Part I: General Information

Name of Institution: Auburn University

Name of Unit: Department of Communication & Journalism

Year of Visit: 2011-2012

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  
_x_ 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  
_x_ 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.

Auburn University was established in 1856 as the East Alabama Male College. Under the Morrill Act, control of the institution was transferred to the state, making the school the first land-grant college in the South in 1872. At that time the school was renamed the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama. It was again renamed in 1899 to the Alabama Polytechnic Institute. Finally, in 1960 the name of the school was changed to Auburn University. Auburn is one of the few universities to carry the torch as a land, sea and space grant university.

Auburn University is governed by a Board of Trustees established under the organic and statutory laws of Alabama, with the governor serving as president and board members appointed by the governor with the consent of the Alabama Senate.

Our Fall 2011 semester enrollment was 25,469. Our students can choose from more than 140 degree options in 13 schools and colleges at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels.

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

_x_ Yes  
___ No

If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit:

Oct. 30- Nov. 2, 2005 (provisional)  
Revisit: Jan 16-18, 2008 (Full accreditation)

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

In 1994 (provisional – full accreditation was granted in 1995)

6. Attach a copy of the unit’s mission statement. The statement should give the date of adoption and/or the most recent revision.
The Department of Communication and Journalism is committed to an educational environment that inspires intellectual exploration and professional proficiency in a variety of communication forms and mass media. Faculty members participate in scholarly and creative activities that promote contemporary expertise both in the classroom and through meaningful outreach projects. (From page 2 of the department’s Policies and Procedures)

Although no specific record exists of when this mission statement was adopted, it was approved shortly after the Department of Communication and the Department of Journalism merged to form the Department of Communication and Journalism in 2000.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of ___15___ weeks 
Quarters of _____ weeks
Summer sessions of __5 & 10___ weeks
Intersessions of _____ weeks

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Sequence or Specialty</th>
<th>Person in Charge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Dr. Jennifer Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>Dr. Brigitta Brunner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/Television/Film</td>
<td>Dr. George Plasketes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Dr. David Sutton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution:  25,469

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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Sequence or Specialty</th>
<th>Undergraduate majors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-majors</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spring, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Sequence or Specialty</th>
<th>Undergraduate majors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and the preceding term.

Spring, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Sec. 1</th>
<th>Sec. 2</th>
<th>Sec. 3</th>
<th>Sec. 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 2210 News Writing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 2310 Reporting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 3220 Feature Writing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 3410 Photo Journalism</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 3470 Newspaper Editing &amp; Design</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 3510 Multimedia Journalism</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 4470 Adv. Feature Writing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 4970 Photo Story</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRCM 4020 Style &amp; Design in PR Messages</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRCM 4080 PR Writing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 2800 Multimedia Production</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 3350 Writing for RTVF</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 3380 Broadcast Newswriting</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 3420 Into to Film making</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 3970 Producing Podcasts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 4230 Adaptation for Short Film</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 4820 Sequence Design</td>
<td>13</td>
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</table>

Fall, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Sec. 1</th>
<th>Sec. 2</th>
<th>Sec. 3</th>
<th>Sec. 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 2210 News Writing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 2310 Reporting</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Sec. 1</td>
<td>Sec. 2</td>
<td>Sec. 3</td>
<td>Sec. 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 2310 Reporting</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 3220 Feature Writing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>JRNL 3410 Photo Journalism</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>JRNL 3470 Newspaper Editing &amp; Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRNL 3510 Multimedia Journalism</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 4230 Adv. Reporting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRNL 4970 Social Media &amp; Web Design</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRCM 4020 Style &amp; Design in PR Messages</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRCM 4080 PR Writing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 2800 Multimedia Production</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 3350 Writing for RTVF</td>
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<td>RTVF 3380 Broadcast Newswriting</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 3420 Into to Film making</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVF 4100 Intermediate Film making</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spring, 2012
15. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2011 – 2012 academic year: $1,901,156
   Percentage increase or decrease in three years: 1.5 percent decrease
   Amount spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: $1,496,485

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

   Jennifer Adams, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Journalism
   Rob Agne, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Communication
   Susan Brinson, Ph.D.  Professor  Radio/Television/Film
   Mary Helen Brown, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Communication
   Brigitta Brunner, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Public Relations
   John Carvalho, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Journalism
   Nan Fairley, MA  Associate Professor  Journalism
   William Ferris, MA  Instructor  Radio/Television/Film & Communication
   Margaret Fitch-Hauser, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Chair & Public Relations
   Michael Fuhlhage, Ph.D.  Assistant Professor  Journalism
   Jennifer Johnson, MA  Lecturer  Basic Course Director & Journalism
   Hollie Lavenstein, MFA  Associate Professor  Radio/Television/Film
   Michael Milford, Ph.D.  Assistant Professor  Communication
   Deron Overpeck, Ph.D.  Assistant Professor  Radio/Television/Film
   George Plasketes, Ph.D.  Professor  Radio/Television/Film
   Judith Sheppard, MA  Associate Professor  Journalism (on leave Spring 2012)
   Kevin Smith, MFA  Assistant Professor  Radio/Television/Film (Visual COMM)
   Lauren Smith, Ph.D.  Assistant Professor  Public Relations
   Ric Smith, MA  Practicum Advisor  Radio/Television/Film
   David Sutton, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Communication
   Jane Teel, Ph.D.  Advisor  Communication
   Jeremy Walden, MA  Instructor  Communication
   Susan Waters, Ph.D.  Assistant Professor  Public Relations & Communication
   Ed Williams, MA  Professor  Journalism
   Debra Worthington, Ph.D.  Associate Professor  Communication
   Ed Youngblood, Ph.D.  Assistant Professor  Radio/Television/Film

17. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in Fall 2011. Also list part-time faculty teaching in Spring 2011.

   Spring 2011  Fall 2011
   Jessica Armstrong  Lauren Robuck
   Richard Donnell  Richard Donnell
   Robert French  Robert French
Spring 2012
Jessica Armstrong
Lauren Robuck
Richard Donnell
Robert French
William White
Austin Phillips
Jessie King
Mary Bentley
Paul Hollis
Deedie Dowdle

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Graduates*</th>
<th>80 or more semester hours outside the major</th>
<th>65 or more semester hours in liberal arts/sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall, 2011</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011 academic year</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010 academic year</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No COMM graduates included
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 mission statement and engages in strategic or long-range planning 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 Communication and Journalism adopted a mission statement in 2000 that is more descriptive of its commitment to providing a curriculum that includes both intellectual exploration and professional proficiency and of its expectations of faculty than a statement of what the department sees as its "purpose in life." A report, Future Directions for the Department, was adopted in 2008 and serves as the department's strategic plan even though it does not include goals and objectives as specific as the previous strategic plan or a timeline for achieving its aims. The unit has policies and procedures for substantive faculty governance that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum.

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

The Department of Communication and Journalism approved a policies, procedures and general information document in January 2011 that spells out in great detail policies and procedures that ensure significant faculty governance. Through an extensive array of standing committees, ad hoc committees and task forces, the faculty clearly is in charge of governing the department and charting its future success. An Executive Committee meets approximately once a month, and the general faculty meets monthly. Minutes are taken at all of these meetings; depending on who is taking the minutes, they provide a straightforward account of discussion and actions or they are written in a whimsical style that doesn’t always seem to convey clearly what transpired.

Having said that, some standing committees meet infrequently so it is difficult to assess what committee results are and whether faculty take advantage of the opportunity to govern and participate in policy and decision-making.
(c) The unit’s administration provides effective leadership within the unit and effectively represents its dealings with university administration outside the unit and constituencies external to the university.

The department chair was elected in 2009 to a three-year term; she is eligible for re-election to a second three-year consecutive term. She is regarded by the dean, to whom she reports, as a good administrator and an effective advocate for the department.

In 2010-2011, the chair’s most recent evaluation, 78 percent of the faculty (both full-time and part-time) who responded to the request for an evaluation of her performance said she is doing an outstanding job. Unfortunately, only 12 of the 39 faculty responded. A few faculty said she seemed to delegate tasks to others, especially program directors, who sometimes feel overburdened. Generally, faculty say she is approachable and an outspoken advocate for changing the department from a unit made up of four silos to a department that can come together as a cohesive unit with the four programs connected, collaborating and interacting. While there are a couple of faculty “holdouts” who make it clear they prefer to keep the silos, most of the faculty seem to welcome the increasingly successful transition from the “them and us” culture that prevailed prior to the merger of communication and journalism to the “we” culture taking root.

Other units on campus regard the chair as an effective ambassador in alumni relations and fundraising, and in encouraging faculty to participate (and to have their classes participate) in the university’s outreach and community engagement activities.

All three program directors, evaluated by the chair, exceeded expectations in their 2010-2011 evaluations. Beginning in the current 2011-2012 year, each program’s faculty members will be asked to complete an evaluation of their respective chairs; the chair will incorporate the faculty evaluations into her evaluation.

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

Department chairs are elected by departmental faculty for a three-year term, renewable once for a second term. Program directors, who must be tenured faculty, are elected by program faculty and approved by the department’s executive council and chair. Department chairs are evaluated annually by unit faculty. Beginning in 2011-2012, faculty in each program will evaluate program directors annually and submit those evaluations to the department chair. The chair will incorporate this feedback into her annual evaluation of the program directors, which also includes evaluation of their teaching, scholarship, service and outreach.
Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.

The department follows Auburn University's policies for adjudicating student and faculty complaints. It attempts to resolve complaints at the unit level (program level for student complaints) before moving to higher administrative levels, either the chair or an associate dean, for complaint resolution.

Summary

The Department of Communication and Journalism was created in 2000 by merging formerly separate departments of communication and journalism. The department is one of 13 in the College of Liberal Arts, and the department chairs report to the dean of that college. A department chair is elected by the faculty for a three-year term; chairs can be re-elected but not for more than two consecutive three-year terms. Program directors for each of the four sequences in the department, all tenured faculty, are elected by the faculty of those sequences. Dr. Margaret Fitch-Hauser was elected chair in Spring 2009. The department's "Future Directions for the Department of Communication and Journalism" serves as a strategic plan for the unit even though it does not include specific goals, objectives or timelines and refers to needed resources in only a peripheral way. The department's policies and procedures ensure substantial faculty governance of educational policy and curriculum.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE
PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:
Discussions of indicators b, c and e must describe and evaluate the individual academic sequences in the unit.

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

The unit does not meet the ACEJMC requirement that students take a minimum of 80 semester credit hours outside of the unit of which a minimum of 65 semester credit hours are in liberal arts and sciences (as defined by the institution) outside of the unit. The number of credit hours within the department can and in the case of some students does exceed the recommended limit students can earn and therefore students may not always have credits outside the major. This is the result of Practicum credit hours being counted as general elective for PR and RTVF rather than properly being counted as a course in the major.

A reformed curriculum was just introduced in the Spring 2012 semester. The change is designed to provide more integrated instruction among the majors. Common courses for all majors include the following: CMJN 2100: Concepts of Communication and Journalism, CMJN 3350: Visual Communication and CMJN 4000: Mass Media and Law Regulation. During the period under review the curriculum has provided the needed balance between theoretical-conceptual and professional skills courses that students need in order to achieve the competencies listed by the Council.

More specifically, curriculum analysis by the three majors:

Journalism

Journalism, with 51 majors, focuses on reporting, editing and other basic journalism skills. In the major, nine three-hour courses are required including the departmental core course CMJN 2100 and CMJN 4000: Mass Media Law and Regulation. Others are Newspaper Fundamentals, Newswriting, Reporting, Feature Writing, Photojournalism, Newspaper Editing and Design, and Multimedia Journalism.

In addition, majors must complete a practicum for work on the student newspaper, The Plainsman, and an internship requiring at least 10 weeks in an approved fulltime position. Three hours of credit is awarded for successful completion of the internship and one hour of credit for the practicum, both are properly being counted within the 40 credits counted in the major.
Nine additional hours of electives may be chosen from the unit’s course list but must include either Advanced Reporting or Advanced Feature Writing.

The unit delivers what it promises: a solid foundation in core journalism skills. Faculty experience and expertise is heavily newspaper-oriented.

Students respect the skills of their faculty and generally are pleased with their own learning outcomes. However, a significant number believe they would be better served by more opportunities to build skills in new media that will add to their versatility in the job market and help them launch careers more quickly.

The faculty is aware of these needs but is without the experience or knowledge in new media. In interviews, a number of faculty lamented that an opportunity to add this skill was missed when one open faculty line that had been shared by journalism and public relations became a public relations-only faculty member. Another was not filled because the university took away the position as part of its budget reduction efforts.

It would be unfair, however, to say that no attention is paid to new media. Some professors do utilize social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Storify, in assignments. More and deeper course offerings on new media would have benefits, some faculty acknowledge, in attracting students and, perhaps, financial support for programs.

Public Relations

The curriculum for the public relations major, varied and extensive, exceeds the recommendations of the Commission on Public Relations Education. The major has an enrollment of 154 students and presents a range of instruction in public relations theory and practice reflecting the breadth of contemporary public relations profession. Seven public relations courses are required: Foundation of Public Relations; Case Studies & Ethics in PR; Style & Design in PR Messages; Writing for Public Relations; PR Campaigns; Survey Research Methods; and Internship.

Electives span the areas of public relations applications including International Public Relations; Public Relations in the Political Process; Public Relations in the Not For Profit Arena, and Intercultural Public Relations.

Students apply for admission to the public relations program after 30 core hours. A previous requirement for a 2.3 GPA has been dropped, contributing to an increase in applications for this major and the others in the department.

The department has requested another position for a full-time public relations faculty position, which would improve the now out-of-balance student-faculty ratio.
RTVF

Students in the radio, television, video and film program complete three required courses (CMJN 2100: Concepts in Communication and Journalism, CMJN 3350: Visual Communication and RTVF 3300: Foundations of Mass Communication). They also take a required writing and production course and an internship.

Students also take seven elective courses from one grouping and two from another. Overall, students say they are well prepared for their internships and competitive with students from other schools. Although students say the classes prepare them well, many noted that material in classes was repetitive, particularly in the theoretical courses. Many students asked about more production oriented courses and thought the balance between theoretical and production courses was off kilter.

A wide variety of elective courses are listed in the catalogue but electives are not offered every semester, or even every year. Students offer many stories of struggles to get into the classes they need to graduate. Students tell stories of not being enrolled in any courses for the first two weeks of classes and faculty and advisers seem aware that this is a perennial issue.

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

The curriculum and instruction is balanced between theoretical and conceptual courses. Students receive instruction in the philosophical and societal foundations as well as the contemporary context for their respective communication disciplines; they also get guidance in developing the skills necessary to achieve the competencies necessary for success in their professional careers.

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

Students fulfill the rigor of study expected by the dedicated faculty. The unit is moving gradually to address the many current technological developments and social issues affecting contemporary communication professions; some faculty recognize they must increase their commitments in this direction to better prepare students for careers in fast-evolving professions. Faculty achievements are regularly recognized with awards from the College of Liberal Arts and professional organizations as well as by grants and support for research, workshops and other accomplishments.

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

Updated information provided to the site team at the start of the visit indicated ratios in skills and laboratory sections are universally within ACEJMC recommendations with only one section, JRNL, Photo Journalism, at the highest
recommended total of 20. However, class sizes in courses that may well be categorized as “skills” courses (but are not by the unit) are considerably higher than these limits.

Many students indicated serious difficulties in getting timely registration in courses required for graduation in four years. Students said crowded classes also have compromised their classroom experience and the personal attention they received. Although sections have occasionally been added, additional faculty and resources are clearly needed, as is additional advising service, although the department adviser is highly praised.

(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.

The unit is a strong advocate of internships. Students are required to undertake an internship after completing a substantial number of relevant courses. The unit works to increase the number of internship opportunities, as evidenced by the range of internship providers the site team contacted in connection with this site visit. In applying for an internship, students go through an interviewing process and present resumes and portfolios. While searching for an internship, they are encouraged to talk freely with the faculty supervisor or Career Services.

Internship records are limited, so it is difficult to assess the long-term success of the program. However, although there are minor administrative variations among the majors, all require a detailed Internship Agreement signed by the student, faculty adviser and on-the-job supervisor; regular progress reports and a detailed final report, and a further final evaluation by the internship provider. Interns receive academic credit, three credit hours per internship. Journalism and public relations majors may take one internship for three credits while radio, television and film majors may take either 3 or 6 credit hours. Although the internship-provider supervisor is encouraged to suggest a grade for the student, final authority for grading lies with the unit internship supervisor.

Internship providers contacted prior to the site visit were uniformly supportive of the program. Several reported that they were so impressed with the quality of interns' work that they offered these students part-time paid employment and, in one case, full-time employment. One indicated that the Auburn internship program was quite superior to those of other institutions.

A practicum is available to students who have not completed enough courses that are prerequisites for an internship. Although much like the internship administrative process in regard to supervision and reports, there are significant differences in how the programs administer the practicums. Journalism majors must complete a one credit Practicum with “The Plainsman” that is counted among the 40 hours required
in the major. Public relations and RTVF majors may take one, two or three Practicum credit hours and count them as general education elective hours.

**Summary**

Although the curriculum and instruction *within* the unit are well designed to prepare students to work successfully in a global, diverse society, the unit does not meet the requirement for balanced education with liberal arts and science courses outside the unit. Moreover, the unit has serious problems in the size of many required classes, and its adviser, while highly regarded, is over-loaded.

**Overall evaluation:**  NON-COMPLIANCE
PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

*The unit has a diverse and inclusive program that 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 unit has a written plan, revised in 2009, which focuses on an inclusive campus environment, recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, faculty, administrators and staff, education and training, partnerships with diverse communities and developing and executing a Diversity Communication Plan.

The new plan does a good job of identifying goals and strategies. The department works in earnest at student outreach. The department also finds support in the College of Liberal Arts Diversity Team, which provides opportunities for faculty and students with programming, outreach efforts, and planning as well as with the student-focused Multicultural Center. The College of Liberal Arts also has a diversity strategic plan enacted November 2009. The College of Liberal Arts Diversity Committee is now more active than in the past. A faculty member with keen interest in the diversity goals is serving on that group and is a conduit to the department for information about University- and College-wide efforts.

The efforts to assess progress toward goals are new and the team cannot yet ascertain their successfulness. The department has just begun systematic reporting on diversity efforts. Concerns about sustainability remain because there is no clear leadership for the diversity efforts but rather many passionate players working on various aspects. Although there does not seem to be any resistance to the diversity goals, some faculty are not engaged with the efforts at all, while others are quite committed.

Meetings of the diversity committee are spotty. Minutes from these meetings show three meetings in December and November 2005. Then a meeting on October 26 but no year listed (appears to perhaps be 2006 from conversations with faculty), September 2007 and then nothing again until Feb 2011. Up until 2011, the Diversity committee has been comprised of all women.

The last accreditation report hinted that the department diversity coordinator position would be continued internally through department leadership even if the university did not fund the position. That did not happen.

There is a sense that progress is being made and things are much better than the last visit, but other than attempts to increase awareness by inviting student and colleagues
to diversity events on campus, few specifics were offered. The team pieced together the minutes of the six diversity committee meetings held since 2005 and the minutes of faculty meetings and was able to ascertain some goals were accomplished. Diversity is a frequent topic among some faculty, but those conversations are led by a few and the whole department does not appear to regularly engage in them.

The unit has been focused particularly on hiring of diverse faculty and has a less intentional focus on curriculum, pedagogy and campus climate as additional ways to show excellence under this standard. Good work is already happening in those areas, but not articulated well internally or externally, perhaps because of the university focus on hiring. The unit lacks specific and identified leadership for the diversity efforts and regular updates on progress toward goals in the plan.

(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 has many projects within courses that focus on central identity issues such as race, gender and ethnicity and also on issues that have a tendency to receive less focus such as disability. Classes with service learning projects employ community partners, guest lectures or visits to civil rights sites as a way to introduce diversity concepts.

Several courses focus on diversity as a central focus such as Gender Communication (COMM 4400), Media & Religion (RTVF 4370) Intercultural Communications (COMM 3450), Diversity Issues and the Mass Media (RTVF 4280) and Women and the Mass Media (RTVF 4240). One particular reporting course this semester is focused on immigration and migration issues in Alabama this term.

Several courses include diversity-related content in projects or as significant units. However, the syllabi for many classes mention diversity minimally at most, perhaps leading to students not making these connections when asked about diversity content in courses. Students at first said that they did not encounter diversity issues at all in their classes. Then when pressed, they did say that they discussed audience issues and that those are related to various groups. Then students offered specific courses that had dealt with diversity issues. Students do not seem, at first glance, to be making the connections that faculty perhaps intend; more explicit connections to diversity concepts might aid that learning.

The unit offers rich co- and extra-curricular diversity offerings to complement the classroom. Diversity-related events include the annual Neil O. and Henrietta Davis Lecture Series, featuring significant journalists such as Earl Caldwell, who was the only reporter to witness the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., and Wayne Greenshaw, a journalist who covered the civil rights movement and has written a book about the Montgomery bus boycott. Campus leaders complimented the program on how it has invited experts across campus to give lectures and how faculty have served on university-wide panels.
The department required faculty to account for their efforts to enhance diversity and cultural understanding on a form as part of the annual evaluation process. The self-study states, “This is a successful assessment tool and continues to improve, and was included in revision of the department’s diversity plan, approved 2009.” Some faculty did not complete this form in either of the two years it has been required.

The department also requires faculty to include a departmental diversity statement and not all colleagues complied with that request either. Further, conversations with faculty show they could not articulate why the statement was necessary and so, although there is not resistance per se, some faculty do not understand the reason for the inclusion. It appears the committee asked all faculty to include diversity events in an accreditation file, but that file only contains a handful of items and they are all quite recent.

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

In the 2011-2012 academic year, the department has 18 full-time faculty in the three programs being reviewed. Eleven are women. One is Asian and one is Hispanic-Anglo; the other 16 are white. There are no African-American faculty members. The department continues to struggle with faculty ethnic diversity, but have outlined the remarkable situation they faced with a new African-American colleague who unexpectedly left the university. When looking at the department’s searches, the department does seem to have some ethnic diversity in the applicant pools, but those applicants are not making it to the finalist pool.

The department has a nice balance in the program being reviewed among men and women on its faculty as well as sexual orientation and religious diversity. The department has employed aggressive outreach techniques to increase the number of high quality candidates in its pools.

The University has a system-wide focus on mentorship for women. The unit has a formal mentoring program for all junior 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.

According to Table 6. Student Populations for the Academic Year 2010-11, 68 African-American students are enrolled in the unit for a percentage of 8.1 percent. This is higher than the total institution percentage of 7.8 percent, but lower than the area population. The table also shows Hispanic enrollment in the unit at 3.6 percent, higher than the 2.5 percent total institution enrollment but again lower than that demographic in the service area.

The department is working to address this under-representation through scholarships and programs. Some scholarships are specific to students from diverse backgrounds.
The Acton Fuston Scholarship ($750), the Porter and Alice Harvey/Advertiser-Gleam Scholarship ($5,300-$5,500), Cynthia Tucker ’76 Scholarship ($2,500), Auburn Plainsman Scholarship ($1,000-$2,500) and Rodrigo Guajardo are examples from the last few years.

The department has sponsored a summer Minority Journalism Workshop, a high school advisers’ workshop and the PACERS workshop. One faculty member provides leadership to both the PACERS and advisors workshops. The advisers workshops and The Diversity Interest Groups (DIG) are both promising new ideas, but just started in the fall so the team cannot yet assess effectiveness. DIG struggles to reach students and get them involved, which is similar to a university-wide problem of student engagement with organizations. The department started an NABJ chapter, but it dissolved when an active student leader graduated.

The student efforts appear to be solely focused on recruitment. The department does not appear to focus on retention or graduation rates. A weakness in collecting retention data across the unit means that groups within the student body are not tracked, so the unit does not know retention and graduation data for any groups.

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

All faculty include a statement about disabilities on syllabi but those statements vary.

The self-study reports, “All students are treated as individuals and all university policies regarding harassment and discrimination are understood and appreciated.”

Faculty, staff and administrators talked about the struggles of minorities to fit in at Auburn because the “Auburn family” is quite homogenous. This appears to be a university- and city-wide struggle. Many people described a less than welcoming atmosphere in the city itself. However, faculty and staff said that the department is quite collegial. Faculty in particular expressed a palpable openness to religious, sexual and racial/ethnic identities in particular in the department and college. Colleagues in general described the working atmosphere as pleasant.

One other note: nine of the faculty have Auburn degrees and all but one adjunct faculty and graduate assistants have Auburn degrees. Some faculty commented that more diversity in educational credentials would benefit the unit in the future.
Summary
The department has a diversity plan but when the team asked for follow up on progress toward goals in the plan no one was able to provide that information in a cohesive manner. Clearly things are happening, but one has to dig pretty deep to uncover them. The department would benefit from a more clear and cogent narrative around the goals, stated progress toward the goals, a celebration of the successes and clear and designated leadership for these efforts.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: 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.

(a) The unit has written criteria for selecting and evaluating the performance of all full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff.

The department has a well-defined process and criteria for recruiting and hiring faculty and instructional staff. Criteria vary among the program disciplines. Journalism equates experience and a master's degree in a related field with a Ph.D and lesser experience; academic qualifications are the most critical criterion in RTVF and Public Relations.

The University requires annual evaluations of all faculty members annually. The department’s process and criteria are clearly defined as is the formula for awarding merit pay.

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

The Department has 41 full- and part-time faculty, including four graduate assistants. There are 25 full-time faculty members, including 18 in the units being reviewed. In the units there are three full professors, eight associate professors and six assistant professors.

In the three years preceding the site visit, full-time faculty have been responsible for teaching the majority of courses. Only in 2009-10, in the public relations sequence, was more than 50 percent of the teaching burden carried by adjuncts. In that academic year, two-thirds of the courses were taught by adjuncts. This occurred in fall 2009 because of the vacancy created by the selection of the chair (a member of the public relation’s faculty) and in spring 2010 because one faculty member was on research leave. Students, while generally pleased with teaching, expressed concerns that some adjuncts were not as effective as full-time faculty.

(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.

Eleven full-time faculty have Ph.D.s, five have M.A.s and two have an M.F.A. With one exception, a 25-year veteran with extensive newspaper experience, all part-time faculty have master's degrees (one also has a Ph.D.) University policy no longer
allows hiring tenure-track faculty with less than a terminal degree but they may be hired as instructors and lecturers.

All faculty in journalism and public relations have extensive full-time work experience in their fields. This is less so among the RTVF faculty where theory and critically based instruction and experience are relied upon more heavily; recent hires have brought diverse backgrounds of work from outside the scholarly field.

Outreach and service to professional and academic organizations is evident. Faculty attend professional meetings and make presentations and serve as resources to these groups. Professionals are invited into classes and departmental programs.

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

Students, using a standard university evaluation form, evaluate full-time and part-time faculty members at least once annually. Tenure-track faculty are evaluated in both the fall and spring semesters. These evaluations are anonymous. Results are tabulated and reports including any written comments are shared with the faculty member early in the next semester. In addition, annual faculty performance reviews include substantial review of instructional performance.

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

Faculty work on many university committees, have served on the university Senate, and often lead important projects across disciplines. Faculty serve as advisers to publications and student groups and lecture in the classrooms of other departments and on programs that serve broader university constituencies.

Representatives of several campus departments and organizations were complimentary of the department’s faculty for their willingness to partner in academic and outreach projects. The dean views the faculty favorably as collegial and noted there are a “few super-performers” while acknowledging there is a need for some others to “step up to the 21st century challenge.”

**Summary**

The faculty is well credentialed and has a rich mix of academic and professional experience. The processes for selection and evaluation of faculty are well defined and are followed. Contributions by faculty to University life and outreach are widely recognized and positive.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance**  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 AU Faculty Handbook states:

“Promotion is based on merit. A candidate for promotion should have acceptable achievements in the areas of 1) teaching and/or outreach and 2) research/creative work. He or she is further expected to demonstrate over a sustained period distinctive achievement in one of these areas or achievement in both areas comparable to that of successful candidates in the discipline in the past five years. In addition, he or she is expected to have contributed some service to the University. The criteria for teaching, research/creative work, and outreach described below shall be considered by the faculty in the evaluation of a candidate's performance and achievement.”

Regarding tenure, the AU Faculty Handbook states:

“Decisions on tenure are different in kind from those on promotion. Tenure, in fact, is more exacting. In addition to demonstrating quality in the areas of 1) teaching, 2) research/creative work, 3) outreach and 4) service as described above under Promotion Criteria, the candidate for tenure must also demonstrate professional collegiality.”

“Whatever the individual focus or field, the primary standards and criteria for establishing distinction are:

1) the totality of individual achievement and activity—research/creative work, teaching, service, outreach.
2) combined quality, quantity and consistency of the candidate’s research/creative/professional activities, and
3) the impact or significance of that work within their discipline.”

The self-study reports, “The Department funds travel for research presentations. Each tenure-track faculty member is assured travel funding for one such presentation per year. Additional trips are funded based on available funds.” Faculty across the board cite the travel funding as generous and flexible enough to support a myriad of faculty needs. In addition, nine colleagues have received leaves for their research and creative activities since the 2005-2006 review.
(b) The unit specifies expectations for research, creative activity and/or professional activity in criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure.

Tenure standards are noted above. Minutes from faculty meetings and conversations with faculty demonstrate concerns about a lack of clarity around expectations for scholarship, in particular for tenure and promotion to associate and for promotion from associate to full professor.

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

Colleagues appear to be succeeding with a variety of types of professional activity including book and journal writing, news media stories and films. The university and department guidelines value various types of professional activity. However, conversations with faculty show some angst about the ways that particular scholarship or creative activity is valued.

(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.

Many faculty appear to be engaged in research/creative activity. Some faculty have very strong records in journal and book publishing. Some faculty are engaged in the practice of journalism and filmmaking. Two faculty are listed on the College website that outlines diversity scholars.

The quantity and quality (as determined by acceptance rates and arguments made in faculty CVs) and regularity of scholarship vary widely. Faculty and the administration note the department has a few super performers and some underperformers, too. Many note the need to raise the bar for scholarly production and engagement. Information provided in the self-study and analysis of CVs indicated a number of faculty are not regularly meeting the department’s stated minimum annual standards for scholarship.

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

The faculty does not seem to be particularly aware of their colleagues’ scholarly work. The unit has held a brown bag seminar to share research twice a term, but it seems in some terms the unit only held one or none. They use informal email for notification when faculty publish books or other important research. Departmental meetings seem to allow for free expression of differing points of view and the curriculum and faculty meetings seem quite spirited. The research committee minutes were quite thin. Often they were an email exchange or only an agenda. The committee appears to have met only three times since the 2005-2006 visit and not since 2007.
Summary

Overall, this is a productive faculty in terms of scholarship and creative and professional activity. Some faculty members are nationally prominent scholars. Many are quite active in publication and presentation. The variance in publication sometimes matches the teaching load and percentage of time devoted to scholarship for each colleague. The department provided funds for conference attendance and all of the school’s faculty take advantage of those opportunities. Some faculty also received summer funding and research leave.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: 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.

Advising is a shared responsibility of the college and the department. The Student Services Center in the college advises on core requirements. A required meeting occurs before the student's first semester and students are encouraged to make appointments, which can be made online, at other times. Further, there are requirements for meeting the college adviser if the student has a 2.0 grade average or below, has completed 65 hours but not declared a major, after completing 90 hours and for a graduation check.

In the department, the departmental adviser places a sign up sheet outside her office and students are expected and encouraged to sign up to meet with her during the advisement period. Advisement folders are kept in the adviser's office and contain a curriculum sheet, plan of study and an advising record.

The dual system works unevenly for students. A significant number of students indicate advice is inadequate and that some advisers seem less knowledgeable than others from the college. The department’s advising is trusted and appreciated, but students have been disappointed by not being able to make timely appointments. Some of this dissatisfaction is generated by students who wait until the last-minute before registration and then are stuck in a queue. However, and more significantly, it is clear the load on a single adviser who must handle 400-plus majors in addition to incoming applicants overwhelms the system.

This bottleneck is exacerbated by significant numbers of courses being faced with the need to increase student seats at the beginning of each term to accommodate students who need the courses to graduate. Students are then frustrated because only then can they finalize appropriate course schedules.

(b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

Most faculty post office hours outside their offices and on syllabi. All are encouraged to schedule at least one office hour for each credit hour they are teaching. Though hours vary, this standard is generally met with a combination of posted hours and the availability of via email and willingness to make themselves available at other times as needed. Students were complimentary about the faculty’s willingness to meet with them and respond quickly to their inquiries.
(c) The unit keeps students informed about the activities, requirements and policies of the unit.

The department and the three programs being evaluated maintain listservs to communicate information on activities, requirements and policies to students. University wide, email is considered the official medium of communication. In addition, Journalism offers an annual all-majors meeting and shares information on internships, special programs and the student newspaper.

Students say although they get forwarded information about internship possibilities, they do not feel information is shared as effectively or in as timely a manner as it could be. They suggest that beyond email and bulletin boards, social media should be exploited more fully. The Department’s Facebook page, for instance, had been updated just twice in the two months prior to the visit of the site team.

(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 are offered a mix of print and broadcast opportunities for hands-on experience. The weekly *Auburn Plainsman* and the Chattahoochee Valley Heritage Project are overseen by the Department, which provides advisers. The student-run *Plainsman* has won 23 of the College Media Advisers Pacemaker Awards and serves students, faculty and citizens of Auburn. The Chattahoochee project is Web-based and produces multi-platform content that chronicles the oral and visual history of a rapidly changing area.

Two additional student-run media organizations are overseen by the university and draw participation and support from students in the department as well as advice from faculty. The Eagle Eye News is a weekly half-hour student-produced television news program covering area and campus news. State of the art digital production equipment affords students a quality experience and a number of students have won awards in the Alabama Associated Press Broadcasters competition. The second media organization offering student experience is WEGL, a student-run radio station that carries music and talk/discussion programs.

Also, the department sponsors the Auburn Film Society, an organization recognized by and serving the university. The society encourages and nurtures the appreciation of cinema.

The Public Relations Student Society of America, in its second year on campus with 120 members, has recently merged with the Auburn University Public Relations Council of America. PRSSA is active in bringing speakers to campus and providing a bridge to the professional world. In addition, the merged organization is carrying on the work of the Council, building public relationships for real clients and helping students develop leadership and public relations skills.

The department is also host of a student chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.
The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success.

The department does not have adequate retention data. The university’s data track begins from a base that includes intended majors. Since acceptance to the department in the unit does not occur until at least the sophomore year, the baseline on graduation and retention data in the self-study was skewed and not meaningful. The department does not track the statistics independently.

Another key source of useful information would be student exit information. The unit has ceased doing exit interviews because it found the data lacking. There is a plan to develop an electronic exit survey to gather useful data.

There are some student services in place at the university for counseling services and improving study habits. The department adviser directs students to these services.

However, quality data must be developed and maintained in order to adequately ascertain and address student needs.

**Summary**

Students are served well by a faculty attentive to their needs and supportive of extra-curricular activities and other developmental activities. The department needs to be attentive to making its advising system less uneven and improving the reliability of retention and graduation assessment measures.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:** NON-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 budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.

The department receives an annual budget from the college (the adopted budget); the chair adds funds acquired through activities as its summer teaching or summer high school workshop and subtracts funds the department is already committed to send from its annual budget. This results in an adjusted budget that the chair allocates with input from faculty and staff, any of whom may propose expenditure or need to be funded. The faculty meet at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters to review the budget status of the department, and any faculty or staff member may request an update at any time. The department, as is the case with other units in the college, spends the bulk of its budget on personnel ($1,899,066 in 2011-2012 leaving $58,017 for other operating expenses). Fortunately, the department’s budget was adjusted upward by $119,308 in summer enhancement funds (its share of revenue from summer teaching based on number of credit hours taught), increasing the funds available for operating expenses. The department also has reserve funds of $240,519 upon which it can draw. (The journalism program was permitted to keep its separate reserves account when it merged with communication; journalism’s reserves are $68,098, which the program uses primarily to augment department student scholarships.) The journalism program also kept control of its gifts account, and uses that money to augment scholarships for journalism students.

The unit’s budget has decreased by 1.5% over the last three years. Thanks to its reserves, the department has been able to weather state budget cuts.

The unit spent $44,507 for travel in 2010-2011 FY11, a sum that would average $2,473 for each of the 18 full-time faculty in journalism, public relations and RTVF, validating the self-study statement that adequate travel funds for paper presentations, conference attendance and research are available.

Several faculty members have been successful in bringing grant funding to the department, some from sources within Auburn University and some from other sources such as the Charter Foundation, Imagining America, the Alabama State Arts Council and the Kettering Foundation.

One concern might be that the department's budget in 2011-2012 included no funding specifically allocated for equipment. The department relies primarily on the college for equipment funding. (Computers are provided centrally by a university IT unit.) Occasionally the department will spend reserve funds if neither the college nor IT can meet an equipment need.
It is difficult to tell how closely the budget reflects priorities in the department’s new strategic plan, but priority is clearly given to instruction, enhancing the student experience and support for faculty scholarship.

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

The department feels that its allocation of resources is consistent with other academic units in its college and in the university. While comparing the Department of Communication and Journalism to other departments (sociology, political science or other liberal arts units) is risky, the department provided numbers that indicate the budgets of other departments are disproportionately allocated to personnel, as is the case in the Department of Communication and Journalism.

The dean said the department’s reserves are “considerable,” more than many units in the college. She and the chair both acknowledged they were feeling pressure “from above” to spend down reserves. When asked if the department could use these funds to pay for additional course sections given the enrollment crunch in courses required for graduation, she replied it could.

The building housing the department’s classrooms, offices and labs, Tichenor Hall, was extensively remodeled in 2009, an indication of university support for the unit.

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

The department has attractive, well-maintained and effective space for classroom learning and offices. Most classroom space used by the program is on the first two floors Tichenor Hall, which is centrally located on the campus and near additional classrooms in Haley Center, Biggin Hall and the Brown Draughon Library.

(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.

All classrooms are technically enhanced with instructor work stations that accommodate the use of a computer, Internet, video recorder, document camera, LCD and screen. Two classrooms include 18 iMac computers and one is equipped with 20 PCs. All are equipped with updated software. Substantial access to computer labs is also available and students indicated they feel no limitations. Production equipment for RTVF is adequate for the number of production courses currently offered, but more HD equipment is needed to meet industry standards and increasing demands for production courses.

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

Library and information resources support the research needs of the departments. Publications, databases and books are kept current. Faculty members are complimentary regarding their relationships with and service from library staff.
Summary

The department is adequately funded by the institution, and thanks to additional revenue from summer teaching and reserves, has been able to weather state budget cuts. Its spending priorities clearly are instruction, enhancing student opportunities and supporting faculty scholarship.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE
PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

The unit advances journalism and mass communication professions and fulfills its obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit is actively engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching current and to promote the exchange of ideas.

The Auburn Reporter, in print and online, and periodic emails are the principal vehicles used to communicate with emails to all of the unit’s alumni. Individual major programs are supplemental. Programs offered by individual majors include the journalism program advisory council, chaired by an alumnus, has led an alumni fund raising effort and confers awards on professionals who have made outstanding contributions to Alabama journalism. The Public Relations Advisory Council, also chaired by an alumnus, sponsors an annual Professional Development Seminar for Communications Professionals. The journalism program operates an Alumni listserv as well as a journalism Facebook page and Facebook group.

Although communication with many other alumni is limited, those alumni contacted prior to the site visit uniformly express high regard for their experience with the program while on campus and in their subsequent careers. Comments included positive guidance for students as well as alumni participation in mentoring seminars and visits to co-curricular clubs. It has generated a seemingly “Virtuous Circle” in the local communications community: from student internship to alumni status to internship provider.

(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 unit supports high standards in professional practice with several kinds of commitments. The Journalism and Public Relations advisory councils, composed of alumni and media professionals, advise the programs on curriculum as a link between the department and the profession. More specifically, in the annual Neil and Henrietta Distinguished Lecture distinguished journalists inspire students and faculty to emulate the spirit and principles of professional journalism. The university's chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America meets monthly, with professionals traveling from Atlanta, Birmingham and Montgomery to participate in its programs. Faculty are also active in many other organizations that interface with the profession, including the American Press Institute and the Broadcast Education Association.
(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.

Many faculty members participate in and/or occupy leadership positions in organizations dedicated to the improvement of journalism and mass communications. These include the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the National Communication Association, the American Press Institute, the Society of Professional Journalists and the Public Relations Society of America. Faculty members serve as officers of such organizations, reviewers for and editors of their publications and as judges of their professional awards programs.

(d) The unit contributes to its communities through service projects, internship and job placements, and faculty involvement in civic activities related to journalism and mass communication.

Each faculty member is expected to fulfill a "service component" (typically 15% of the individual's total assignment) in support of professional associations, the profession itself or in public service. The university also recognizes "outreach scholarship" in service to the community. Examples of such outreach: A faculty member has promoted the "Valley Vision Project", in the university's Outreach Scholarship Magazine, at the National Outreach Scholarship Conference and in a book chapter on journalism civic engagement. Another faculty member helped launch the interactive website of the Chattahoochee Heritage Project. Still other civic engagements have included promotion of the College of Liberal Arts Diversity Team and leadership in the "Becoming Alabama" program, examining Alabama politics, culture and opinion.

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

The unit has dedicated significant resources to scholastic journalism. Its aim is to give participants the knowledge and skill needed to either start publications in their schools or take their publications to a higher level. At the Annual High School Summer Journalism Workshop students spend a week with professionals and university faculty becoming print reporters and multimedia producers for high school communications media. The workshop also provides field trips to media sites to learn, first-hand, about newspapers, television news and multimedia journalism.

Each fall and spring the unit also provides a one-day training session for students in the PACERS Community Newspaper Project, a statewide association celebrating and sustaining Alabama's rural communities and schools. The journalism program also has hosted fall meetings of the Alabama Scholastic Press Association.
Summary

The unit has undertaken and implemented many activities and engagements to advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfill its obligation to its community, alumni and the greater public.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE
PART II — Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

*The unit regularly assesses student learning and uses 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’s assessment plan is an “outline of a plan for the department,” according to the department’s assessment committee. Because each program developed its own learning objectives, each is worded differently. But each appears to reflect ACEJMC’s core values and competencies.

An examination of course syllabi showed that most include learning objectives, not always in the language of ACEJMC but clearly addressing desired values and competencies.

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

In the 2005-2006 report of the department’s on-site ACEJMC evaluation, the site team reviewed an assessment plan the department had developed in 2003 in conjunction with the university’s accreditation self-study for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The site team based its narrative on compliance with Standard 9 on this SACS plan but said, “…the Department of Communication and Journalism has assembled a series of rather modest assessment measures that appear to deal primarily with skills competencies – with little focus on the broader professional values (such as ethics, law, history, diversity).”

Now, a departmental plan is in place, adopted in 2010, but it is “an outline of a plan for the department” that leaves it to each individual program to set its own learning objectives. The plan identifies both direct and indirect measures from which each program can choose to measure progress toward meeting its learning objectives.

Direct measures include student portfolios (they were not required previously), a graduation exit interview or survey and an alumni survey focusing on learning experiences and application to careers. Indirect measures include internship evaluations, results of the annual National Survey of Student Engagement administered to freshmen and sophomores, course evaluations and retention and graduation rates.
Some of these measures are still being developed (i.e. gathering accurate and comprehensible retention and graduation rates) but the internship evaluations, course evaluations and alumni survey are in use and data is being collected and reported.

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

The department is able to document the employment of approximately 80% of its 2008 graduates (estimated at 120). Many of its graduates hold prominent positions with local and regional media and organizations, and some have achieved success at the national level. The department periodically publishes an on-line alumni newsletter and has resurrected the practice of an annual alumni survey (dropped temporarily when the newsletter went from print to on-line). The journalism program maintains a Facebook group that allows alumni to interact and to post information. The public relations sequence operates a blog that encourages alumni participation. The RTVF program appears not to communicate with its alumni outside of the departmental newsletter. The university maintains alumni records and makes those records (e-mail and snail mail addresses) available to the department.

The journalism and public relations programs have alumni advisory councils that are actively involved in reviewing program curricula.

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

The public relations program plans to involve members of its alumni advisory council in evaluating student portfolios when it implements that requirement, expected to be in 2012-2013 after the university transitions to a new course management system, Canvas, that makes it especially easy for students to create on-line portfolios.

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

The department is beginning to use assessment data to “close the loop:” collecting data, reporting data and using data to improve the curriculum and student learning.

It collects data annually (alumni survey now, both the graduation exit measure and the retention and graduation rates to be collected when the plan is completely implemented) and the assessment committee reviews and discusses the data. Program-specific data is shared with program directors, who discuss it with their faculty and agree on curriculum changes or tweaks that might be indicated by the data.

Data also is reported to the university. The university requires all academic units to report each spring on its assessment activities; the department submits its report (via an on-line document) to the college, which then assembles a college report. The chair prepares the department’s report from data provided to her by program directors, adding the results from course evaluations. The
department’s report is reviewed by an associate dean, who provides feedback. Beginning with the spring 2012 semester, the department’s faculty review will review and discuss the data in a special meeting and will decide how the department (and/or its programs) will respond.

**Summary**

The department is in the process of fully implementing a new assessment plan approved in 2010; previously, it was guided by a plan developed to meet Southern Association of Schools and Colleges requirements. The plan includes a mix of direct and indirect measures, and each program will decide which to use and how they will be administered. Three measures are already being used: an annual alumni survey, internship reports and course evaluations. The assessment committee and program directors review data and recommend improvements based on the data. The department also reports assessment data to the college as required by the university.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**  COMPLIANCE
PART III: Summary by the site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:
- Students who are enthusiastic about the education they are receiving in the unit and who appreciate the student-centered environment in which they are learning.
- Plentiful access to student opportunities for extra-curricular activities and internships.
- Progress on ongoing transition from four academic separate, siloed programs to a more cohesive shared core curriculum and greater opportunities for collaboration and synergy.
- University budgetary practices that permit the department to accumulate reserves, a cushion that provides some protection from the harsh effects of budget cuts.
- “Closing the loop” in assessment by collecting data, reporting data and using the data to make improvements in curricula and/or student engagement.

Weaknesses:
- Lack of sufficient seats in some courses offered in all three of the majors being reviewed that results in students being added to already-full courses two or three weeks into the semester rather than being able to register and have a complete schedule before the start of a semester.
- The single professional adviser in the department is not sufficient to advise all majors, and the college advisers who advise pre-majors and perform graduation checks are not sufficiently familiar with program options and requirements.
- Permitting students in public relations and RTVF to complete six hours of departmental internship credit, applying three credits to the major and the other three to general electives.
- Permitting students in public relations and RTVF to complete as many as three credits in a practicum that is essentially an internship and applying the credits to general electives.
- Lack of racial/ethnic diversity among the faculty resulting in a faculty that does not adequately represent the university’s Alabama and Georgia service areas.
- Uneven scholarship across the faculty with as many as one third of the faculty not meeting the department’s stated minimum annual expectations.

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

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction
Standard 6: Student Services
3) **Summarize the problems or deficiencies that must be corrected before the next evaluation**

**Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**
- The department should stop counting practicum hours as general electives and count them as hours in the major within the allowed 40.
- Internship credit should be no more than 3 credits.
- The department should provide sufficient seats for majors before pre-registration/registration in order for students to get the classes they need to graduate on time.
- The department should reevaluate the criteria it uses to categorize courses as either skills or non-skills, because the skills criteria now are too limited.

**Standard 6: Student Services**
- The department should demonstrate that additional resources have been devoted to advising majors.
- College advisers should refer students admitted as majors to the department adviser(s).
- College advisers should demonstrate understanding of the degree requirements of majors in order to conduct accurate assessments of progress at 90 hours and prior to graduation.

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

**Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**
- The department should stop counting practicum hours as general electives and count them as hours in the major within the allowed 40.
- Internship credit should be no more than 3 credits.
- The department should provide sufficient seats for majors before pre-registration/registration in order for students to get the classes they need to graduate on time.
- The department should reevaluate the criteria it uses to categorize courses as either skills or non-skills, because the skills criteria now are too limited.

**Standard 6: Student Services**
- The department should demonstrate that additional resources have been devoted to advising majors.
- The college advisers should refer students admitted as majors to the department adviser(s).
- The college advisers should demonstrate understanding of the degree requirements of majors in order to conduct accurate assessments of progress at 90 hours and prior to graduation.
5) In the case of a recommendation for denial of accreditation, clearly and fully explain the reasons that led to that 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 problem.

The unit’s most recent visit was a re-visit in 2007. The site team for that visit determined the department had corrected the deficiencies leading to recommendations of non-compliance on standards one, three and eight, and an overall recommendation of provisional re-accreditation. The re-visit team reported the department had corrected the deficiencies in standards one, three and eight as follows:

**Standard 1**

Corrections needed to address deficiencies:

- Adoption of policies and procedures that assure faculty governance and consultation: policies and procedures completely re-examined and revised, a new strategic plan, a positive change in directors with a revised description of responsibilities, greatly improved communication with the dean and cooperation of faculty from both communication and journalism to eliminate the “us and them” mentality that had followed the merger in 2002.

**Standard 3**

- Implementation of the 2005 diversity plan: inclusion of the diversity plan in the department’s policies and procedures, increased outreach and mentoring efforts targeting underserved populations, hiring of a college diversity officer to assist departments, increased research related to diversity, establishment of scholarships that can benefit underserved populations, improved inclusion of content on minorities and women in the department’s curriculum and individual courses.
- Progress in hiring of diverse faculty and adjuncts: heightened efforts to proactively recruit minority applicants for one current search and two more planned in the near future, stabilized funding for adjuncts that should provide time to recruit and hire adjuncts of color.
- Progress in bringing the student body close to the university and regional demographic profile: an increase in the number of African American, Hispanic and Asian students, continued use of the Summer Journalism Workshop and scholarships to recruit and retain minority students.

**Standard 8**

- Establish departmental program of professional and public service: new department lecture series, co-sponsoring events and activities, hosting a Southeast regional research colloquium, established professional development programs for practitioners, greater visibility for the department’s service learning activities with local community organizations and
providing greater visibility in alumni publications.

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

The self-study was well organized and included appropriate appendices; a table of contents for appendices would have been helpful.

The team learned during the time it was on campus that a significant amount of information related to documentation of efforts to meet standards was missing:

- On diversity activities and contributions.
- On how assessment data is analyzed and used to inform decisions about program improvement.
- On the unit’s budget and sources of funding, especially reserves.

The self-study was missing an explanation of the information the department provided in the self-study on retention and graduation rates, and the department had no better information to provide on site.

Some information in the self-study, such as mention of content and policies regarding internships and practicums, was inadequate and misleading, requiring the team to spend a great deal of time to get a clearer picture regarding the two and the differences between them.