

**Report of On-Site Evaluation**  
ACEJMC  
**Undergraduate program**  
2015-2016

Name of Institution: California State University, Chico

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: President Paul Zingg

Name of Unit: Department of Journalism & Public Relations

Name and Title of Administrator: Susan Wiesinger, Chair, Department of Journalism & Public Relations

Date of 2015 - 2016 Accrediting Visit: Feb. 14-17, 2016

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Oct. 25-29, 2009

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2015 - 2016 Visiting Team:

*Prepared and submitted by:*

**Team Chair:**

Name and Title: Kristin Gilger, Associate Dean

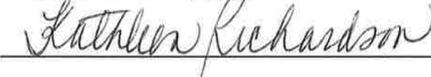
Organization/School: Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University

Signature 

**Team Members**

Name and Title: Kathleen Richardson, Dean

Organization/School: School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Drake University

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Name and Title: Ward White, Strategy Officer

Organization/School: Edelman

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Organization/School:

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## PART I: General information

Name of Institution: California State University, Chico

Name of Unit: Department of Journalism & Public Relations

Year of Visit: 2016

### 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.

The California State University is the world's largest comprehensive higher education system, with 23 unique campuses serving more than 450,000 students with 45,000 employees statewide. The individual universities were brought together as a system by the Donohoe Higher Education Act of 1960.

### 4. Has the journalism/mass communication unit been evaluated previously by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications?

Yes, last accrediting visit 2009

No

When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? 1997

**5. Attach a copy of the unit's mission statement. Statement should give date of adoption and/or last revision.**

We seek to foster a dynamic, high quality learning environment that builds on classroom learning and faculty engagement in ways that help students achieve personal goals, along with grants, scholarships, internships and jobs.

The Chico State Department of Journalism & PR offers a structured, rigorous program that provides students with faculty interaction, engagement, feedback and learning. We want our students to be prepared to learn, grow, make mistakes and thrive, both in the classroom and through professional journalism experiences.

We are committed to the achievement and success of our students; to fostering diversity and personal growth; and to professional standards and independence. *(Revised 2011)*

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

Semesters of 16 weeks

Summer sessions varies: three to 12 weeks

Intersessions: three weeks

(**Note:** Journalism rarely offers summer or intersession classes. These classes must be self-supporting and departments do not receive funding to offer them or budget credit for students enrolled in them.)

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

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Ph.D. degree

**8. List the specific degrees being reviewed by ACEJMC.**

The Bachelor of Arts in Journalism with options in News and Public Relations

**9. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree:**

120 semester hours

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

There are two categories of internships: required internships that are part of the PR option core and elective internships supervised by the chair as electives. The total number of required internship units for the option core cannot exceed two units, although that requirement can be repeated for elective credit. The total number of elective internship units supervised by the chair cannot exceed three units and may not be repeated.

**Note:** All students are required to complete internship-level work in option-capstone labs.

- Students in the News option must spend at least one semester working on the program's award-winning, student-run news organization, The Orion. They may earn up to seven units overall for work across multiple semesters for The Orion (two semesters as a two-unit practicum; one semester as three-unit newsroom leadership/management). The Orion is supervised by the News option professional-in-residence.
- Students in the PR option must spend at least one semester in a supervised on-site internship for a non-profit organization in Butte County or one semester working for the program's student-managed PR agency, Tehama Group Communications. Onsite PR internships and TGC are supervised by the PR option professional-in-residence.
- Students in News are encouraged to apply for non-management jobs with Tehama Group Communications and students in PR are encouraged to apply for non-management jobs with The Orion.

**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>
News	Susan M. Wiesinger, in consultation with Mark Plenke, professional-in-residence
Public Relations	Susan M. Wiesinger, in consultation with Debra Johnson, Professional-in-residence

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

16,251 (fall 2014, full-time equivalent)

**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):**

<b>Name of Sequence or Specialty</b>	<b>Undergraduate Majors (post-census fall 2015)</b>
News	91
Public Relations	161
Undeclared option	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>

**14. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, 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 skills courses, which also must meet the 20-1 ratio. (*\*The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.*)**

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>FALL 2015</b>	<b>SPRING 2016</b>
<b>J260 Writing for Mass Media</b>		
Section 1	19	20
Section 2	20	20
Section 3	17	Not offered
<b>J321 Public Affairs Reporting</b>	17	20
<b>J325 Magazine Writing</b>	20	20
<b>J327 News Editing</b>		
Section 1	20	20
Section 2	Not offered	20
<b>J341 Writing for PR</b>		
Section 1	17	20
Section 2	18	20
<b>J351 PR Publications</b>	19	20
<b>J353 Photojournalism</b>		
Section 1	20	18
Section 2	19	Not offered
<b>J451 Digital Media Innovation</b>	20	20
<b>J453 Advanced photojournalism</b>	Not offered	20

**15. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2015–2016 academic year:**

Budget allocation: \$714,110

Percentage increase or decrease in three years: -8 percent

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$270,836

(Full- and part-time salaries: \$556,971)

**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.**

- Matthew Blake, associate professor (on sabbatical fall 2015-spring 2016)
- Janell Bauer, assistant professor
- Aaron Quinn, associate professor
- Susan Wiesinger, professor, Department chair
- Debra Johnson, professional-in-residence, lecturer
- Mark Plenke, professional-in-residence, lecturer

**17. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2015. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2015. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2016, please provide the updated list of faculty at time of visit.)**

- Spring 2015: Glen Bleske, David Waddell, Forrest Hartman, Michael Griffin, Leslie Layton, Maria DeCastro
- Fall 2015: David Waddell, Forrest Hartman, Michael Griffin, Leslie Layton, Steve Caldes, Bernard Richter, Deanna Reed, Maria DeCastro

**18. 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 of journalism and mass communications.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>TOTAL GRADUATES</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
2014–2015 Academic year	61	61	100
2013–2014 Academic year	65	65	100

## **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.*

### **Background**

Chico is one of 23 campuses in the California State University system, the largest public university system in the country, serving more than 450,000 students. The CSU's 23 campuses are the source of almost half the bachelor's degrees awarded each year in California.

The Chico campus, with a reported enrollment of 16,140 full-time students in 2015, is one of the few schools in the system with a student population that is primarily residential. Almost 95 percent of the students come from California. Many students are first-generation college students and/or community college transfers.

In contrast to the University of California system, which places an emphasis on research, the CSU system considers itself primarily a teaching institution. Faculty members typically teach a four-four course load as well as advise students.

Journalism has been taught at California State University, Chico, since the 1980s. A formal Department of Journalism was created in 1990 as part of the College of Communication and Education. In 2011, the Department changed its name from the Department of Journalism to the Department of Journalism & Public Relations. The title of the news sequence also was changed, from News-Editorial to News, in an effort to re-brand the Department and attract new majors.

The Department of Journalism & Public Relations is the smallest unit within one of the largest colleges on campus. In the fall of 2015, it had six full-time faculty members and 252 majors, making it one of the smallest majors on campus. The size of the faculty and the number of majors has dropped since the last accreditation report in 2009, when there were nine faculty members and 315 majors.

The Department offers a Bachelor's of Arts in Journalism with options in News and Public Relations. In the fall of 2015, there were 91 majors in the News sequence and 161 in Public Relations.

The CSU system has undergone major financial stresses over the past decade, with state government support falling from \$3.76 billion in 2007-2008 to \$2.44 billion in 2012-2013. The budget situation was noted as a concern in the 2009 site visit report, and subsequent discussions included the possibility of eliminating small departments such as journalism. The Department reacted quickly, increasing the number of general education classes it teaches and improving its FTEs. The dean stated that the Department essentially went from one in danger of being eliminated to one that is, at least in the foreseeable future, secure.

The Department has undergone a number of other seismic changes since the last site team visit. In a two-year-period (academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013), five of nine full-time faculty members retired, including three founding faculty members. The dean of the college retired in 2011 and was replaced by an interim dean for two years.

Volatility continues: The president of the university has announced his retirement and the provost has been an interim for two years. Faculty system-wide recently approved a vote of no-confidence in the president, the provost and the university's director of business finance following a fall 2015 budget that

changed the funding formula for colleges. Additionally, California State University faculty recently overwhelmingly voted to strike if demands for higher salaries are not met.

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 has a strategic plan last updated in 2009. According to the self-study, the mission remains the same: to be the foremost instructional institution of print and multimedia journalism and public relations in Northern California. Departmental goals are summarized as follows:

- Maintain solid instruction in traditional writing skills while building multimedia competencies.
- Encourage faculty development to improve technological competencies.
- Become a role model for successful recruitment of diverse students who, upon graduation, will have marketable employment skills and relevant social values.
- Pursue external funding sources to lessen the impact of state budget fluctuations.

The self-study additionally describes the Department's key goals as preparing students for careers in communication in an environment that is caring, challenging, sensitive to diversity and rich in hands-on experiences for students.

The 2009 site team report notes that the Department "plans to add to its long-range plan an emphasis in community journalism because that's where print jobs seem to be and because of the number of community journalism jobs in the Chico region." According to Department leadership, a community journalism track was not created because faculty ultimately decided that efforts should be directed toward making the program more multimedia in focus instead.

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

The Department's faculty typically meets twice a year at the beginning of each semester. Informal meetings are frequent as the size of the faculty is so small. The Personnel and Curriculum committees are committees of the whole, with all faculty participating. The Retention, Promotion and Tenure Committee consists of tenured faculty and has responsibility for conducting reviews of the Department's faculty members, following university guidelines.

Major policy and curricular changes are reviewed at the college level by a committee of faculty and the dean. Most changes in courses or programs also are reviewed by the university Faculty Senate. New programs are reviewed at the state level by the chancellor.

Department of Journalism & Public Relations faculty serve on key college and university committees, including Curriculum, Scholarship, Hiring and Personnel.

**(c) The unit's administration provides effective leadership within the unit and effectively represents it in dealings with university administration outside the unit and constituencies external to the university.**

The chair enjoys the support of Department faculty and administrators. The dean of the college called her "a model" for other faculty in that she is both a skilled teacher and an accomplished scholar. Her ability to solve problems and her student-centric approach set her apart from others, the dean added.

The dean, a group of university administrators and individual faculty members cited the chair's success in preserving and even building the program during challenging budget times and said she has helped raise the profile of the Department on campus. The dean described the chair as someone who sometimes "speaks her mind" when others might take a more taciturn approach. Faculty members said that while they appreciate the chair as hard-working, competent and able to deliver resources and get things done, her interpersonal style sometimes strains relationships.

The chair teaches a 2-2 load and advises students, and students seem to know her well. They describe her as someone who always has time for them and who goes out of her way to get to know them and help them. They view her as someone who has strong ties to the professional world and keeps up with changes in the profession.

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

The chair is appointed by the president upon vote of the Department faculty and recommendation of the college dean. The chair reports directly to the dean. The term of appointment is three years and renewable. The current chair has served since the 2011-2012 academic year and is in the second year of her second term.

Within the California State University system, department chairs are considered to be within the faculty bargaining unit and are not considered part of management. The chair is thus not formally evaluated by the dean. However, the dean meets with the chairs every two weeks and holds frequent individual meetings with them.

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

Students with complaints about grades or class experiences are first asked to try to resolve issues with the faculty members involved. If that does not resolve the complaint, the student meets with the Department chair, who may facilitate a meeting between the student and faculty member. Students may take their complaint to a campus Student Judicial Affairs representative, who will document the complaint and work with the chair to arrive at a resolution acceptable to all. If the problem still is not resolved, a university Judicial Affairs Committee hearing may be held. The finding of this committee is usually final and binding. Student complaints rarely go beyond the first two steps of this process.

Faculty members and staff have the right to take complaints to their unions, which have detailed procedures for filing grievances that are part of a collective bargaining agreement.

The Department chair reports that she mediated one complaint from a student during this review period and it was resolved internally. No faculty complaints were filed.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Journalism & Public Relations has undergone seismic changes in the past six years, in large part due to university budget challenges and administrative turnover at the college and university levels. The Department has been creative and proactive in meeting challenges and has emerged, if not stronger, at least on solid footing. Faculty are fully involved in governance and Department leadership is praised for moving the Department forward.

**Overall evaluation: 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 of Journalism & Public Relations requires its students to take a minimum of 72 credit hours outside of JMC and adheres to that rule, facilitating compliance through mandatory academic advising and documenting it through electronic degree audits. The Department reports that 100 percent of its graduates earned 72 or more semester hours outside of JMC in the past two academic years.

The Department's students must meet the university's general education requirements, and it requires its students to complete a formal minor outside of the Department to ensure a liberal arts education.

**(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 has a core curriculum for all its students that includes both theory and practice: Digital Media Literacy & Civic Engagement; Writing for Mass Media; Mass Communication Law; and Ethical Problems in Mass Media. In addition, both News and Public Relations students take Introduction to Public Relations to understand the persuasive side of communications.

Each sequence or "option" also has a set of core classes, and students then choose from a menu of electives to complete their JMC coursework. The electives cover such topics as women, men and the media; race and diversity in the media; international communication; magazine writing; photojournalism; online presentation; and digital media startups. Both options require nine credits of theory classes and 11-12 credits of applied and visual storytelling skills. The total number of JMC credits required to graduate is 47.

### **News:**

The four-class core for the News option combines History of Journalism with skills classes in Public Affairs Reporting; Media Editing, Proofreading and Entry-level Layout; and News Laboratory (work on the student newspaper, The Orion). The core is lean but appears sufficient; students essentially take three classes that emphasize writing and reporting, and multimedia skills are built in throughout. Students can go on to take skills classes in magazine writing, photojournalism, advanced photojournalism or a class focusing on digital media startups, among others.

### **Public Relations:**

The five-class PR core is Writing for PR; PR Research; Public Relations Strategy; a professional preparation course; and Public Relations Lab, which centers on an actual campaign with a real client.

While it differs somewhat from the model curriculum of the Commission on PR Education, this PR curriculum appropriately mixes theory and practice and appears reasonable and effective.

The PR option seems stronger in PR practice than theory. This good program would become better by strengthening the theory content of core courses.

The Department has a formal assessment matrix that maps its courses against ACEJMC competencies to ensure that all are met across the curriculum. The unit strives to embed professional values and ethics in all classes, and also emphasizes writing, style and grammar, critical thinking, diversity, technological competence, numeracy, and First Amendment values.

Consistency across multiple sections of the same class is achieved by faculty meeting informally to coordinate their assignments; having one instructor teach multiple sections of the same course, and by a senior professor acting as a course coordinator for several sections.

**(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.)**

The Department responded aggressively to advice in its 2010 site visit report that it “ratchet up its interest in new media.” Although new classes were added in digital entrepreneurship and social media, the unit’s primary focus has been to incorporate new technology and tools into existing classes. Students in the core Digital Media Literacy class create a basic website. Students throughout the curriculum use the Adobe Creative Suite, including InDesign, Photoshop and Premiere.

The department has developed some interdisciplinary collaborations to take advantage of academic assets offered by other parts of the university. These include the development of a minor in photography in conjunction with the College of Humanities and Fine Arts and Department of Communication Design, and a news game class with the department of Computer Animation & Game Development. Other interdisciplinary efforts are no doubt possible.

Both News and Public Relations students interviewed expressed satisfaction with their exposure to and training in digital media. And they were uniform in their affection and appreciation for their instructors, who they believe care about them as people and who are committed to their success. They described an environment that is challenging but welcoming and supportive. One student described the program as “a hidden gem.” An international transfer student said, “The faculty and students here really take you under their wings.”

#### **News:**

The Public Affairs Reporting class has been retooled as a “digital newsroom” that integrates mobile video, data reporting and visualization with traditional beat reporting. A professional journalist conducts an Excel workshop for the class, and professional journalists are guest speakers via Skype. Students in the editing class learn InDesign and Photoshop, publish via WordPress and learn the basics of search engine optimization.

News organizations that hire the Department’s students and graduates report that they are well prepared in both the basics of reporting and writing and in current technologies. Students are described as “very professional” on and comfortable with social media and don’t need a lot of coaching. Local professionals view the News program as adaptable and quick to change the curriculum to address the

online needs of the media.

Students and alumni report feeling well prepared for internships and jobs, especially in the area of writing. They described their education as well-rounded and professional, with a collegial classroom environment. “Our professors push us, and we all motivate each other,” said one student. Said another, “I’ve never had a bad experience with a faculty member.” One student said that every professor asks, “What more can I do to make you prepared?” Some expressed a desire for more experience with video production.

**Public Relations:**

The PR curriculum is appropriate and current. Digital, social, mobile, multimedia and multiplatform competencies are built into regular coursework, rather than split off into stand-alone courses. The team saw evidence that that faculty and students make this integration work.

This emphasis on newer media benefits from a strong PR leadership that insists on such integration and from a key younger professor for whom newer media is generationally second nature. The program gives commendable priority to visual storytelling skills, so central in today’s communications environment.

PR students said they feel prepared for internships and jobs. They report that faculty are up-to-date and constantly change their classes to adapt to the changing media environment. Those participating in Tehama Group Communications described it as an “awesome” experience. Some said they would like more instruction in Web and graphic design. PR students said the Department’s faculty have an open-door policy and that their professors “really, really care.” They describe the Department’s climate as close, respectful and “trustworthy.”

In general, this is a PR program that accomplishes a lot with a little. Over the past 25 years it has become a practical, effective program conceived and built from the ground up in ways unique to its rural circumstances.

Building effective regional and national relationships is challenging for a rural institution. Particularly noteworthy since the last site visit are the national exposure and relationships that have been successfully nurtured with institutions like the Plank Center for PR Leadership at the University of Alabama and the Entrepreneurial Journalism program at Arizona State University.

The Department’s faculty members have been very active in attending faculty development training, both on- and off-campus, to remain current in their teaching technology and pedagogy, and have received recognition as teaching fellows at professional institutes and academies.

**(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. (Campaigns classes are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)**

The unit reports that enrollment in all of the skills or lab classes offered in the 2015-2016 academic year was 20 students or fewer. There has been pressure recently from the university to increase caps in writing courses to 30.

**(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.**

The unit allows up to three credit hours for formal internships, although university policies make it financially unfeasible for the Department to offer summer internships or other classes for credit. This frustrates both students and faculty because many employers offer internships only for academic credit and summer is a prime time for internships. Finding a solution to this administrative hurdle currently standing in the way of summer internships would appear beneficial, not only to the students but to the program and the university.

Internships are approved and supervised by faculty members. The Department has sought partnerships with media organizations and solicited donor funding to support internships (an initiative much appreciated by internship employers).

The News professional-in-residence has facilitated internships at both The Sacramento Bee and The Fresno Bee. It appears that the majority of PR internships, before and immediately following graduation, are paid; most of them are reported to be in the Bay area.

The News and Public Relations professionals-in-residence help connect students with internship employers, and the Department's Facebook page also has become a venue for alumni to publicize internship opportunities.

Students must complete an internship application, have a 3.0 GPA in their majors, complete certain classes and receive recommendations from faculty to be considered for an internship. During the internship, faculty members interview the employer and intern either in person or by phone. After the internship, employers complete a questionnaire evaluating the intern.

#### **News:**

News students must spend at least one semester working on the student newspaper, The Orion. Students who continue in management roles at the newspaper also may receive credit for that work. Off-campus internships are not required in the News sequence.

Students at The Orion work day-to-day under the supervision of other students. However, a professional in residence, as part of his teaching duties, critiques the newspaper, conducts weekly meetings and evaluates students. Department faculty say News students are required to do The Orion in lieu of outside professional internships because there are so few internship opportunities available in the area during the school year. Students are encouraged to do outside professional internships on their own.

#### **Public Relations:**

PR students must spend at least one semester working either for the student agency, Tehama Group Communications, or in a supervised external internship. Students apply for the Tehama Group in a competitive process; those who are not selected do an outside professional internship to fulfill requirements.

A site team sampling of employers of interns in San Francisco, Sacramento and locally found universal overall satisfaction. Employers rated the quality of interns and their preparation as good to excellent.

The internship program appears to be effectively structured, staffed, assessed and monitored. Proper requirements, signed contracts, feedback, oversight and evaluation are built into the program. However, while students and faculty are enthusiastic about The Orion experience and it is undoubtedly a strong experience for students, the department might consider allowing News students to do outside internships for credit, bringing it in line with the PR program requirements and standards.

**SUMMARY:** The Department's curriculum reflects a balance of theory and skills courses, and it has mapped its classes against ACEJMC competencies. The unit strives to embed professional values and ethics in all classes, and also emphasizes writing, style and grammar, critical thinking, diversity, technological competence, numeracy and First Amendment values. The unit aims to incorporate new technology and social media engagement in a broad range of classes, and students and employers report that the curriculum is rigorous, flexible and current. Students get hands-on training either through internships or student program experiences.

**Overall evaluation: 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.**

The Department does not have a written diversity plan of its own but follows a detailed 2011-2016 California State University, Chico Diversity Action Plan which sets out priorities and actions to be taken in eight key areas, including recruitment, climate, satisfaction and training.

**(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.**

Diversity is taught explicitly in the required ethics course as well as in several other required courses, including Introduction to Public Relations and Media Literacy & Civic Engagement. Diversity also is prominent in syllabi for Writing for Public Relations and Public Relations Strategy, required of all public relations students, and in syllabi for elective classes such as Popular Culture, Women & Media, and International Communication. It is less apparent in other classes, although students indicate that diversity frequently is mentioned in class discussions and often is part of writing or reporting assignments.

Language regarding disability accommodations is included in syllabi.

**(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.**

The faculty has become less diverse since 2009. As of fall 2015, the faculty consisted of three white men and three white women.

Of nine faculty members in 2009, three were women and one was a person of color. The Department had three hiring opportunities during this reporting period, adding one white man, one white woman and one African-American woman to its faculty. The African-American woman left in 2015 after two years for another teaching opportunity, leaving the Department with no minority representation on the faculty.

Unit and college leadership indicate that diversity is a priority but it has been difficult to attract minority candidates to Chico, in part because of its geographical remoteness.

The Department has hired a woman of Euro-Asian origin, who will begin teaching in the fall of 2016. As mentioned earlier, a second search is under way. That position does not require a Ph.D. and has

produced a diverse pool of candidates. The Department also is hopeful that it will be successful in gaining a new faculty line in a competitive process within the university next year. These hires offer the Department an opportunity to further diversify its faculty.

Of eight part-time faculty members in the fall of 2015, one was diverse. (Two of the eight were retirees from the Department who continue to teach.) Part-time faculty, who teach anywhere from one to four classes, are covered under the university's collective bargaining agreement, which prescribes that part-time faculty who successfully teach two consecutive courses must be given priority to teach classes in subsequent semesters. This limits the Department's ability to diversify its part-time faculty.

**(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 Department has made substantial progress in diversifying its student body. The unit's student minority enrollment was 20.1 percent in 2009 and has since grown to 44 percent (academic year 2014-2015). More than half of those students are Hispanic. Similar progress has been made at the university level, with minority enrollment growing during the same time period from 22.3 to almost 50 percent. The progress is even more significant when considering that the population in northern California is approximately 70 percent white.

The department began aggressively recruiting students of color and making other changes to retain students following a 2003 accreditation report that cited student diversity as a significant deficiency. In 2009, the site team report acknowledged the Department's efforts, which included a faculty member going on the road to visit high schools and community colleges with large minority populations and the securing of a MediaNews grant to place minority interns at metro newspapers that had not previously taken Chico students. The recruitment efforts have led to the establishment of a rich pipeline of students from Southwestern College, located south of San Diego near the Mexican border – 600 miles from Chico – from which 23 students have been recruited. Other pipelines have been established with Contra Costa College, Modesto Junior College and others.

Over the past six years, the Department has continued to aggressively recruit minority and first-generation students and has taken steps to ensure that those recruits stay in school. Students are personally connected to faculty members, who guide them in everything from financial aid to course choices.

The current self-study states that of 45 minority students specifically recruited since 2009, 32 have graduated and another 12 are on track for graduation. It also states, "In fall 2006, roughly 9 percent of our journalism majors reported their ethnicity as Asian, African-American or Hispanic. In spring 2015, some 44 percent of our students self-identified as members of those three ethnicities. That's an increase of 400 percent, which can be largely attributed to eight years of active recruitment by one faculty member from one of the university's smallest departments in challenging budget times."

University administrators, including the head of Admissions and the director of the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, cite the Department's "shoe leather" recruiting efforts and say that its retention strategies provide models to be emulated by other departments and colleges at the university.

That faculty member who has led the recruitment efforts retired in 2011 but has continued teaching (and recruiting) part time. He is now stepping down. The Department is currently seeking a replacement who will coordinate writing programs and assume recruitment duties. When the MediaNews Group grant

expired in 2011, the Department raised \$20,000 in donations for recruitment, scholarships to assist those student recruits, and stipends for summer internships.

**(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.**

Students state that while the faculty is not ethnically diverse, they feel the climate in the school is accepting and welcoming to all populations.

**SUMMARY:** The Department has made impressive gains in diversifying its student body but has been much less successful in diversifying its faculty. Diversity issues are prominent in many course syllabi. Students report a supportive and inclusive environment for learning.

**Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE**

**Table 6. Faculty Populations, Full-time**

**Academic year: 2014 – 2015 Full-time faculty**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% of total faculty</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>% of total faculty</b>
Black/African American	1	8%		
White	3	23%	3	23%
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)				
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				

## 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.**

University procedures dictate the hiring process for full-time and part-time faculty. A hiring committee of three Department faculty members and a faculty member from another department evaluates candidates for full-time positions. National advertising is required. After screening, phone interviews, background checks and on-campus interviews, the hiring committee makes a recommendation to the college dean, who makes the hiring decision.

Part-time faculty members are chosen from a pool of self-identified candidates using a process dictated by union rules. Once part-time faculty have taught successfully, they receive priority in subsequent hiring, creating stability but restricting the Department's flexibility to diversify the faculty.

Tenure and promotion guidelines are governed by the faculty union's collective bargaining agreement and university faculty personnel policies and procedures. These procedures include performance reviews of all full-time tenure-track faculty until they achieve promotion to full professor. Part-time faculty members are reviewed at least once a year until they have been employed for six years. The Department also has a tenure and promotion policy. Periodic formative reviews are conducted by the Department personnel committee and dean. Full-time faculty members are expected to contribute service to the Department and university.

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

The Department currently employs six full-time faculty members, one of whom serves as chair. Two of the full-time faculty members are "professionals in residence" who also supervise the student newspaper and PR agency. The Department has hired a seventh full-time faculty member who will begin in the fall and is searching for an eighth. A full-time lecturer coordinates the writing class that the Department provides for the general education curriculum. The Department also regularly employs six to eight part-time faculty members. Full-time faculty teach a 4-4 course load, and part-time faculty teach anywhere from one to four classes a semester. Five classes are considered a full-time load for part-time faculty.

The Department has seen a dramatic turnover in faculty in recent years, with five retirements between 2011 and 2013. However, the full-time faculty members still retain primary responsibility for the Department's teaching, scholarly output and service. From 2012 to 2015, full-time faculty members taught between 65 percent and 74 percent of classes. Some of the classes taught by part-time faculty were taught by faculty participating in a phased-in retirement program.

**(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 tenured or tenure-track faculty members hold doctoral degrees and worked full-time as media industry professionals for one to 12 years. The two professionals in residence have master's degrees and professional experience of 16 and 22 years, respectively. This is a faculty of veteran teachers, with years of teaching experience ranging from five to 21 years, with most in the nine-to-10-year range. Adjunct faculty members also are experienced media professionals and teachers.

The Department reports that the university offers frequent opportunities for faculty development and that its faculty members take advantage of those sessions. Department faculty members also have attended numerous national institutes, conferences and other training in their fields, including Poynter Institute, Scripps Howard, AEJMC and Edelman workshops.

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

University tenure and promotion procedures include annual performance reviews of all faculty until they achieve promotion to full professor. The Department also has a tenure and promotion policy, which emphasizes teaching effectiveness as determined through student course evaluations and evaluations by fellow faculty members of classroom performance and course materials. Student evaluations are required each semester, although a part-time faculty member failed to administer evaluations in four classes last year.

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

The Department's faculty are described as "very involved" in campus life and are respected especially for their contributions to the university's career development and admissions initiatives. The Department's course offerings in the general education curriculum are praised by faculty in other units. The quality of the student newspaper and PR agency is a point of campus pride and considered a reflection of the rigor of the program. "I have tremendous regard for the Tehama Group and the work they do with their clients," said a business faculty member. Said a colleague in another department of the School of Communication, "What impresses me about the program is how hard they work to keep it current," citing the Department's instruction in social media and online entrepreneurship. The Department's graduates frequently are hired by other campus units, standing out in "very competitive" applicant pools. The Department's successful effort to diversify the student body also is widely admired.

**SUMMARY:** The Department currently employs six full-time faculty members, including two professionals in residence, has hired a seventh professor to begin in the fall and is searching for an eighth. All tenured or tenure-track faculty have doctoral degrees; the professionals in residence have master's degrees. All faculty have professional experience, from one to 22 years, and are veteran teachers, with five to 21 years of classroom experience. The Department has seen a dramatic turnover in faculty in recent years, with five retirements between 2011 and 2013. However, the full-time faculty members have retained primary responsibility for the Department's teaching, scholarly output and service. Faculty have taken advantage of on- and off-campus development opportunities to keep their

skills current. University and Department tenure and promotion policies ensure regular evaluation of teaching effectiveness using a variety of methods.

**Overall evaluation: 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 standard faculty teaching assignment is 4-4 with advising duties. New tenure-track faculty members receive a course reduction during their first four semesters and move back to a 4-4 teaching assignment in their third year. The newest tenure-track faculty member, who started in fall 2014, received \$1,600 in development funds for travel, equipment, research materials and supplies for the first two years.

Tenure-track faculty members receive annual professional development funds from the provost's office in the amount of \$600 to \$800 per year per person. Faculty members may use the money for conference travel or special equipment for research.

For the past two years, the chair has received additional funding of \$3,000 per year to support scholarship and research for the chair and supplemental allocations to faculty. This has been used largely to fund travel and research for the Department's two professionals-in-residence, who do not receive allocations from the provost, raising some objections from faculty who believe the funds should go to those holding the rank of assistant professor or above.

Faculty also may apply for university research grants of up to \$6,000. Three departmental faculty members have been awarded these grants in the past six years.

Full-time faculty members are eligible for sabbatical leave following each six-year period without leave. Sabbatical leave is granted by the college's leave committee and approved by the provost. Sabbatical leaves may be awarded at full or half salary. Faculty members also may apply for leaves of absence without pay for up to two years.

Two faculty members have taken sabbaticals during this review period; one of them is on sabbatical for the 2015-2016 academic year.

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

Promotion and tenure guidelines are spelled out in detail in the Department's RTP Evaluation Criteria document. Faculty members are evaluated for promotion and tenure on the basis of the following: instruction; professional growth and achievement; and other contributions to the university. There is no formula for weighing each area, but teaching effectiveness is considered the most important.

To be retained and for tenure and promotion to assistant professor, a candidate must be rated "effective" in instruction and "adequate" in the other two categories, although, in the case of tenure and promotion cases, a "superior" rating may offset an "adequate" rating in an area other than instruction. Promotion to

the rank of professor is based on the preceding as well as substantial recognition at or beyond the university.

**(c) Evaluation criteria for promotion, tenure and merit recognition account for and acknowledge activities appropriate to faculty members' professional as well as scholarly specializations.**

There was one promotion during this review period, when the current chair went up early. One promotion to full professor and a four-year review are currently under way.

Professional achievement is measured by tangible examples of expertise, both scholarly and creative. It is most frequently measured through publication, whether in peer-reviewed academic journals or publication in general circulation news organizations or trade publications. Academic publications may include refereed conference presentations, books and book chapters and reviews of publications, including textbooks. Creative works may be considered professional achievement. These may include presentations, workshops or panels, editing a professional website, grants and contracts or consultations for government or non-governmental organizations.

Contributions to the university are measured in the context of their contribution to the university's strategic plan, including ability to work collaboratively and productively with colleagues, participation in committee work and service to organizations outside the university.

**(d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.**

The Department's faculty produced 12 articles in refereed journals/proceedings, 12 monographs, four books, two book chapters, and 10 non-juried creative works in the past six years – an impressive list given the size of the faculty and its focus on teaching. One faculty member is under contract for a book on virtue ethics and another has a book on digital literacy that was released in January 2016.

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

Faculty members appear to be engaged, curious and open to new ideas individually and as a unit. They indicated that the chair does not always welcome dissent and some tension exists between individual faculty members. But that does not seem to have affected the student experience or the functioning of the Department.

**SUMMARY:** Guidelines for tenure and promotion and sabbaticals are clear. Faculty are productive and generally congenial. The unit and the institution support faculty research and professional and creative activities.

**Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE**

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				Totals (8)
		Full Professors (1)	Associate Professors (2)	Assistant Professors (2)	Other Faculty** (3)	
Awards and Honors	5	1	2	2		5
Grants Received Internal	1		1			1
Grants Received External	2	2				2
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	3	2	1			3
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored						
Books Edited	1	1				1
Book Chapters	2		2			2
Monographs						
Articles in Refereed Journals/Proceedings	12	2	3	7		12
Refereed Conference Papers	11	1	7	3		11
Invited Academic Papers						
Encyclopedia Entries						
Book Reviews						
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	1		1			1
Juried Creative Works						
Non-juried Creative Works	10	5	2	3		10
Other (specified)						

\*Co-authored work should be counted as a single publication in the unit totals. However if, for example, two members of the faculty are co-authors on the same journal article, it would be reported as a publication for both authors.

\*\*Includes all full-time faculty who do not hold listed ranks, such as instructors and others on term appointments. Many faculty in this category may hold teaching appointments without significant scholarship, research or creative requirements.

## 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.**

Academic advising is a strength of the Department. Students are required to undergo mandatory advising every semester. The Department believes that mandatory advising provides better understanding of degree requirements, timely movement through the program and closer relationships between students and faculty. Interviewed students unanimously support that assessment.

Full-time faculty members do all academic advising in the Department, with each advising 40 to 60 students.

A campus-wide advising office provides counseling on general education requirements. New Department of Journalism & Public Relations students meet with the Department chair and the accreditation assistant to evaluate previous coursework. Each student is assigned an individual faculty adviser but may request a change.

Each semester, students are notified of “mandatory advising week” in advance of campus-wide registration. Faculty have computer access to the academic records of students. Students have access to a degree audit that allows them to track progress toward a degree. An electronic Degree Progress Report is an effective tool that allows students and advisers to complete graduation-readiness checks in real time, including the 72-unit rule. The adviser’s signature is required prior to registration for each semester’s classes. Students then register by computer. Key to the system is that a “hold” or block appears on the unadvised student’s registration file. To remove the hold, the unadvised student must see the adviser and get the required advising, approval and signature.

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

Students complimented faculty advisers, both for accessibility and for a genuine commitment to help their advisees. The mandatory advising system and the four office hours per week required of each faculty member facilitate accessibility.

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

Conversations with students provided ample evidence that they find it easy to keep informed about the Department’s activities, requirements and policies. They noted that the small size of the unit makes it easier to keep informed. They pointed to multiple information channels, including email, bulletin boards, meetings and – most important – frequent student/faculty interaction.

**(d) The unit and the institution provide students with extracurricular activities and opportunities that are relevant to the curriculum and develop their professional as well as intellectual abilities and interests.**

Student opportunities for extracurricular and professional enrichment appear appropriate for the locale. A primary enrichment is either the campus newspaper for News students or the campus public relations agency for PR students.

The weekly laboratory campus newspaper, *The Orion*, provides a realistic newsroom experience and outside feedback from both a weekly critique and from visiting professionals. News majors must work at least one semester on *The Orion*. The Department-run PR agency, Tehama Group Communications, gets good reviews from student participants and from student alumni.

“Field trips” to brand-name PR firms in San Francisco, Sacramento and Palo Alto expose PR students to professional agency environments.

While there is a student chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, it appears to have little interaction with the national organization. The former student chapter of IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) has been inactive for several years, and the PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) chapter is not yet established.

**(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 Department appears to have processes in place to collect, maintain and analyze relevant data and to use the findings to improve the program. Chico State ranks among the highest in the California State University system in the CSU Quality Improvement Program survey (a statewide, system-wide measure of student satisfaction). That report does not support a departmental breakout of data.

The Department uses university-generated data and the Department’s own data review to update accountability assessments for the unit; to compare enrollment, retention and graduation rates to the college, university and past Departmental performance; and to use this information to help allocate resources and plan program or course changes. The Department publishes its “accountability” information on its website and reports one of the highest four-year graduation rates at Chico State University. Overall, the Department’s rates for graduation, retention and attrition appear to compare favorably to the total campus. For example, the most recent five-year average for four-year graduation rates for the Department was 27 percent compared to the university’s 19 percent. According to department’s website, the six-year graduation rate for both the Department and university was 59 percent. The Department reported a first-year retention average of 66 percent vs. the university’s reported 87 percent.

Student records are all electronic and password protected.

**SUMMARY:** The team judged academic advising a strength of the Department. The mandatory advising system appears to be highly effective. Aided perhaps by the relatively small size of the Department, faculty are clearly available and accessible to all students. Students appear to have easy access to the requisite information about activities, requirements and policies of the unit. Opportunities for extracurricular and professional enrichment are adequate, although the student chapters of the relevant professional societies were either still in formation or had little interconnection with the

national association's resources. The Department gathers the appropriate graduation and retention data and appears to use it, to at least some degree, to improve the unit's offerings, programs and policies.

**Overall evaluation: 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.**

Department funding is determined by the dean of the College of Communication and Education based on the university funding formula. In the fall of 2015, the provost presented a budget model that significantly changed the way funding was allocated. The model shifted pay for part-time adjunct faculty to operating expenses, which benefitted departments with high-tenure density and hurt those with low-density. Due to retirements and a faculty member's departure, the Department of Journalism & Public Relations faced an 18 percent cut that would have meant the elimination of all part-time faculty and the cancellation of more than a dozen classes.

The dean subsequently reallocated funds from other departments within the college that benefited from the new funding model, moving \$34,500 from another department's budget to the Department of Journalism & Public Relations. The dean also requested and received additional funding for the Department from the provost's office to cover the 14 sections of general education courses taught by the Department. In the end, the Department took a cut of approximately 8 percent, eliminating three part-time instructors and cancelling six elective classes that had small enrollments. Department leadership states that no students were delayed in their programs as a result of the cuts. Students who were interviewed said the same.

Ninety-seven percent of the 2014-2015 budget of \$714,110 was earmarked for salaries. (The percentage was 96 percent in 2009.) This leaves the Department with few resources for creative or other activities.

Other funding is available from the university's Student Learning Fees fund, which provides resources for new equipment. The Department secured \$21,000 from the fund in 2013-2014 to replace half of the computers in its Mac Lab, and the college matched the amount, making it possible to replace all 26 computers in the lab in the summer of 2014. Additionally, The Orion and Tehama Group Communications receive funding from the student-administered Instructional-Related Activities Fund that covers printing of the weekly student newspaper and other expenses.

Some expenses, such as tech support, are covered by the college, and the unit has embarked on its own fund-raising efforts. For example, the program is conducting an alumni fund raiser in connection with its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and has submitted a proposal for a \$300,000 grant from a national news organization's foundation to support diversity recruitment efforts. The Department also reports obtaining a grant totaling \$80,000 from an intergovernmental agency that oversees technology initiatives that allowed the Department chair to travel to France in the fall of 2015 for a two-week teaching and research fellowship.

The Department's most successful effort to reduce the impact of budget cuts has been the expansion of its general education offerings. The Department went from offering two GE courses with about 150 students to 14 sections of five courses with an enrollment of more than 600 students. These courses attract a large number of non-majors, fulfill several university GE requirements and have nearly doubled the program's FTE. In its self-study, the Department says it is one of only two programs in the college that exceeded its FTE targets for the past two years.

While the Department has been creative in supplementing its funding, a great deal of budget uncertainty remains and there is little evidence of a long-range strategic plan related to the budget.

**(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.**

As noted previously, the institution has experienced significant budget cuts through much of this review period. The unit has three fewer full-time faculty positions and 86 fewer majors than at the time of the last accreditation review, although FTEs are up because of the teaching of general education courses and two faculty positions are in the process of being filled. The university imposed further cuts in fall 2015, to take effect in spring of 2016. The Department did not get its budget until November of 2015, leaving it little time to react.

The new budget model, which also included raising caps to 30 for writing classes, helped prompt a vote of no-confidence by university faculty in the Interim Provost. According to leadership, the unit resisted raising caps in its writing classes, citing accreditation concerns. For now, the 20-limit cap remains in place, although the issue may be revisited.

Despite the turmoil, unit leadership and faculty say they have been treated fairly in budget considerations and funding has been in line with other small programs, such as Philosophy, Comparative Religion and History. In addition to the dean's steps to protect the unit from cuts, as described above, the dean selected the unit as the college's nominee for an additional faculty position under a program administered and funded by the CSU Chancellor's Office. As a result, the Department was given a new faculty line, one of just five awarded to Chico State, for which a search is ongoing.

In statements and in the self-study, Department leadership and faculty indicate that they enjoy strong support from the college and they express guarded confidence about the future.

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

The Department is located in a four-story, 82,000-square-foot building, Tehama Hall, now nearing its 24th year. The Department and the entire College of Communication and Education share the building with the College of Business. The Department's lab newspaper, *The Orion*, is housed in the basement of an adjacent building. Classrooms seat from 25 to 85 students. Most are "smart classrooms" featuring computer-aided projection equipment to handle the Internet and other teaching resources.

All faculty offices have up-to-date Apple computers with Internet and wireless connections as well as printers. Some faculty have specialized software relevant to their disciplines, such as Adobe Creative Suite.

The Department's facilities are adequate for enabling and promoting scholarship, teaching and learning.

**(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.**

The unit's computer lab has 26 iMac pros purchased in 2014-2015, Apple TV, three laser printers and one full-color 11x17 laser printer. Computers are equipped with current Adobe Creative Cloud software

and are connected to the California State network. Supervised lab hours are 6-9 p.m. on Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays; some students expressed a desire for extended hours because they don't have all the software used in classes on their own computers. However, students also said they can use the lab during the day when it is not scheduled for classes. The Department has access to another computer lab in an adjacent building for photography classes.

Both The Orion and The Tehama Group Communications have their own workspaces, equipped with up-to-date gear appropriate to their needs. The Department does not provide electronic equipment for student checkout. Students who work on The Orion and The Tehama Group use those organizations' audio and video gear for multimedia storytelling projects; students in the photojournalism classes are required to provide their own cameras. Students report that most class assignments can be completed using their smartphones.

The Department's technology needs are supported by the college's and university's technology staff.

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

Students and faculty have access to the university's network, which provides access to the Internet, email and all California State University libraries' databases and other electronic resources.

**SUMMARY:** The Department's budget has decreased over the review period and budget uncertainties loom. However, faculty and leadership feel for the most part that they have been treated fairly in comparison to other units. A tiny operating budget leaves little flexibility for creative pursuits. Facilities and equipment are adequate for needs.

**Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

*The unit and its faculty advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfills 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.**

Because Chico is a 90-minute drive from Sacramento and almost 3 1/2 hours from San Francisco, the unit's outreach to alumni and professionals faces hurdles. In spite of the geographic challenges, however, the Department seems to have a following in northern California, a plus for students seeking internships and employment.

The Department tries to make it a two-way process. Outsiders visit; students and faculty travel. Alumni appear often as guest speakers for classes, both in person and via Skype. Guest speakers during the past three years have included professionals who work for The Portland Oregonian, FleishmanHillard, The Sacramento Bee, InkHouse Media, WFXT Boston, Sterling Communication, SutherlandGold PR and Business Insider.

Alumni and other professionals visit to critique The Orion. PR alumni, as members of the unit's advisory board, critique student portfolios and review curriculum. Each fall, a fundraising telephone campaign involves alumni in fundraising efforts. The Orion and PR Halls of Fame continue to attract and engage alumni.

On the outbound side, site visits to PR agencies are prominent each semester. The PR job and internship coordinator offers customized services to alumni seeking to hire. Even the major PR firms in Sacramento and San Francisco tap into these services in their recruiting initiatives. Electronic mentoring is a growing phenomenon, based on two-way communications involving alumni as mentors via Skype, email and social media.

Maintaining contact with alumni and the unit's network of professionals takes place through email, an annual electronic newsletter and, increasingly, the Department's Facebook page. Students are encouraged to establish a presence on LinkedIn as a part of various class assignments, and Instagram is growing as a conduit for communication with and among students, alumni and interested professionals.

**(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.**

The faculty has a track record of public service. Principal involvements include operation of campus media, leadership of the in-house PR agency, serving as judges for professional associations and doing critiques and presentations.

The Orion student newspaper is published weekly on Wednesdays with daily updates online. Faculty and students in and out of the Department point to the newspaper and its many awards with pride. It was named to the Associated Collegiate Press Hall of Fame in 2005 for being a winner of or finalist for the Pacemaker Award some 22 times since 1988. The paper, which recently converted to a tabloid format, provides an increasingly digital experience for students with a robust online presence and a new app that allows for easy mobile access.

On the PR side, The Tehama Group is presented as one of the longest-running, student-managed public relations agencies in the nation. It provides low-cost services to other campus units, nearby businesses and non-profits.

**(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.**

Individual faculty are members of professional and academic societies – locally, regionally and nationally. These range from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and the Society of Professional Journalists to the Sacramento PR Association and the Butte County Scholastic Journalism Project. A faculty member serves as an elected four-year representative to the board of the Journalism Association of Community Colleges.

National involvement appears more robust among the News faculty than among the PR faculty and with the national journalism associations more than the national PR or PR research associations.

**(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 level of public service involvement is commendable for such a small faculty with many other obligations. Service ranges from volunteer marketing for a state theater group and the local humane society to consultancy for the National Public Radio station in Chico.

The public service involvement of the students is extensive, both on campus and off. The unit reports that students cumulatively provide more than 2,600 hours of internship service to non-profit, on-campus and business clients each semester. Tehama Group Communications, the student-run PR agency, has done work in recent years for Boys and Girls Clubs of the North Valley, the Chico State Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Enloe Medical Center, Chico Art Center, Butte Environmental Council and UC Davis Children's Hospital, among others.

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

Two faculty members helped found the Butte County Journalism Network, which aims to provide journalism experience to students whose high schools have ceased print publication of school newspapers in recent years. The unit also has sponsored Chico State Journalism Day, an event that connects professionals and faculty with high school students, and supports the diversity recruitment initiative to build relationships with high school and community college journalism programs.

**SUMMARY:** The unit is appropriately engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations for purposes of keeping current and exchanging ideas. Faculty members appear more active in the professional journalism societies than in the PR associations and conferences. Given the challenges of a rural location, the unit achieves substantial interaction with alumni and professionals.

The unit supports scholastic journalism. Overall, the Department fulfills its public duties to alumni, the profession and the communities it serves.

**Overall evaluation: 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 has identified 15 learning outcomes for its curriculum, based on the ACEJMC standards. Learning outcomes are included in course syllabi.

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

The Department’s assessment plan is intentional, institutionalized and has evolved over time. One faculty member is assigned to collect and analyze data annually for the faculty, although there was a gap in 2014-2015 caused by the departure of the faculty member charged with creating the report. Measures include an annual alumni survey and job placement data; internship evaluations; course evaluations; critiques of student work by visiting professionals and clients; input from a professional board; contest feedback, and course evaluations. The Department is working to finalize an exit exam for its seniors.

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

The Department has maintained a multi-year plan of assessment, improvement and evaluation of the curriculum. Annual reports analyze potential gaps in student learning and “program improvement actions” are identified and implemented, then evaluated for effectiveness. For example, when internship supervisors reported issues with student reporting and writing, the faculty incorporated more coaching, peer editing, rewriting and a consistent grading rubric across classes. Reviews of student work by professionals and alumni surveys indicate improvement in the targeted areas.

In other examples, the Advanced Photojournalism class is being revamped into a multimedia storytelling course to respond to industry needs for more video skills. Students’ unhappiness with the structure of the News Laboratory class (The Orion) prompted the professional-in-residence to shift focus from the print newspaper to providing extra critiques of the online multimedia version. The Public Relations faculty revamped the Public Relations Research class for spring 2016 in response to feedback from student focus groups and the Department’s advisory board.

**(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 conducts an annual survey of alumni who graduated the previous year and uses the survey to assess student learning and currency of instruction. It uses feedback from the survey to improve the curriculum as needed.

Recent alumni are employed in media-related jobs and other professional positions. According to the self-study and a review of the 2013-2014 survey results, alumni report that their education was

challenging and prepared them well in the ACEJMC competencies, especially in the areas of technology use, research, ethics, diversity, professionalism, numeracy, writing and editing.

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

A professional advisory board and class visitors provide feedback on instruction and student work, including critiques of the student newspaper. Clients of the student PR agency, Tehama Group Communications, also provide feedback. Recent critiques were highly complimentary. Said one client, “I am very pleased with the final product; they did a very good job. Nice stories, photography, video.” Said another, “I’d call it the best edition yet. It’s truly a Web newsletter.”

Internship supervisors provide in-person and written evaluations. One employer praised an intern’s “creative and innovative ideas,” while another characterized an intern’s writing as passable but lacking “voice.”

Student work is submitted to state and national contests and has earned an impressive list of awards, including national Pacemaker recognition. Judges commented upon The Orion’s enterprise reporting, watchdog work, strong sourcing, design and “excellent use of graphics.” The Department’s students have won regional and national competitive internships.

**SUMMARY:** The Department has identified learning outcomes based on ACEJMC values and competencies. It has maintained a robust and ongoing program of assessment, evaluation and improvement based on multiple direct and indirect methods, including professional input from alumni, clients and contest judges. There is evidence that the faculty has changed the curriculum to reflect this feedback.

**Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE**

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

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

##### STRENGTHS

- Remarkable progress in diversifying the student body
- Faculty that is obviously committed to students to an exceptional degree
- Marked improvement in incorporating multimedia throughout the curriculum
- Impressive level of research and professional activity for such a small faculty
- A faculty and department leadership that responded to trying circumstances with creativity and flexibility
- An advising system that keeps students on track
- Improvement in faculty national networking has benefitted the department

##### WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES

- Lack of ethnic diversity of the faculty
- A precarious budgetary situation
- Declining student enrollment
- A university environment in flux with regard to leadership and faculty confidence
- Substantial faculty turnover in recent years is a concern but also an opportunity.

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

N/A

#### **3) Summarize the problems or deficiencies that should 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 should be addressed 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 2009 report noted a “cloud of uncertainty” about the future because of California’s consistently unresolved budget crises. Budget problems persist, although Proposition 30 has brought more resources into the system.

The report also noted a weakness in the teaching of digital media. The situation has markedly improved.

**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 report was comprehensive, well-organized and clearly written and presented.