

# Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC  
Undergraduate program  
2014- 2015

Name of Institution: Winthrop University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Acting President and Provost Dr. Debra Boyd

Name of Unit: Department of Mass Communication

Name and Title of Administrator: Marilyn Sarow, Ph.D., Interim Chair (from Aug. 1, 2014)  
J. William Click, Ph.D., Chair (retired Aug. 1, 2014)

Date of 2014 - 2015 Accrediting Visit: Oct. 26-29, 2014

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: October 2008

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2014 - 2015 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

*Prepared and submitted by:*

## Team Chair

Name and Title: Barbara Cochran, Curtis B. Hurley Chair in Public Policy Journalism

Organization/School: University of Missouri School of Journalism

Signature



## Team Members

Name and Title: Brad Rawlins, Dean, College of Media and Communications

Organization/School: Arkansas State University

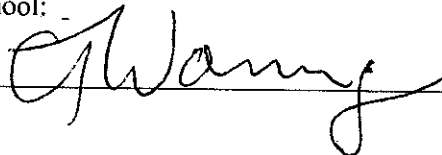
Signature



Name and Title: Charles T. Wanninger

Organization/School:

Signature



## **PART I: General information**

Name of Institution: Winthrop University

Name of Unit: Department of Mass Communication

Year of Visit: 2014 -2015

**1. Check regional association by which the institution now is accredited.**

- Middle States Association of Colleges and School
- 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.**

Winthrop University's legal authorization to provide an education beyond a secondary school in South Carolina and to grant degrees is embodied in legislation of the South Carolina General Assembly 1985 Code § 59-125-10, § 59-125-80 and §§ 59-125-120. Chapter 125 pertaining to Winthrop University cites references to prior codes or acts in 1982, 1974, 1972, 1962, 1952, 1932, 1922, 1920, 1912, 1902, and 1891.

**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 2008*

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

**May 1997**

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

[MISSION STATEMENT](#)

*(Adopted September 2013. Language revised to reflect changes in mass communication curriculum, replacing earlier January 2008 version. No major content changes.)*

The Department of Mass Communication promotes an active learning environment to empower students to analyze, evaluate, synthesize and use multiple ideas, concepts, skills and viewpoints in an integrative and collaborative manner. To that end, the department's mission reflects the pursuit of the following core competencies in its undergraduate mass communication and integrated marketing communication programs:

- » Provide professional education to prepare students to enter and succeed in the mass communication (journalism, broadcasting, digital) and integrated marketing communication fields.
- » Instill a continuing urge for inquiry and learning through a sound liberal arts education.
- » Develop skills to think critically and communicate clearly.
- » Promote awareness of the theoretical, ethical and legal environments that affect mediated communication and integrated marketing communication.
- » Promote understanding about the past, present and future of the discipline through exploring diversity of ideas, opinions, representations and actions that impact the individual, community and society in a globally interconnected world.

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

Semesters of 15 weeks.

Summer sessions of 3, 4 ½ and 8 weeks and varying lengths depending on the course.

**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. List the specific degrees being reviewed by ACEJMC. Indicate online degrees.**

- BA in Mass Communication
- BS in Integrated Marketing Communication

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

124 semester hours

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

1- 3 semester hours

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

**Name of Sequence or Specialty**

[Mass Communication](#)

**Person in Charge**

Marilyn Sarow (Aug. 2014 onwards)  
J. William Click (retired Aug. 1, 2014)

[Integrated Marketing Communication\\*](#)

Marilyn Sarow (Aug. 2014 onwards)  
J. William Click (retired Aug. 1, 2014)

\*The integrated marketing communication major is a joint B.S. degree program of the College of Arts & Sciences Department of Mass Communication and the College of Business Administration Department of Management and Marketing. It is administered by a joint IMC Committee. Because Winthrop requires degrees to be located in only one college, the two deans agreed that it would be housed in the College of Arts & Sciences. Mass communication is a B.A. degree program.

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

Winthrop's fall 2013 enrollment was 6130 (5048 undergraduate, 1082 graduate) students.

**14. 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 <i>September 2014</i>
Mass Communication	56
Integrated Marketing Communication	46
Mass Communication Pre-majors	90
Integrated Marketing Communication Pre-majors	61
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>253</b>

\* Table 1 in Supplementary Information provides detailed break-out of majors and 2013-14 graduation numbers.

**15. 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. Include a separate list for online courses**

COURSE NUMBER, SECTION AND NAME	SPRING 2014	FALL 2014 *
MCOM 226-001 Multimedia Storytelling & Production	11	9
MCOM 226-002 Multimedia Storytelling & Production	13	10
MCOM 226-003 Multimedia Storytelling & Production	12	-
MCOM 226-004 Multimedia Storytelling & Production	13	-
MCOM 241-080 Media Writing	15	9
MCOM 241-081 Media Writing	15	16
MCOM 325-001 Digital News and Video Production	14	3
MCOM 342-001 Advanced Reporting and Writing	14	15
MCOM 346-001 Principles of TV Production	12	15
MCOM 349-001 Advertising Copy and Layout	15	10
MCOM 349-002 Advertising Copy and Layout	15	8
MCOM 425-001 Advanced Broadcast Journalism	4	4
MCOM 441-001 Multimedia Reporting of Issues/Institutions	11	17
MCOM 446-001 Advanced Television Production	4	6
MCOM 471-001 Public Relations Writing & Production	16	12
MCOM 471-002 Public Relations Writing & Production	15	-

\*As of Aug. 2014

**16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2014 – 2015 academic year:**

\$587,604

**Percentage increase or decrease in three years:**

(4.14%) Note: One fewer full-time faculty salary with retirement of the department chair. Continuing faculty receive 2% salary increase. Estimated net reduction: \$25,358.

**Amount spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:**

\$591,630 including department chair

**17. 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.\***

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1. Marilyn Sarow, Professor
  2. Padmini Patwardhan, Professor
  3. Guy S. Reel, Associate Professor
  4. Nathaniel Frederick II, Assistant Professor
  5. William Schulte, Assistant Professor
  6. Mark S. Nortz, Senior Instructor
  7. Aimee Meader, Instructor (Assistant Professor, effective August 2014)
  8. Bonnye Stuart, Instructor

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\* Note: 1. William Click, Professor retired August 1, 2014.  
2. Table 3 in Supplementary Information provides details of qualifications and experience.

**18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2013. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2014.\***

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<u>Fall 2013</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
None	Kelli Bolling, formerly Red Ventures, MCOM 341 Advertising Principles
	Chris Miller, sales manager, WRHI, MCOM 495 Advertising Media Sales

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\* Table 3 in Supplementary Information provides details of qualifications and experience.

**19. Schools on the semester system**

**For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 72 or more semester hours outside the major of journalism and mass communications. (ACEJMC has revised the hrs to 72 or more.)**

\*fall 2013 & spring 2014: IMC = 45, mass comm = 24  
summer 2013 (3 graduates)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Graduates</b>	<b>72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications</b>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
2012-2013	50	50	100%
2013-2014	69*	69	100%

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## **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 Mass Communication is one of 14 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences at Winthrop University. Created in its present form in 1987, the department evolved from the first journalism classes taught in 1925. The department offers two Bachelor's degrees. One is an interdisciplinary B.S. in Integrated Marketing Communications, which is overseen by a committee of faculty members drawn from the department and from the College of Business Administration. The other is a B.A. in Mass Communication, conferred after students complete a converged curriculum that was adopted in 2011 and combines broadcast and print journalism with digital media. The department has been accredited since 1997.

The department's mission statement declares that it "promotes an active learning environment to empower students to analyze, evaluate, synthesize and use multiple ideas, concepts, skills and viewpoints in an integrative and collaborative manner." The statement details five core competencies it expects its graduates to attain, focusing on a professional education with a liberal arts foundation, critical thinking and communications skills and understanding of theoretical, ethical, legal and historical principles in a diverse and globally interconnected world.

The department approved a strategic plan for 2012-2017 in early 2013. The plan begins with the desired learning outcomes for mass communications and integrated marketing communications students. It sets long-range goals for students, curriculum, faculty, faculty development, alumni activities, professional and community relations, equipment and facilities and accreditation. A checklist of objectives from 2013-14 showed most objectives had been met, with the most significant being the continuing implementation of the converged curriculum and the increase in internship opportunities to meet the new requirement that all students have at least one internship or practicum.

The department enjoys a good reputation within the university. Both the current and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, who is now provost and acting president of the university, have been supportive of the department.

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

The department follows the faculty governance procedures of the university and the College of Arts and Sciences. All faculty members participate in the Faculty Assembly for the college and the Faculty Conference for the university. They serve on college and university committees. Because of its size, the department draws on other departments to serve on search committees and tenure and promotion committees. This has benefited the department by familiarizing outside faculty members with the department's needs and personnel.

Department faculty appear to operate with a high degree of collegiality. Curriculum changes that combined journalism and broadcast into one major and added multimedia skills were made by



faculty members meeting as a committee of the whole. The faculty met 10 times in 2013-14. Other committees for the year were: strategic planning, assessment, diversity, technology, internship/practicum, self-study, global learning and social media. A review of faculty meeting minutes shows that the faculty meets regularly and addresses key issues.

**(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 is at a crossroads. The long-time chair, who led the department for 27 years and first obtained accreditation for the department, announced in early 2014 that he would retire. A senior, well-respected faculty member became interim chair in August 2014. She receives high praise from department faculty and college administrators, who know her well from her work for the college and university. The interim chair also plans to retire and will not be a candidate for the position. A search committee has been formed, headed by a chair from another College of Arts and Sciences department and including two faculty members from the department. The search committee will recommend a candidate to the dean of Arts and Sciences, who will make the final decision. The chair serves at the pleasure of the dean.

The position has been advertised nationally. The position description suggests a continuation of the same type of leadership the department has had – a candidate with a doctorate in mass communication or related field, administrative experience, ability to build relationships and knowledge of the accreditation process. Faculty members expressed confidence in the search process and the dean of Arts and Sciences spoke of her commitment to a successful outcome.

For the period under review, the department had strong leadership from a chair who was respected throughout the university and had built strong ties to regional media organizations. Faculty and administrators are committed to finding an appropriate successor.

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

The chair is supposed to be evaluated annually by the dean of Arts and Sciences. Department faculty respond to a survey. The most recent dean's evaluation of the chair was done for 2012-13 and gives a "highly satisfactory" review. The faculty survey from 2011-13 reported over-all satisfaction, with the chair meeting or exceeding expectations on relevant measures.

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

Faculty and staff members are state employees and can use the appropriate grievance procedures. Student policies are available in the online student handbook. Students can appeal grade decisions to the chair, the dean and finally the Academic Conduct Committee. The department says it receives few complaints about grades. Complaints about degree requirements, if unresolved by the chair, can go to the director of student services for the College of Arts and Sciences.

The university trains administrators, department chairs and faculty who supervise student employees to deal with harassment and discrimination complaints. All such complaints are to be reported to university authorities. The department has had no such complaints.

## **Summary**

The department has a clear mission that has guided curriculum changes to keep its program relevant and enable it to produce journalists and communicators for its region. While a leadership change is pending, a process is in place for a new chair to continue building on a solid foundation.

## **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 journalism and mass communications and meet the liberal arts and sciences-general education requirements of the institution. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet these requirements.**

The department uses an online advising system, Degree Works, that ensures that students comply with the 72-hour rule. Students cannot graduate without meeting this requirement. The department will require the 65 credits in liberal arts until the 2014-2015 catalog when the university will reduce the credits required for graduation from 124 to 120 hours.

A review of a random selection of graduation check sheets confirmed that graduating students are meeting this requirement.

- (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 department offers two degrees, a B.A. in Mass Communication (MCOM) and an interdisciplinary B.S. in Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) with the College of Business Administration. Both degrees have a strong professional orientation and offer theoretical and conceptual courses and content that helps meet the ACEJMC competencies and values. The MCOM degree requires courses such as Mass Communication Theory and Research, Mass Media Law and Ethics and Issues in Mass Communication. The IMC program requires Mass Media Law and teaches theory and ethics in its principles and capstone courses.

In 2011, the department converged the Journalism and Broadcasting degrees into a single Mass Communication degree. The program was phased in for incoming freshman and will graduate its first class in 2015. Students take a 35-hour core of classes (9 credits are outside of MCOM), another 9-10 hours in MCOM electives and are required to complete a minor of 15-24 hours. The converged program requires students to take a Multimedia Storytelling and Production class that introduces all students to reporting across platforms. Students work with advisers to identify electives that will best prepare them for their chosen career. Broadcast faculty have recently discovered that many students who plan to have careers in broadcasting are not taking the appropriate electives and they plan to revise the core and electives to address this deficiency. Students interested in the printed word have several electives from which to choose, including feature writing, news editing and magazine production. Students may also take an elective in advertising or public relations.

The IMC degree is interdisciplinary, but the major resides in the Department of Mass Communication. About half of the credits in this 65-credit program are offered by the College of Business Administration as a service to this degree program. Students take 30 credits from business, comprised mostly of marketing and management courses. They also take an elective from art or visual communication. The department offers two courses in IMC, two courses in advertising and two courses in public relations. Students do not have the option of specializing in one of these areas

but are prepared across the IMC disciplines. The department was aware of other strong public relations and advertising programs in the state and opted to provide a unique degree program. Students praise the program as giving them an edge with the required marketing and management courses. There is one elective within the Mass Communication Department for IMC, as well as elective choices in business and visual communication.

Although the formal concentrations in journalism and broadcasting no longer exist, students still identify themselves along those lines and these areas were evaluated separately by the site team.

**Journalism.** For students concentrating in the print area, the curriculum provides the necessary mix of skills and theory courses. Required courses include Media Writing, Mass Media Law, Multimedia Storytelling, Applied Statistics, Mass Communication Theory and Research, Ethics and Issues, and Public Affairs Reporting. The curriculum has been adjusted in the past two years to make sure it prepares students for the new demands of convergence. The new curriculum for those interested in print encompasses those demands – providing students with the ability to report a story across varied platforms.

**Broadcasting.** Students specializing in broadcast journalism take the required courses in mass communication and three courses that focus on acquiring progressively advanced broadcast skills. The courses are Digital News and Video Production, in which students learn to combine reporting and producing techniques; Advanced Broadcast Journalism, in which students produce one reporting package a week; and Advanced Television Production, in which students produce a weekly program, Winthrop Close-Up, a studio-based program using packages from Advanced Broadcast Journalism.

**IMC.** The IMC program includes theory and practical skill courses across the curriculum and in both the mass communication and business programs. Theories related to communication are taught in the principles courses and in the senior seminar. Students are also exposed to marketing, consumer behavior and economic theories from the College of Business Administration. Students learn design and business software by taking courses in computer science and develop skills in strategic planning, design, storytelling and research.

- (c) Instruction, whether onsite or online, is demanding and current; and is responsive to professional expectations of digital, technological and multimedia competencies. Achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued. (If the unit has more than one sequence, address the quality of instruction by sequence.)**

**Journalism.** Instruction for print students is solid, with three faculty members having an emphasis in this area. According to student interviews, professors keep current with the needs of new multimedia journalism, and the curriculum has been adjusted recently to reflect those realities. Two of the three have extensive professional experience, which is recognized and praised in student interviews. The addition of Multimedia Storytelling and the flexibility for print students to take additional courses in broadcasting and digital news provides a broader skill set.

**Broadcasting.** Students observed in the Advanced Television Production class were engaged and enthusiastic. The studio, control room and equipment used by students is adequate. There were complaints about the poor quality of mini-DV cameras used in the introductory broadcast journalism class and difficulty of getting lab time for video editing, but funds are lacking. Nonetheless, students said they felt they were better prepared for internships than students from other programs. They also observed that encountering equipment problems helps prepare them for the real world.

**IMC.** Interviews with students, classroom visits and reviews of course syllabi indicate that the IMC courses taught in the Department of Mass Communication are current and very rigorous. While the program does not have a unique course dedicated to social media, all of the courses

incorporate sections on social media and require social media strategies for all assignments. Students report that the marketing courses don't appear to be as current and do not incorporate much digital and social media in lectures and assignments. Students also comment that the MCOM courses are much more difficult than the business courses, with the exception of accounting.

This is a unique program and one of only a handful across the country that provides an interdisciplinary degree in MCOM and business. Students give it high praise for the preparation that it gives them and graduates have been able to find jobs with this degree. The majority of the 2011 alumni (81 percent) who graduated from the IMC program are working in marketing communication.

**(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 department is in complete compliance with this requirement.

**(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. Schools may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed six semester credits (or nine quarter credit hours). Students may take up to two semester courses (or their quarter equivalent) at an appropriate professional organization where the unit can show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit's faculty and professionals. Students may take up to three semester courses (or their quarter equivalent) at a professional media outlet owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.**

Students in IMC have always been required to complete an internship and the department began requiring MCOM students to complete an internship or practicum in 2011. The department has a detailed procedure for the internship course, including applications and evaluation forms. Students work with faculty to find internships. Faculty members appear to have built great networks with regional media and IMC organizations and help students find internships. One student reported a situation where the faculty member approached him about an excellent internship opportunity and introduced him to the newspaper editor. Other students report finding their own internships and getting them approved. The department visits internship sites during the semester where feasible or calls internship providers and students to verify the quality of the internship. A different faculty member is designated as the internship coordinator for IMC, broadcast and print areas.

### Summary

Quality instruction, revised curriculum, engaged students and a balance between theory and principles and practical application provide for a solid curriculum.

### 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. The diversity plan should focus on domestic minority groups and, where applicable, international groups. The written plan must include the unit's definition of diversity and identify the under-represented groups.**

Winthrop University originated as an all-women's institution and makes diversity an important part of its mission. In 2012, the university launched a campus-wide global learning initiative, in which the Department of Mass Communication is actively participating.

Winthrop University primarily serves students from South Carolina and seeks to become the university of choice for African American students in the state, where 64 percent of the population is white and 28 percent is African American. African American students were 28 percent of the university student body in 2013 and 48 percent of the Department of Mass Communication's student body. This represents a 37 percent increase for the department since the time of the last accreditation visit when the department was found out of compliance on the diversity standard. At the time of the last visit, the department had seven faculty members, of whom two were women, one was Asian and none was African American. Today, of the nine faculty members, four are women, one is Asian and one is an African American.

The department's diversity plan was revised and adopted in January 2013. It defines diversity as relating to gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious or political thought. It states five objectives: to maintain a welcoming campus climate and to strive for and maintain a civil, respectful, efficient and positive workforce; to recruit and retain a diverse student body; to recruit and retain a diverse workforce and maintain a diverse leadership and management; to continue to refine a curriculum that reflects university and college values on diversity; and to coordinate with university-level efforts to support diversity goals.

The diversity plan specifies actions to be taken to achieve the objectives. Among those that have been implemented are recruiting diverse pools of candidates for openings; incorporating diversity into the curriculum; establishing a student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists; and obtaining more nationally competitive internship opportunities for students of color.

- (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.**

The department lists seven Mass Communication and six Integrated Marketing Communication classes that incorporate lessons related to diversity topics. Examples include teaching of media law cases, such as *New York Times v. Sullivan*, that originated in the civil rights movement and a class project to develop a communications plan for the York County Disabilities Foundation. A review of syllabi showed the inclusion of diversity topics in many classes and a statement on every syllabus about how the course furthers the objectives of the university's Global Learning Initiative. Students showed familiarity with diversity topics in meetings with the team.

**(c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and domestic minority faculty and professional staff and, where feasible, recruits international faculty and professional staff.**

Of nine full-time faculty, four are female and five are male. Seven are white, one is an Asian woman and one is an African American man. There have been three openings for tenure-track faculty in the past six years. Efforts were made through advertising, meetings and personal contacts to recruit a diverse pool of candidates and yielded diverse groups of finalists. An African American man was hired to teach media law in 2011. Searches for two other openings, one in broadcast and one in journalism, resulted in an offer of the broadcast position to an African American woman, who withdrew her candidacy. The two positions were filled by a white man and a white woman.

The department uses few adjunct faculty. The two professionals hired most recently were both white. Efforts were made in 2009 and 2010 to recruit African American professionals from the local area to teach special one- and two-hour courses, but faculty members concluded such short courses were not an effective way to enhance diversity.

**(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 diversity of the department's student body has increased over the years to the point where minority groups and international students now make up a majority of the student population. White students are 43.5 percent of the department's student body, African Americans are 47.8 percent, Latinos are 1.4 percent, Asian are .35 percent, two or more races, 1.4 percent and international, 5.4 percent. This diversity was visible in classrooms and student meetings. The international students come chiefly from a degree completion program with ISCOM, a communications institute in Montpelier, France.

Student recruitment begins at the high school level with contacts in local schools and an annual high school media workshop. To further engage African American students, the department established a student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, which is popular among students and maintains an active schedule of events. The African American faculty member escorted a group of students to the Howard University career fair. Guest speakers in class and at the annual Mass Communication Week are one way in which students encounter successful minority role models; another is through internships, where 14 of recent internship supervisors were minorities.

Retention rates are better for minority students in the department than in the university over-all. Between 2008 and 2012, retention of freshmen ranged from 67-100 percent for IMC majors and 52-96 percent for mass communication majors. Several university programs provide academic and mentoring assistance to minority and first generation college students.

**(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.**

The department observes university policies on harassment and discrimination. All department faculty and staff completed Title IX training in 2013-14. Facilities are accessible and efforts were described to accommodate students in wheelchairs and with a vision disability.

## **Summary**

The department has a diverse student body and incorporates diversity issues effectively into student learning. With the addition of an African American man and Asian woman to the faculty, it is more diverse than it was at the time of the last accreditation visit. Current and anticipated vacancies offer opportunities to increase diversity among the faculty.

## **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.**

At the time of the site team visit, Winthrop's Mass Communication Department had eight full-time faculty members occupying the nine available positions. The department is currently conducting a search to fill the department chair position--and ninth faculty position--that was vacated by the retirement of Dr. William Click. The nine positions are two more than were in the department for the 2009 accreditation study. There are two full professors, one associate professor, three assistant professors and two instructors. There is one more planned retirement in the department and the dean expressed concern about retaining the position for the department with the current budget climate.

There are clear guidelines for selecting and hiring faculty. Faculty members work with the department chair to prepare the vacancy announcements and the position descriptions and advertisements must be approved by the Human Resources Office, dean's office, University Relations Office and the Office of the Provost to ensure that all university guidelines and procedures are being followed. Because of the relatively small size of the department, search committees often include faculty members from other departments in the college.

Faculty complete an annual faculty productivity form that comes from the College of Arts and Sciences and write an annual review of their teaching for the department annual review. Faculty members at the university have not received merit increases or salary equity adjustments during the period of this accreditation study. Faculty who were promoted did receive significant increases in salary and all faculty members received a 1 percent across-the-board increase for cost of living in 2012 and 2 percent last year.

Tenure and promotion decisions are based on faculty performance in the areas of *Student Intellectual Development* (teaching), *Scholarly Activity* and *Professional Stewardship* (service). Pre-tenure faculty members are reviewed in their third year and in their sixth year (final review) for tenure. Tenured faculty go through a required post-tenure review every seven years. The decisions for promotion and tenure are separate and require separate votes. Faculty members can go up early for promotion but not for tenure. Because of the few tenured faculty members in the department, faculty from other departments in the college are involved in the tenure and promotion decisions. All tenure, promotion and merit considerations are based on 50 percent teaching and a mix of research and service determined by the faculty member and the chair.

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

Nearly all of the courses are taught by full-time faculty. Faculty members normally teach an equivalent of 12 hours per semester. A three-credit course with lab is considered the equivalent of a four-credit course for faculty load purposes. Faculty members occasionally receive a course reduction for one semester during the academic year. Course releases are very rare in the department

and usually only occur in the case of an extreme need, such as the course release one member received for writing the self-study report. In the year of the accreditation visit, only one adjunct faculty member had taught a class. There are very few funds available to hire adjunct faculty and the department has been identified as a model by the dean for efficiency in use of adjuncts. Adjuncts are hired when there is a need to offer a course and the expertise of full-time faculty members is not available for the course. Students said that they appreciated taking several courses from the same faculty member because it increases their familiarity with faculty expectations and they believe the faculty members know them better as a result.

**(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.**

All but one of the faculty members have professional experience in their specialty areas of journalism, broadcast and integrated marketing communication. The years of experience range from five to eighteen. Most of the senior faculty members have been out of the profession for many years: between 15 and 26. The influx of new faculty has brought some new ideas and professional experience and the senior faculty members are very well connected in their professions and take measures to stay current. Faculty have attended workshops and training seminars at the Freedom Forum, Poynter Institute, the National Association of Investigative Reporters and Editors, AEJMC, and American Academy of Advertising, as well as with state organizations such as the South Carolina Broadcasters Association and the South Carolina Press Association.

There is a challenge to keep the curriculum and course content current without the infusion of professional adjunct faculty. The department attempts to address this challenge by inviting guest speakers, using onsite internship visits to discuss new practices and assisting with faculty development. Guest speakers are particularly prominent during Mass Comm Week, when many alumni and professionals are invited to campus to speak in classes and meet with students. Professional speakers and alumni are also invited to attend a student recognition dinner held in April.

Students expressed appreciation for the level of professional expertise faculty members bring to their classes, the connections they have in their respective fields that lead to internships and jobs and the efforts they make to keep the curriculum current and relevant.

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

The review of teaching, which is the primary consideration for merit, tenure and promotion, is evaluated each year using course evaluations, syllabus reviews, classroom visits, and the annual report from faculty. In this report, faculty members analyze each course in detail, discuss changes from previous semesters and assess what worked and what needs to be improved.

The classroom visits are periodic and there is no formal schedule for the visits. Peer review of teaching occurs for tenure and promotion cases.

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

The faculty members are well respected across campus. Because of the interdisciplinary programs in IMC and Digital Information Design, faculty members frequently interact with other faculty across campus. The level of service provided to the university, particularly of a few faculty members, is very much appreciated and respected. A couple of the prolific scholars in the department are also recognized for the quality of their work.

Colleagues from around the university described the department as “having its act together” and its faculty as good university citizens, who are hard-working, disciplined and organized. There was high praise for the quality of students and their preparation by faculty in other disciplines. Several said that the Mass Communication students were more intellectually engaged and better prepared in writing and critical thinking than the students in their own programs.

**Summary**

The faculty members genuinely care for their students and their success and put a lot of time into course preparation. They bring professional experience to their classes and try to stay current in the developments in their respective fields.

**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.**

Winthrop University is first and foremost a teaching university and the highest proportion of merit, tenure and promotion evaluations is determined by quality teaching. However, research and creative activities account for 25 to 30 percent of performance reviews. Scholarly activity is required for tenure and promotion and pre-tenure faculty are appreciative of the mentored support they receive from tenured faculty. The greatest obstacles for scholarly productivity are time and funding. The faculty members teach 12 hours per semester, so most faculty reserve the summer months for their scholarship. Travel support for research conferences comes from the college with some department assistance. The idea is to provide faculty with enough support to attend one conference per year, but the funding has declined from \$1,100 to about \$800 per faculty member. Faculty can also seek additional funds from the university, and five faculty members received university grants in the last six years.

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

The department does not have its own tenure and promotion document and relies on the university and college documents to specify research and scholarly expectations. The college documents specify the types of activities that count toward scholarly activity and classifies them into priority one, two and three categories. *Priority one* scholarship includes works that “illustrate novel ideas: and that go through the highest level of peer-review or judgment of work.” *Priority two* scholarship include works that “integrate existing ideas” and go through a less stringent review process. *Priority three* scholarship demonstrates discipline skills and knowledge with little or no peer review. The tenure and promotion document does not specify the number of activities one must achieve for tenure and promotion. Their document is intentionally vague to encompass multiple disciplines, from biology to English, and to acknowledge different achievements toward scholarly work. The imprecision of the document does create some anxiety and uncertainty, but most faculty members seem to understand that tenure and promotion to associate professor requires about four priority one activities and several priority two and three works as well.

**(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 uses the College of Arts and Sciences “Faculty Roles and Rewards” document to evaluate professional and scholarly specializations. The document closely follows the university’s document that was adopted in 2011. The “roles and rewards” document defines the criteria for evaluation in the three priorities as described in the section above.

- (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.**

Vitae and the self-study indicate that the faculty members are active in scholarship. All full-time tenure-track faculty members have contributed “priority one” scholarly works during the last six years. This includes four books, 13 refereed journal articles, five book chapters, 30 plus refereed conference papers, five invited academic papers, more than 20 articles published by faculty in professional media and 14 non-juried creative products developed by non tenure-track full time instructors. One faculty member is particularly productive and accounts for a large percentage of the peer-reviewed works, including eight peer-reviewed articles, two book chapters and 14 referred conference papers. Faculty scholarship productivity is in line with the expectations outlined in the college “roles and rewards” document.

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

The faculty members are very collegial, collaborate on research and share research ideas and resources. Pre-tenure faculty members have mentors who assist them with research and other tenure expectations. The tenure and promotions document and the culture respect different forms of scholarship and publication in a variety of journals and formats.

## **Summary**

Faculty scholarship meets, and occasionally exceeds, expectations for the college and university.

## **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.**

Faculty members are assigned 25-35 students for the advising process, much of which takes place in a two-week window each semester. Though there is no departmental system to track the progress of students, an electronic system called Ellucian Degree Works apparently heads off most problems. Degree Works is web-based and designed to help students and advisers navigate curriculum issues.

Both students and faculty members say the system works, although the self-study noted some “teething problems” relating to advising for recent curriculum changes. A survey of graduating students in 2014 noted some dissatisfaction with the advising process, so there may be room for adjustments in the system.

Faculty members also provide career counseling and get involved in helping students secure internships.

Not many student records are kept in the department office. Instead, they are maintained on a password-protected online computer. Students are advised of graduation requirements by the Records and Registration department. There is also a Senior Portfolio course that helps seniors nail down final graduation issues and prepare for their futures.

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

Faculty members are expected to have a minimum of five office hours a week and students say that they have no problems reaching professors. All professors post office hours. Students praise the involvement of their professors – for general help and for both academic and professional advising.

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

The unit has increased its use of social media to communicate to students and others in the department. There is also a commitment to improve the department’s website, to make it more user-friendly and helpful. These new efforts supplement traditional communication methods such as posters and flyers and other bulletin-board materials.

**(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.**

Students have opportunities to participate in a full menu of extra-curricular activities – the *Johnsonian* weekly newspaper and *Roddy-McMillan Record*, a monthly multicultural newspaper. Broadcast students can work at WINR, the campus cable/Internet radio station.

Faculty members serve as advisers to the campus media.

Students can also participate in standard media organizations on campus – the National Association of Black Journalists, Society of Professional Journalists, Association for Women in Communication, etc. IMC students can participate in the American Marketing Association. Several IMC students mentioned a desire to have a PRSSA chapter on campus.

- (e) The accredited unit must gather, maintain and analyze enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success. The unit regularly publishes retention and graduation information on its website.**

The unit maintains and publishes relevant enrollment data, providing it to the university's Department of Accreditation, Accountability and Academic Services. According to the self-study, the department's rates exceed the university as a whole. More than 70 percent of all IMC freshmen and 64 percent of all mass communications freshman continued in the major as sophomores during the years for which data is available. The public accountability report is published on the department's website.

### **Summary**

The department provides students with support and services they need.

### **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.**

The department has a budget that does not include expenditures for building maintenance, retirement allowances, scholarships, prizes or student aid. It does include salaries but those are not controlled by the department. All major equipment purchases come from funds outside the department. The chair develops a budget request with input from faculty members and submits it to the dean, who meets with the chair and then the provost.

The Information Technology department is responsible for computers in labs and faculty offices. Video equipment and software are requested by the department. The department includes equipment needs in its long-range planning and makes the administration aware of anticipated purchases. While the university has been supportive, plans can be delayed. A converged media news lab was approved two years ago, but won't be completed until 2015.

The department's budget is affected by the university's financial health. A decline in enrollment in the fall of 2014 led to a 10 percent budget cut across the university. About 10 percent of the university's budget comes from the state, so a decline in tuition revenue has a major impact.

**(b) The resources that the institution provides are adequate to achieve the unit's mission. The resources are fair in relation to those provided other units.**

The previous chair, interim chair and faculty members feel the department has been treated fairly by the university. The previous dean, now the acting president, obtained the funds to move the television studio and control room from analog to digital equipment. The department also has combined forces with other departments when all needed to purchase the same software.

The department can engage in fund-raising activities in coordination with the university's development office. With no dedicated staff, such efforts depend on faculty members. They have made some efforts, including obtaining an in-kind donation of HD video cameras from the Carolina Panthers NFL franchise.

With a cut in this year's budget, the department is concerned about whether future faculty vacancies will be filled. The search for a new chair is well under way, but approval to fill a prospective opening is pending.

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

The journalism unit is located in Johnson Hall, a 1920's building originally funded by John D. Rockefeller. The building is shared with the Department of Theatre and Dance. Classrooms and offices show their age but seem to meet the needs of students and faculty members.

The department uses two classrooms, one seminar room, two computer labs and various rooms for its electronic media classes. The labs have MAC computers loaded with Microsoft Office,



Adobe Creative Suite and Adobe Premiere. The unit is excited about a new “converged news lab,” scheduled to be open for the second semester.

Classrooms have Internet, wireless access, projection equipment and a computer. Faculty members have MACs in their offices.

**(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.**

As noted above, the unit has adequate computer hardware and software to meet the needs of students and faculty. MACs are upgraded every three years and there is technical help available on a timely basis. The labs have enough MACs to handle student’s needs.

Radio and TV classes use a variety of standard equipment – some of it pretty new, some pretty old. Included: 10 Vivitar DVR cameras, 5 Cannon PowerShot still cameras, 13 Zoom H1 digital microphones, 7 Flip video cameras, 7 Canon GL2 video cameras, 15 Panasonic AGHMC80 video cameras, 5 Alesis 5 Channel Audio Mixers.

Students say they have some problems with access or performance of the cameras, but that this is not a major issue throughout the semester. Students in the advanced class can check out a camera for the full semester. Though equipment has been upgraded from analog to digital, a further upgrade to high-definition equipment would better prepare students for professional jobs.

The TV studio set is badly outdated and could use an upgrade. The unit recently received three newer cameras, but much of the equipment in the studio dates back to 2006.

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

Students can get information they need, primarily through Internet access that is available across the campus. The department maintains a small resource center, though students say it gets limited use. It has no copies of live newspapers because those are available online.

The university’s primary library, the Ida Jane Dacus Library, was built in 1969 and holds almost 600,000 volumes. Students say they use the main library regularly and it meets their needs for information and classroom work.

## **Summary**

The unit has adequate resources to fulfill its mission, although declining enrollment could present problems in the future.

## **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.**

The unit maintains a number of efforts to remain current with alumni, but admits there is room for improvement. The self-study lists a number of ways in which it communicates with alumni and the unit clearly values its relationships with former students. Noted are regular visits from graduates and participation in an annual Mass Communications Week and a recognition dinner. Media professionals in the area who are graduates are regular visitors to campus.

Formal outreach to graduates is centralized in the Alumni Relations Office, though the department maintains its own lists and tries to communicate to alumni. Social media sites have been established. A plan is under way to upgrade the department's website – to make the site more user-friendly and a better vehicle for department and alumni news.

The department had an online alumni newsletter in place, but that has not been published during the last two years.

The unit does not have a formal advisory board, but faculty feel they have the necessary programs in place to foster regular interaction with professionals and alumni.

- (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.**

Department faculty serve the community and the profession through involvement in community events, including a Leadership York County Media Day program. They are active members of professional associations. And they promote continued interaction with professionals and alumni. The self-study provides a detailed list of faculty involvement in outside activity and faculty clearly feel that such activities are a part of their responsibility.

- (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.**

As noted, all faculty members participate widely in professional organizations that promote journalism and mass communications. A university-wide document provides standards for professional stewardship, and it seems clear that the unit's faculty members exceed those.

- (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.**

Faculty members are involved in professional organizations such as Society of Professional Journalists, National Association of Black Journalists, the South Carolina Press Association, etc. They work on association committees and attend networking events.

The Leadership York County Media Day provides an innovative opportunity to enhance relationships between business and journalism professionals.

On campus, faculty members get mixed reviews on their participation in university-wide committees – strong involvement with some professors and little involvement from others. The self-study notes that several faculty members have been cited with Winthrop service awards. The department appears to have a good campus-wide reputation and several campus representatives praised unit faculty members for their involvement in committees and activities.

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

The unit organizes an annual workshop for 100-150 high school students in media, theater and dance. Faculty members look for new approaches to address issues with scholastic journalism – approaches with social media and efforts to interact with specific local schools.

**Summary**

The unit and faculty members meet their obligations to alumni, professionals, associations, the university and the community as a whole.

**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.**

The department provides the following list of learning goals that it states are based on the ACEJMC core values and competencies.

1. Provide professional education to prepare students to enter and succeed in the mediated communication and integrated marketing communication fields.
2. Instill a continuing urge for inquiry and learning through a sound liberal arts education.
3. Develop skills to think critically and communicate clearly.
4. Promote awareness of the theoretical, ethical and legal environments that affect journalism, broadcasting and integrated marketing communication.
5. Promote understanding about the past, present and future of the discipline through exploring diversity of ideas, opinions, representations and actions that impact the individual, community and society in a globally interconnected world.

To add specificity and clarity to these goals, the department has identified the following learning outcomes for the Mass Communications degree

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of legal frameworks and issues that affect the profession.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of historical milestones, figures, and trends in the discipline.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of mass communication concepts, theories, and processes.
4. Students will demonstrate ability to conduct research and evaluate data/information by methods appropriate to the communication profession.
5. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of ethical contexts in which the communication professions operate.
6. Students will demonstrate responsibility and engagement with the community/profession through undertaking and satisfactorily completing a professional experience/practicum.
7. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of the global interconnectedness of mass media and audiences.
8. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of diversity issues in domestic society and their relation to mass communication.
9. Students will write correctly and clearly, demonstrating use of forms and styles appropriate for the communication professions and the audiences that they serve.
10. Students will demonstrate ability to produce integrated media news stories
11. Students will apply tools and technologies appropriate to the communication professions in which they work.

(The learning outcomes for the IMC degree are essentially the same but written in the context of IMC and include a learning outcome for oral presentations.)

These learning outcomes capture the essence of the ACEJMC values and competencies and are expressed in the department's own words. The department has mapped out how its learning outcomes match the ACEJMC values and competencies and Winthrop's relatively new University Level Competencies. The department also provided a matrix in Standard Two that identified the courses where the ACEJMC competencies and values were addressed at the level of awareness, understanding and application. The learning outcomes identified in the course syllabi do not necessarily correspond to the matrix.

It is not readily evident how students learn about the program outcomes. There were no visible posters of the outcomes in hallways or classrooms. When IMC students were asked about the specific learning outcomes for the IMC program, they were not aware of them. When asked where they might find the outcomes, they mentioned that syllabi included these outcomes. However, after reviewing the syllabi for the department, the University Level Outcomes and the course objectives are listed on most syllabi, but the program goals and learning objectives are rarely listed. One student mentioned that the learning outcomes were listed on the department's website.

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

The department has a good assessment plan, most recently revised in 2011, that uses four direct measures and four indirect measures to assess student learning. The eight measures are:

Direct

1. Embedded test questions in core courses.
2. Evaluation of reflective papers and assignments by external referees (other faculty).
3. Evaluation of senior portfolios by a team of faculty and professionals.
4. Internship evaluations.

Indirect

1. Senior exit surveys.
2. Intercultural competency survey.
3. Alumni survey and visits.
4. Student awards.

Each year, the department selects two to four learning outcomes to assess based on a rotating schedule. The annual cycle is determined by the assessment coordinator who is a faculty member in the department. The faculty coordinator receives one course reduction to manage the assessment process.

The plan tries to make the assessment authentic and unobtrusive by assessing embedded assignments and test questions. When trying to improve the results of learning outcomes, the faculty will create new assignments and new assessment measures in these classes.

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

During the site visit, the data collected by the direct and indirect measures were shared with the team. There is plenty of evidence that the department is regularly collecting data and using the data to address ways to improve curriculum and instruction. Faculty members meet at least once a

semester to go over the data and make recommendations for improving student learning. The department provided annual assessment reports from the last three years that described assessment data, identified areas for improvement and provided plans that addressed those areas. There is evidence in the curriculum that these plans have been implemented. For example, assessment data on student understanding of theory and research in the Mass Communication program indicated a lingering deficiency, so the department created a new core course entitled Theory and Research. It has been offered for two semesters and the program is collecting data on how well it is working.

Other major curriculum adjustments that have been made as a result of assessment:

- Adoption of an integrated mass communication curriculum that combined print, multimedia and broadcast journalism into one degree program.
- Requiring mandatory internship/practicum experience for all mass communication majors.
- Introduction of a global learning initiative.

**(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 does not maintain the official alumni list, but it does make efforts to gather information about alumni through social media (Facebook and LinkedIn), guest lecture invitations, and alumni events held throughout the year. The department conducts a survey of alumni every five years. In spring of 2014, it collected 88 responses to the survey, of which 79 percent were IMC majors, and the majority of which were recent graduates. The results indicated strong agreement on statements about the quality and value of the program and that more than 85 percent found jobs in the first six months. Alumni evaluated their education using the learning outcomes defined by the department and provided open-ended responses for improving the curriculum.

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

The department created informal alumni advisory boards for the Mass Communication and the IMC programs to provide input on the curriculum in 2013. Professionals evaluate student work, in the form of senior portfolios and class projects, every semester using rubrics designed by the department. Professionals also evaluate interns and provide evaluations on client projects.

## **Summary**

The department's assessment efforts were applauded in the 2009 site team report and they have been improved since then. It is evident that the department takes assessment seriously and makes extra efforts to use assessment data to improve student learning.

## **COMPLIANCE**

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

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

##### Strengths

- a. Collegial, hard-working faculty, readily accessible to students and with useful ties to the profession
- b. Enthusiastic and diverse student body that includes many first-generation college students determined to succeed
- c. An innovative and interdisciplinary program in Integrated Marketing Communication that is uniquely positioned in the state and prepares students well for marketing communications careers
- d. Supportive relationships with professional media organizations in the state and access to big-market internships in the Charlotte metropolitan area
- e. Robust assessment plan that uses direct and indirect data to improve the curriculum and student learning

##### Weaknesses

- a. Enrollment declines and dwindling state support create uncertainties about filling future faculty vacancies
- b. Lack of new sources of revenue to fund needed equipment purchases
- c. Absence of an organized and formalized approach to alumni relations

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

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

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

The 2008-09 site visit found the unit out of compliance with Standard 3: Diversity and said “The unit must adopt a more energetic and creative approach to diversifying its faculty.” At the time of the previous visit, the faculty of seven included two women, one of whom is Asian, and no other minority. Since that time, the department conducted three searches for tenure-track faculty and expanded its recruitment efforts through national advertising and extensive personal contacts. The chair, who retired in August, personally contacted 67 individuals to seek minority applicants. Each of the three searches resulted in a diverse group of finalists for the position. The department ultimately hired an African American man, a white man and a white woman.

**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.**

See previous answer.

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

The self-study was forthright and well organized. The listing of highlights for each standard was especially helpful. Some detail was lacking from the self-study but available on site.