

# Report of On-Site Evaluation

## ACEJMC

### Undergraduate program

2012– 2013

Name of Institution: Savannah State University \_\_\_\_\_  
Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Cheryl Dozier \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Unit: Department of Mass Communications \_\_\_\_\_  
Name and Title of Administrator: Charles J. Elmore, Ph.D., interim chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Date of 2012 - 2013 Accrediting Visit: Feb. 3-6, 2013 \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Jan. 21-14, 2007 \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation of the previous accrediting team: Accredited \_\_\_\_\_

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Accredited \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation by 2012 - 2013 Visiting Team: Re-accreditation \_\_\_\_\_

*Prepared and submitted by:*

#### **Team Chair**

Name and Title: Pam Luecke, Department Head \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/School: Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, Washington and Lee University \_\_\_\_\_

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

#### **Team Members**

Name and Title: Brad Rawlins, Dean \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/School: College of Communications, Arkansas State University \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name and Title: Dorothy Bland, Professor \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/School: Division of Journalism, Florida A&M University \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name and Title: Kim LeDuff, Acting Director \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/School: School of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Southern Mississippi \_\_\_\_\_

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Organization/School: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/School: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## ***PART I: General Information***

*Name of Institution:* Savannah State University

*Name of Unit:* Department of Mass Communications

*Year of Visit:* 2012 -2013

*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.*

Savannah State University was established November 26, 1890, when the Georgia General Assembly, as a result of mandates from the Second Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890, created Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youths as the first publicly supported black land-grant college in Georgia's history. The Georgia Board of Regents changed the name to Georgia State College in 1932, to Savannah State College in 1950, and to Savannah State University in 1996.

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

- Yes
- No

*If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit:* January 21 – 24, 2007

*5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC?*  
2006-2007

6. Attach a copy of the unit's mission statement. The statement should give the date of adoption and/or the most recent revision.

### **Department's Mission**

The department's mission is to develop productive students in a global society, trained for careers in mass communications, and to increase cultural diversity in professional media. The department fosters engaged learning and professional growth through high quality instruction, scholarship, research, service, and community involvement. The department is committed to graduating students prepared to perform at high levels of excellence in mass media professions and post graduate studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The department intends for students to:

- Understand diversity in a global society.
- Understand diversity in a domestic society.
- Understand the historical, theoretical, and applied aspect of their chosen mass media concentration.
- Acquire technical and applied mastery in one or more of the department's areas of concentration – print journalism, radio/television and public relations/advertising.
- Internalize the University's and department's core curriculum to provide them with a well-rounded education based on the liberal arts with electives and minors outside their mass communications majors.
- Assist students in developing a broad interdisciplinary liberal arts perspective inclusive of literature, art, film, philosophy, African-American studies, music and history.
- Respect and practice freedom of expression, fairness, truth, and ethical standards of professional media.
- Understand and implement technologies associated with multi-platform media in a converged media educational environment to include all forms of social media applications as they apply to professional media.

*(Mission Statement adopted in 2005 – 2006 and revised in 2011 – 2012).*

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

Semesters of 15 weeks

Quarters of    weeks

Summer sessions of 6 and 4 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.* 125 semester hours

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

Students may earn 3 semester hours of credit for COMM 4902 – Professional Media Internship, based on at least 80 work hours per credit hour. Students can earn a maximum of 3 semester hours of internship credit. Savannah State has one professional media internship course with 3 semester hours of credit – COMM 4902, which is the equivalent of the one semester course as stipulated by ACEJMC.

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

The Department of Mass Communications offers a bachelor of arts degree in mass communications and a minor in mass communications. It offers three areas of concentration in the major – online journalism, public relations/advertising, and online/video production. The chair and mass communications faculty have specific responsibilities for coordinating the curricular areas of concentration.

***Name of Sequence or Specialty***

Online Journalism

Public Relations/Advertising

Audio/Video Production

***Person in Charge***

Charles J. Elmore

Juliana Trammel

Reginald L. Franklin and

Kai Walker

12. *Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution:* 4,452

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</b>
Online Journalism	20
Public Relations/Advertising	63
Audio/Video Production	84
Undeclared	195
Total	361

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

**Fall 2012**

<b>COMM</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Class Size</b>
2101.01	Writing for the Media	15
2101.02	Writing for the Media	13
2101.03	Writing for the Media	15
2101.04	Writing for the Media	5
3102.01	Photo Journalism	16
3105.01	Writing for Newspapers and Magazines	9
3110.01	Desktop Publishing	6
3201.01	Feature Writing	6
3301.01	Introduction to Television Production	9
3301.01	Introduction to Television Production	4
3302.01	Speech for Radio and Television	15
3303.01	Script Writing for Radio and Television	14
3306.01	Introduction to Audio Production	15
3401.01	Introduction to Public Relations and Advertising	9
4101.01	Advertising Copy Writing	12
4106.01	Communications Practicum	20
4107.01	Advanced Television Production	10
4902.01	Professional Media Internship	14

**Spring 2013**

<b>COM</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Class Size</b>
2101.01	Writing for Digital Media	12

2101.02	Writing for Digital Media	15
2101.03	Writing for Digital Media	15
3102.01	Photojournalism	16
3102.02	Photojournalism	14
3110.01	Multimedia Publishing	7
3301.01	Introduction to Video Production	3
3301.02	Introduction to Video Production	6
3303.01	Script Writing for Multimedia	15
3401.01	Introduction to Public Relations& Advertising	6
4106.01	Communications Practicum	20
4107.01	Adv. Video and Post Production	11
4110.01	Advanced Radio Production	16
4170.01	Advanced Writing and Reporting	3
4201.01	Copy Editing	3
4402.01	Strategic Campaign Principles	12
4406.01	Strategic Campaign Production	11
4902.01	Professional Media Internship	15

**15. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2012 – 2013 academic year:**

Expenditures for 2012–2013 academic year - \$812,641. Percentage increase or decrease in three years: 44.08% budget increase - from \$561,057 in 2010 – 2011 to \$812,641 projected in 2012–2013 - (hired three new faculty at \$50,000 with fringe benefits for a \$251,000 increase from 2010 – 2011 to 2012 – 2013) in the total departmental budget.

Amount spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$324,908.

**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.)**

Sandra Earley – Instructor (temporary full – time)  
 Reginald L. Franklin – Associate Professor  
 Phelps Hawkins – Assistant Professor  
 Lester Sloan – Visiting Professor  
 Juliana Trammel – Associate Professor  
 Kai Walker – Assistant Professor  
 Angela Wilson – Assistant Professor

17. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in Fall 2012. Also list part-time faculty teaching in Spring 2012. (If your school has its accreditation visit in 2013, please provide an updated list at the time of the visit.)

Part-time/adjunct faculty – Fall 2012 – Novella Cross Holmes (one course COMM 4902 – Professional Media Internship; and Margaret Williams (one course – COMM 4705 – Communications Law and Ethics); Spring 2012 – Novella Cross Holmes (one course – COMM 4902 – Professional Media Internship; and Margaret Williams (one course – Communications Law and Ethics).

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

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

Year	Total Graduates		80 or more semester hours outside the major	65 or more semester hours in liberal arts/sciences
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2011-2012 academic year	39	100	39	100
2010-2011 academic year	42	100	42	100

**19. Schools on the quarter system:**

For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 116 or more quarter hours outside the major and 94 or more quarter hours in liberal arts and sciences.

(NA/Savannah State University is on the semester system)

## **PART II — Standard I: Mission, Governance and Administration**

### **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.**

Savannah State University was founded in 1890 as the first publicly supported black land-grant college in Georgia's history. Today it has 4,452 full-time students, a 40 percent increase since 2007. Nearly all of those students are undergraduates, although the University does offer master's degrees in several disciplines. Eighty-nine percent of its student body is African-American. The attractive campus, on more than 200 acres beside a bucolic marsh, has several new academic buildings and residence halls.

Instruction in mass communications began in 1971 as a minor within the humanities department. Mass communications became a major in 1981. The freestanding Department of Mass Communications was established in 2002 and is now one of four Centers of Excellence at the University. The Department received initial accreditation by ACEJMC in 2007, becoming only the second program in Georgia with that distinction.

The Department is part of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS), one of three colleges in the University. The other two are Business Administration and Science and Technology; a School of Teacher Education is seeking approval from the state Board of Regents. More than 350 students choose to major in the department, making it the second-largest academic department in the University. Enrollment has increased by more than 60 percent since the department was accredited six years ago. Students choose one of three concentrations: Online journalism (20); public relations/advertising (63); or audio/video production (84). More than half of the majors have not yet chosen concentrations (195).

The Department has both a mission statement and strategic plan. Its mission is, in part, "to develop productive students in a global society, trained for careers in mass communications, and to increase cultural diversity in professional media." Its current strategic plan was written by the Department in 2011-12 to complement the University's "Vision 18" strategic plan, which covers 2006-2018. But the self-study says the Department Chair and faculty developed another three-year plan in the fall of 2012, "because of the transitional and rapidly changing nature of multi-media and social media."

Outside administrators seem to recognize the program's value and popularity, as evidenced by its being designated a Center of Excellence. The Department is one of the reasons students choose to come to Savannah State.



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

As a Department within a College, the Mass Communications program follows the University's faculty governance policies. The University has a faculty senate, which establishes rules and policies concerning faculty and academic programs. One of the Department's associate professors represents the department at senate meetings. The Department faculty as a whole develops the curriculum and educational policy. Major changes must be approved at the University level, but lesser modifications can be handled within the Department. According to the self-study and minutes, the faculty meet, on average, four times per academic year; they met less frequently during 2011 and more often during 2012.

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

The Department has had four leaders in the past six years. The current interim Chair is Dr. Charles Elmore, an alumnus and 30-year veteran of the University who steered the Department to initial accreditation in 2007. After he retired in June 2007, two different faculty members served as interim Chairs in 2007-08 and 2008-09. An outside candidate was hired to serve as Chair beginning in fall 2009. She was asked to step down as Chair at the end of fall term 2011 and left the University the next year. Dr. Elmore returned to the University in January 2012 as part-time interim Chair and plans to retire again in June 2013. Faculty both within and outside of the Department express respect for Dr. Elmore's institutional knowledge, deep commitment to the Department's reaccreditation, and ability to focus faculty and staff attention on specific goals.

At the same time that the Department has had considerable turnover in leadership, the University has as well. The interim Department Chair now reports to an interim Dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs has been in place just since August 2012. The current University President took office in May 2011 as acting President and was given the position permanently in May 2012.

The lack of continuity in leadership within the Department during the last six years has resulted in instability and slippage on some accreditation standards, notably assessment and curriculum development. And while Dr. Elmore's return during the last year has brought stability, whether that stability can be maintained after he leaves is unclear. While the site-team found a solid program during its visit, team members are not convinced the quality can be maintained for the next six years without immediate attention to the Department's future leadership.

A search for Dr. Elmore's successor did not begin until this January; the Dean hopes to have a new Chair in place by mid-summer, but he acknowledges that the University has a "history of late searches."

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

The self-study says the process for evaluating administrators “has undergone extensive revision.” The Dean reviews chairs annually. There is an instrument for faculty to evaluate chairs as well, but it is apparently not used regularly.

To select the next Chair, the Dean recently empaneled a search committee headed by a faculty member from outside the department; three mass communications professors are members of the committee. The job is posted on the University’s website and an ad appeared in Inside Higher Ed in January.

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

The faculty handbook outlines a system for handling grievances, which may ultimately go to a board of review. The University “guarantees the right of all faculty and staff to lodge complaints without fear of retaliation.”

Students are encouraged to express concerns first with their professor and, if that is not successful, they may then bring concerns to the Department Chair. The Chair reports that there are no complaints pending.

The department has a Mass Communications Student Association and chapters of PRSSA and NABJ. It seeks student input from their members and other students.

**Non-compliance**

## **PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**

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

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

The Department reports 100 percent compliance on the 80/65 for the last two years. However, upon inspection of student transcripts in spring 2012, one of the student transcripts randomly pulled did not meet the requirement. The team decided to review additional transcripts that could be problematic, particularly those with business double majors or business minors. After reviewing eight more transcripts, the team was confident that the Department was 95 percent compliant with this requirement in 2012. It should be noted that the study sheets, or “grids” as they are called at SSU, do not include information about the 80 and 65 credit requirements, nor is there a place to verify compliance with the rules. When students were asked about these requirements they had no knowledge or understanding of the rules or how they would affect graduation requirements.

**(b) The unit provides a balance between theoretical and conceptual courses and professional skills courses to achieve the range of student competencies listed by the Council. (If the unit has more than one sequence, evaluate each sequence.)**

The Department offers one degree with three program areas: Public Relations & Advertising, Online Journalism, and Audio/Video Production. Two of the program areas were renamed in fall 2012 to better reflect changes in the media professions: Print Journalism became Online Journalism and Radio & TV became Audio/Video Production. After the team reviewed the Department’s current catalog and course syllabi, it was apparent that the curriculum is in transition to a more current version. Interviews with faculty and students indicate that the recent revisions are mostly composed of title changes to reflect what was already happening in the classes.

Students who enter the Mass Communication program as freshmen can take Colloquium as their freshman year experience course. The required 12-credit core for all mass communication students has a nice mix of theoretical and practical courses and is composed of the following:

- Writing for Digital Media (replaced Writing for the Media)
- Mass Media and Society
- African-Americans in the Media
- Advanced Composition

The courses in the program core are available to all students at the University as electives in meeting the 60 liberal arts credits that compose the general education of the university. The writing course provides instruction for writing in all study areas. The introductory mass media course covers history, theory, diversity and industry practices. African-Americans in the Media addresses history, practice, principles and effects. Advanced Composition is offered through the English Department.

All syllabi list the 12 skills and competencies that the Department adopted from ACEJMC. The curriculum grid indicates that all courses are expected to teach awareness of the 12 competencies while particular courses should focus on greater understanding and application of specific competencies. For example, the Law & Ethics course provides greater understanding and application of the freedom of expression and ethical ways of thinking.

As students move into the program concentrations the courses become more skills oriented and more specific to those areas. All students take Introduction to Communications Theory and Media Ethics & The Law in their programs of study to provide some balance to the majority of classes that focus on writing and production. A communications research course is an elective that is strongly encouraged for public relations and advertising students.

Students are required to complete a 15-hour minor. This ensures that focused learning in one area is occurring outside of the degree program. Public relations and advertising students frequently minor in business, while English, political science, psychology and visual and performing arts are popular among all students.

All students take Communication Practicum that brings the study areas together and requires students to complete an individual final project, produce a professional online portfolio, and prepare job application materials such as resumes and sample cover letters. The projects and portfolios are used as part of the assessment process. Students remark that these assignments have given them a competitive edge in the media job market. Additionally, all students are required to complete an internship for credit. The team met several students who had completed at least three internships through the encouragement and assistance of the faculty.

There is not much flexibility and choice with electives in the programs of study. The current requirements allow for one elective from among five classes: Media Arts and Design, Photojournalism, History of Journalism, Speech for Multimedia, Strategic Campaign Production or Communications Research. The required number of credits to graduate from the program is 39. Since the University requires 125 for graduation, there is room for more courses. However, the faculty resources may not allow for more courses.

**Online Journalism:** There are currently 20 students studying Online Journalism. The core and program area courses provide a good balance of theory and practice, with more emphasis on practice during the latter half of the curriculum. Each course addresses awareness of the 12 competencies, while certain courses focus on deeper understanding and application of particular competencies. The required minor also allows journalism students to become more specialized in an area such as political science or business. Students in this concentration are required to take the following nine classes worth 27 credit hours:

- Introduction to Communications Theory
- News Writing and Reporting
- Multimedia Publishing
- Feature Writing
- Advanced News Writing/Reporting
- Copy Editing

- Media Ethics and Law
- Professional Media Internship
- Communications Practicum

Several faculty members lamented that the course requirements leave room for only one required elective. Some faculty members were excited that a Women in Media class will be offered in fall 2013.

**Audio/Video Production:** Audio/Video Production is the largest study area with 84 majors. The course work required of Audio/Visual majors offers an appropriate blend of theory, writing, audio and video production training. The primary courses include:

- Script Writing in Multimedia
- Intro to Communications Theory
- Intro to Video Production
- Advanced Video and Post Production
- Advanced Audio Production
- The Documentary
- Media Ethics and Law
- Professional Media Internship
- Communication Practicum

Students can also take an elective course. The syllabi for all courses required in the sequence clearly indicate the means by which the competencies recommended by ACEJMC will be achieved. Successful completion of these courses should prepare a student for an entry-level job in the field of Mass Communication.

**Public Relations & Advertising:** The public relations and advertising program is the fastest growing area. It has 63 majors and provides an integrated approach to the disciplines so that students are aware of both areas. The curriculum is fairly balanced between theory and practice, with nearly an even split between the two. Students are required to take the following courses beyond the program core:

- Multimedia Publishing
- Intro to Communications Theory
- Intro to PR & Advertising
- Strategic Writing in PR & Advertising
- Strategic Campaign Principles
- Strategic Campaign Production
- Media Ethics and Law
- Professional Media Internship
- Communication Practicum

Syllabi are careful to identify how program outcomes, the Mass Comm 12, are evaluated in each course.

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

Quality teaching is highly valued in the Department. The faculty members teach a four-four load with many teaching four different preparations. Faculty members spend most of their time preparing pedagogy, teaching classes and evaluating student learning. Many faculty members have infused their classes with the latest trends and technology, and the students said they feel they are ahead of the curve in the University and in the industry. Students praised the faculty for preparing them for internships and “real-world” exercises.

Syllabi are thorough and indicate rigorous and demanding instruction. Required textbooks are current and reflective of the changing media landscape. The syllabi often include rubrics for evaluation and students remarked that rubrics are frequently used throughout the program to evaluate student performance. Classroom observations suggest that most faculty are prepared and, generally, engage students in discussions. Students were observed engaging in peer evaluation in some courses.

The quality of instruction in each subject area is listed below.

**Online Journalism:** Interviews with students and classroom observations indicate that students are engaged for the most part, and faculty are employing websites, smart screens and other technology to bring the ever changing media world to students. A review of syllabi showed that faculty members follow a consistent format with course descriptions, textbooks, expected student learning outcomes, course requirements, grading policy, the 12 core competencies aligned with ACEJMC and references to the “Quality Enhancement Plan.” Some faculty members include their mobile phone numbers on syllabi to ensure easy student access. It appears faculty are utilizing a variety of instruction methods including lectures, film screenings and at least two faculty members are using hybrid teaching methods. All students are required to have a 3-credit hour professional internship, and the Department appears to have strong partnerships with CNN as well as 30 other media/PR firms, ranging from the Savannah Morning News to the Savannah Convention and Visitors Bureau.

**Public Relations & Advertising:** Students in this program are exposed to the principles, practices and tools of public relations and advertising. Faculty in this area reviewed “strategic communications” programs around the country for ideas about how to integrate the curriculum. While the name suggests that equal time and effort is given to both areas, a review of syllabi, courses, and discussions with students would suggest that it is more of a public relations program enhanced with an understanding of advertising. For example, all of the textbooks in the courses are standard public relations texts. Students said they felt prepared for both advertising and public relations jobs, and some shared experiences where knowledge of both areas gave them an advantage in internship situations. The Copy Writing course became Strategic Writing in Public Relations & Advertising because the public relations students needed more writing. Because of the integrated nature of the program, the title “strategic communication” might be more accurate. Students are introduced to social and new media in the introductory course and learn how to use the new media strategically. Analytics for evaluating message reach in new media, search engine optimization, use of social media are all addressed in a curriculum that could easily be labeled as current. The introductory course is offered as a hybrid between online and class interaction and the campaigns principles course has been offered online. Students know how to use relevant and up-to-date software, but wish they had more access to the computer labs.

**Audio/Video Production:** The focus of this program has moved from just radio and television to all aspects of audio/video production. Courses prepare students for careers in this area with updated equipment, software and current information about the field. The broadcast studio is equipped for HD recording, staff members are AVID certified instructors to help faculty and students use the latest AVID equipment and software, and labs have current versions of Adobe Premiere and After Effects. Access to some of the equipment could be improved, particularly with camera checkout and after-hours access to computer labs with video and audio editing software. Students said they feel very prepared for their internships and careers and appreciated the currency of faculty and facilities.

**(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.**

All of the skills courses offered in the last two years comply with this requirement. The courses ranged from four to 20 students. The labs used for instruction of skills courses have fewer than 20 computers.

**(e) The unit advocates and encourages opportunities for internship and other professional experiences outside the classroom and supervises and evaluates them when it awards academic credit. (If the unit has more than one sequence, address the opportunities by sequence.)**

All students are required to complete a three-credit internship. Interns are required to work 20 hours a week for the course. The internship course has a syllabus, requires a contract between the student and the internship provider and requires weekly reports. Students evaluate their internship sites and are evaluated by their internship supervisors. A part-time instructor, who is the special projects coordinator for the Southern Regional Press Institute, is responsible for managing the internship class, which had 50 students last year. Most of the internships are located on campus, in the Savannah area and in Atlanta. Students are primarily responsible for finding their internships, which can lead to opportunities in New York, Chicago and other large markets.

## **Compliance**

## **PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness**

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

**(a) The unit has a written plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan.**

The Department's commitment to diversity is evident in the mission statement as well as the Diversity Plan. Since the last accreditation visit, the University established an Office of Equity and Diversity in 2010, and the Department of Mass Communications revised its Diversity Plan in the spring of 2012 to align with the University's Diversity Strategic Plan. There are five specific goals outlined in the Department's plan:

- 1) a diverse faculty
- 2) an inclusive curriculum to encourage domestic and global diversity
- 3) a diverse domestic student population
- 4) a diverse international/global student population
- 5) a supportive climate for working and learning

As a Historically Black institution, SSU's student population is 89.1 percent African American. The Department is at 98 percent but has made a clear effort to reach out to a diverse population of potential students. The Department hosts the Southern Regional Press Institute and invites elementary, middle and high school and college students (of all backgrounds) from the region to come to campus and interact with Savannah State students and media professionals. The Institute is highly regarded across the University for bringing a diverse group of students and professionals to campus to share ideas and knowledge on contemporary media issues.

The Department has also made efforts to reach out to the Hispanic community by publishing recruiting materials in Spanish and English. It also hosts and promotes radio broadcasts in Spanish.

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

Every course syllabus includes narrative reinforcing the importance of diversity to good practice in the profession. It is also evident that faculty make a concerted effort to expose students to diverse voices through the readings, activities and course work. Since 2007 two additional courses have been approved: Women in the Media and Communications in a Global Society. The new courses are designed explore issues of diversity other than race in the classroom.

Departmental faculty are also involved in study abroad programs. In 2008, students and professors traveled to Egypt and Brazil and, in 2011, four students traveled to China, Costa Rica, Ghana, and Nigeria as International Studies scholars. These activities indicate that students are being taught to think of diversity on a global scale.



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

The Department's 2007 Diversity Plan states that the unit will "*note the diversity of the faculty since the last accreditation visit.*" At that time there were five faculty members, all African American. There are now seven full-time faculty members. Two are white and one is Afro-Brazilian. Of the full-time faculty, three are men and four are women.

Based on the data reported from the searches between 2009 and 2012 the applicants were diverse. The searches however, were not always successful. Even when finalists were selected, they did not always accept the position.

**(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.**

Based on the most recent Census data Georgia is 63.2 percent white, 31 percent Black/African American, 9.1 percent Hispanic and 51 percent female. More than 90 percent of Savannah State's students come from four major metropolitan areas within the state (Atlanta, Augusta, Macon, and Savannah). The University population is 89.1 percent Black /African American. As of the 2011-2012 academic year, the Student population within the Department of Mass Communication was 97.6 percent Black/African American. There were 216 females and 152 males.

While not quite as racially diverse as the University population, the Department recognizes the need for more racial and ethnic diversity and is making efforts to reach out to students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds as part of its Diversity Plan.

**(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.**

In both the faculty handbook and the student handbook there are clear statements indicating that the University maintains an environment free from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, creed national origin, age disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Based on interviews with faculty, staff and students, it appears the Department is a welcoming and supportive environment that upholds the University's expectations for inclusiveness and intellectual diversity.

One student noted, "We are like a big family." The student explained that as a freshman faculty and staff introduced him to upper level peers so that he could establish a support system within the Department. Students also noted that faculty and staff are always readily available and willing to help them with course work, career planning and often express concern for their general well-being.

**Compliance**

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

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

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

The department follows the University's guidelines for selecting and evaluating both full-time and part-time faculty. A comprehensive faculty handbook outlines steps and expectations for hiring and retention. Faculty are evaluated annually, usually by their Department Chair, and that review is expected to include at least one classroom evaluation. Faculty teach a 12-credit (four-course) load each term but may occasionally be given release time for certain duties. The faculty handbook states that, when possible, faculty should have no more than two "preps" per term, but several mass communications faculty have four "preps."

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

The department reports that full-time faculty taught 85 percent of the courses in 2011-12, and 86 percent in 2010-2011.

All tenured or tenure-track faculty are expected to perform research and service; collectively, the two count for 20 percent of each professor's evaluation. Each professor may determine the weight of each leg, though, from 5 to 15 percent.

**(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.**

The department has seven faculty members teaching full-time this year; one is a visitor. Four are women and three are men. (This does not include the interim Chair, who is not teaching.)

Most of the professors have considerable professional experience in journalism and communications fields. One of the seven has a Ph.D. and one expects to complete her Ph.D. this year. Four have master's degrees and one has a B.A. The interim Chair has a Ph.D.

Three faculty members have tenure. Two of the seven are associate professors, three are assistant professors, one is an instructor and one is a visitor. None of the faculty members is a full professor, although the interim Chair is a professor emeritus. There are two part-time instructors, both African-American women with master's degrees.

The interim Department Chair is an African-American male as are two other faculty members; the other male is Caucasian. Two of the women are African-American; one is Afro-Brazilian and one is Caucasian.

The seven full-time faculty represent an increase of two since 2007. Four of the current faculty are new since the last site visit. One former full-time professor is now a part-time professor. The Department has one position filled by a temporary employee, but the interim Chair intends to let his successor conduct the search for a permanent occupant.

In addition to its faculty, the Department has three technical support staff who work closely with faculty and students in the classroom and on co-curricular activities. All three positions were added since the initial accreditation; two are supported by a five-year Title III grant and the other is supported by University funds.

One concern of the last site team was the department's ability to enable faculty members to become more visible regionally and nationally through participation in academic and professional conferences. The department allocated \$13,000 in Title III money for faculty travel in the 2012 fiscal year and reported that faculty attended several conferences and workshops.

Faculty are members of an array of professional and academic associations, including JEA, BEA, BCCA, NABJ, RTDNA, AEJMC, SPJ and PRSSA.

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

The Department follows the University's procedures for evaluating teaching, which is given the majority weight in overall faculty evaluation. The University also pays close attention to student evaluations of professors, giving them at least a 10 percent weight in each professor's evaluation.

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

Most of the permanent faculty members are active in Departmental and University committees. One member has been on the faculty senate for more than 12 years. Others are active in international education or in advising student organizations.

**Compliance**

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

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

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

Based on reports from faculty, the interim Chair is supportive and encouraging when it comes to scholarly activities. Over the past six years, financial support was given to those who sought additional training and participation in academic and professional meetings and conferences.

The typical faculty load in the Department is four-four, and some faculty have three to four preps each semester. This has the potential to limit the amount of time faculty can contribute to scholarly activity. In 2007, the site team indicated “*A need for support to enable faculty members to become even more visible regionally and nationally through participation in academic and professional conferences.*” A more rigorous requirement for faculty in regard to research, creative and professional activity would be consistent with University expectations and might allow for more visibility on a national scale. Both the Dean and one faculty member outside the Department of Mass Communication told the site team that at least one publication in a refereed journal is expected in order to be tenured and/or promoted to associate professor.

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

The Department’s expectations are in line with The Board of Regents policy that faculty are evaluated in four areas: 1) teaching effectiveness, 2) academic achievement, 3) professional growth and 4) development and institutional service. While some accomplishment in each area is expected, Savannah State requires that a faculty member be notable in the area of teaching effectiveness and one other area (selected by the faculty member) for promotion and/or tenure. Therefore, notable scholarship is not required for tenure and promotion. Administrators and a review committee of tenured faculty determine whether a faculty member is eligible for promotion and tenure.

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

The Faculty Handbook includes guidelines for the promotion and tenure processes. Savannah State is a teaching institution, therefore all faculty are expected to be notable in the area of teaching effectiveness.

Scholarship is important to the areas of academic achievement and professional growth. The University broadly defines scholarship, saying it is demonstrated not only in the form of publications, but also by: presenting papers at professional meetings and conferences; practice or performance; creative activity; staying current in one’s field through reading and research; and holding leadership positions in professional organizations.

**(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.**

In the last six years, eight faculty members have participated in the following scholarly activities:

- Received one grant
- Authored or co-authored one book
- Edited one book
- Wrote two book chapters
- Presented 10 refereed conference papers
- Wrote four encyclopedia entries
- Published five articles in non-refereed publications
- Produced one juried creative piece
- Produced 15 non-juried creative pieces

While all faculty have made efforts to produce scholarly works, some are more active than others. According to the self-study, most of the work listed above was produced by two members of the faculty. The majority of the non-juried creative work was produced by one member of the faculty.

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

In line with the University's policy, the Department encourages a climate that supports intellectual diversity. Faculty are encouraged to set personal goals annually in the four areas in which they are evaluated.

The self-study notes that the department has allocated more than \$20,000 to stimulate scholarship, research, creative and professional activity since 2007. According to the report, faculty were given financial support to attend conferences, workshops and trainings. The data shows that from 2007 to 2010, only one faculty member attended a national conference each year. In recent years, more faculty have done so.

**Compliance**

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

### **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.**

Four full-time faculty are assigned each semester to advise mass communications students, based on the students' last names in the alphabet. The interim Department Chair advises graduating seniors, and students are required to submit an Application for Graduation the semester before their anticipated graduation.

Students said the advisement system currently in place is effective -- for the most part. However, given the four-four teaching load, there is some faculty concern about having 40-50 students to advise each semester. Several students expressed concern that graduation may have been delayed a semester or so due to advisement challenges outside of the Department in their freshman year. A review of faculty minutes and documents shows that these issues have been discussed in the past. According to students, a major improvement was made in 2010 when a "pin" system was implemented and students are required to complete the curriculum grid each semester prior to registering online. Students also complete a Savannah State University Schedule Planning and Registration Form that must be signed by the student and adviser. Faculty advisers "keep you on the straight and narrow," said one student. Another student shared that she started a petition to get a class added and other students supported the petition drive. The class was added to ensure they would graduate in a timely fashion.

One weakness in the advisement process is the "grid" or curriculum matrix. It does not provide evidence that ACEJMC's 80/65 rule has been met on the matrix and a review of transcripts showed that students have not consistently taken all prerequisites before taking major courses. The grids are not retained after graduation, so verification of compliance with the 80/65 rule is difficult.

The unit also has a part-time internship coordinator who oversees the internship advisement process and required 3-credit hour class that is clearly documented. About 50 students held internships in the last year.

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

Students consistently praise faculty and staff as helpful and caring. "It feels like a family," said one student. "It's not just radio/TV or online. We're mass comm. Professors are not just advisers, they're mentors." Professors are accessible via email, text messaging and phone. Most of the classes observed had fewer than 20 students, and instructors know students by their first names.

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

Students said they feel they are well-informed thanks to ongoing dialogues with faculty, staff, student media outlets and social networks. Faculty office hours are clearly posted, and students said they often interact with faculty and staff electronically as well. "I love this department," said one student. "We're

welcome to use the ProTools lab and learn convergence. I love the fact my professors have worked and have experiences. It inspires me.”

Students can access the department’s website 24/7 for curriculum info. The Channel 96 TV monitor near the Department’s first floor entrance also streams content about events and programming.

The curriculum sheets are available in the Department Chair’s suite. The Department has done an excellent job marketing the “Mass Comm 12” competencies and the “Mass Comm 9” ACEJMC standards with classy posters and fliers for recruitment. In addition to student organization advisers attending student meetings, the interim Department Chair also meets with student groups formally and informally.

**(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 passionate about their involvement in a variety of student media outlets and University-operated radio stations. “Customer service-wise, I’m getting my money’s worth,” said one student.

Within Kennedy Hall, the first floor is largely the epicenter for student-operated media with the offices of *Tiger’s Roar* and Channel 96 in an area labeled the “Student Media Center.” Students are enthusiastic about the fact that student media organizations are open to all students willing to work and not just mass communication students. *Tiger’s Roar*, the student newspaper available in print and online; Channel 96, the educational access channel on campus; plus two radio stations provide outlets for students to “express themselves and produce content of substance,” said one student.

During the site-team visit, Channel 96 was running about 2.5 hours of program in a constant loop with news updates and three documentaries. Students were excited to share plans to launch a College Avenue TV show this spring that will focus on issues relevant to African-Americans. The Department has used UStream to showcase some content such as the Miss Savannah State University pageant. There is so much more opportunity as Channel 96 expands programming particularly with student news packages, documentary projects, public service announcements and revenue-generating opportunities.

Although the team was initially told the student newspaper is published monthly, the newspaper published only two issues in the fall of 2012. The first print issue of *Tiger’s Roar* for this semester was produced during the site team’s visit. Like many college newspapers, funding has been an issue. The newspaper has about five paid student staff positions and there is a full-time professional working as an online content manager. It is subsidized by a Title III grant and advertising.

In the last year, student media have embraced social media — and it shows. *Tiger’s Roar* had more than 350 “likes” and more than 260 Twitter followers at the time of the site visit. Facebook and Twitter feeds for the *Tiger’s Roar* are updated almost daily during the school year. For example, during the site team’s visit, tweets were posted about the Super Bowl as well as President Barack Obama’s gun control proposal. The web and social media audience clearly eclipse the print edition. Google Analytics show there were 13,822 unique visitors and 39,106 page views between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2012 to *Tiger’s Roar* website, with the highest traffic around Homecoming week in late October. As expected more

than 90 percent of the visitors were from the United States, followed by the United Kingdom, Canada and India.

The University operates radio station WHCJ 24/7, a 6,000 watt FM station, that covers Chatham County and portions of Effingham, Bryan, Beaufort and Liberty counties, according to the University's website. The format is diverse, ranging from gospel to Spanish-language programming. Education offerings also include talk shows, commentary and cultural programs. Students and professionals said the relationship is a positive one as students often get hands-on training as volunteers and interns. Students also largely operate WSSU, another 1,000-watt radio station housed with WHCJ in another building on campus.

In addition to working with students in student media outlets, faculty and staff members also serve as advisers to student organizations such as the Savannah State University chapter of the PRSSA, the SSU chapter of NABJ, and the Mass Communication Student Association.

Although internships are woven into the curriculum for every student, several students said the culture is one in which students are encouraged to pursue multiple internships. The part-time internship coordinator is seen as a valuable resource and the exposure that students get in assisting with the Department's Southern Regional Press Institute is another bonus. Students also have access to two University-wide career fairs held each fall and spring semester.

In addition to the Department specific initiatives, the University has about 70 other student organizations to enrich student life.

**(e) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success.**

The minimum GPA for students with 60 or more hours is 2.0. The Department has done a solid job of tracking enrollment, retention and graduation data as detailed in the self-study. For example, enrollment has grown about 60 percent since the last visit. The fact that retention and graduation rates are above the university-wide averages also are good indicators.

A review of graduation placement statistics provided by the department shows that of the 198 graduates tracked between the class of 2008 and the class of 2012, about 32.8 percent were working in media jobs, 21.2 percent pursued master's degrees and about 26.7 percent were working in non-media jobs.

**Compliance**



## **PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment**

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

#### **(a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.**

The Department's budget aligns with its strategic plan; 70 percent is spent on faculty salaries, and teaching is clearly a priority. The Department's travel budget is small, but faculty have access to other funds for that purpose. The self-study says that the Department has spent more than \$1 million since the last site visit – from a combination of Title III grants from the U.S. Department of Education and University sources -- on building renovations, faculty/staff offices, audio/visual production labs and computer labs. Its latest Title III grant of \$261,000, received in 2010, has enabled facility renovation as well as the hiring of two technical support staff.

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

The Department's status as a Center of Excellence ensures that it receives at least its fair share of University resources. Like many states, Georgia has experienced significant cuts in state funding for higher education. Faculty throughout the state University system have not had raises for five years and must take several furlough days each year. Still, the Department's 2011-12 budget was 36 percent higher than its budget in 2009-10. Georgia is moving to a higher education funding formula that is tied in part to graduation rates, which is causing some concern across campus because SSU's six-year graduation rate is less than 50 percent.

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

Nearly all of the Department's classrooms and all of the faculty and staff offices are in the John F. Kennedy Fine Arts Building, which is shared with the music, fine arts and theater Departments. The previous site-team indicated a need for better storage, adequate space for student media and improved equipment and maintenance. Since that visit, great strides have been made to improve the facilities. The Department created the Student Media Center in the Kennedy Building to house Channel 96, the Department's low-powered television station, the *Tiger's Roar online* and *Tiger's Roar* print edition. The television station utilizes the Department's new high-definition television production studio.

The Department hired a director for Channel 96 and also hired an online content manager to work with the student staff of the *Tiger's Roar* online and print editions. The Department also added a full-time lab manager to improve equipment storage and student check-out procedures. The laboratory manager's office is in the Kennedy Building – Room 209 – where all equipment for students and faculty is stored. The lab manager also assists with selection of equipment for purchase, communicates with vendors and maintains and repairs equipment. Additionally, the lab manager installs software in iMac laboratories and serves as the Department's liaison with the University's instructional technology department.

WHCJ FM, the University's 6,000 watt radio station – is now equipped with a new low-power radio station (WSSU 104 FM). WHCJ is also equipped with a new instructional conference room and

expanded production facilities for students, which also includes a fully operational newsroom for radio reporting.

The Department continues to maintain and develop state-of-the-art iMac laboratories. At the time of the visit, new computers for one of the labs in Kennedy Hall were on order. A new iMac laboratory with 20 computers and a Smart Station for faculty had just been added in neighboring Whiting Hall – Room 125. The Department notes that this laboratory, along with access to additional classroom space in Whiting Hall, alleviates the Department's instructional space problems.

The University administration has given a green light to a 15,000-square-foot expansion of the Kennedy Building to serve both the Mass Communications and Fine Arts programs. The addition, scheduled for completion in September 2016, will house a laboratory and studio space as well as lecture, computer lab and office spaces.

The Department has made good use of grant funding to improve the environment and equipment available to students and faculty.

**(d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment or access to equipment to support its curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty.**

As the result of Title III grants awarded to the Department, the audio and video production facilities in Kennedy Hall have been upgraded. This enhances the learning experience of students in the sequence because they have exposure to the latest state-of-the-art technology. In addition, the grant enabled two staff members and one faculty member to attend AVID training and two became AVID-certified instructors. The hope is that this will result in AVID-certified graduates, making them stronger candidates for employment after graduation.

Students in production classes and those working on senior projects get first priority when it comes to equipment. At the time of the site-team visit, additional camera equipment and computers were on order. The additional equipment should allow more students access to equipment. There are currently 10 Panasonic HD cameras available for checkout and an additional 10 newer models have been ordered. There are six portable audio recording devices. The current equipment checkout process requires students to reserve equipment 24 hours in advance by going to the laboratory manager's office between the 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. and then returning to pick up equipment. Some students said the process could be streamlined.

Students also told the site-team they wish lab hours could be extended. They are now allowed to work in the iMac computer labs in Kennedy Hall between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., but classes are often in the labs during those same hours. If students stay after hours, campus security can be notified so that they can lock facilities after students leave.

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

The University's Asa H. Gordon Library is a short walk from the Department's Kennedy Building and offers students a pleasant setting for study and research. One research librarian is designated as a liaison to the Department's faculty and students. Material provided to the team and a spot-check of the stacks indicate a solid collection of mass communication books and journals. The library is part of Galileo, Georgia's Virtual Library, which enables students and faculty to access a vast number of online databases.

**Compliance**

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

### **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 Department provided ample evidence that faculty members are actively engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations to ensure the curriculum stays current. Several faculty members have received additional training at Poynter Institute and all faculty have taken advantage of additional training via the University's online training initiative. Two professional staffers, who also are SSU alumni, have been certified as Pro Tools and Media Composer instructors since the last site visit.

The self-study documents the fact that the Department often brings in professionals as speakers, and has averaged more than 40 a year since the last site visit. One professional communicator said the strength of the program is its "emphasis on journalistic storytelling craft and cross-platform publishing. They were early adopters of multiple media reporting theory and approach." He suggested the Department improve on the "integration of technology and social media strategy development."

The Department also has an Advisory Board of nine, which includes an impressive list of professionals who represent organizations such as CNN, the Savannah Morning News, an African-American newspaper and an Atlanta-based public relations firm. While the interim Department Chair has been in touch with Advisory Board members for their counsel, the board has not met this school year.

**(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.**

Professionals said the Southern Regional Press Institute also enables professionals in the Southeast region to recharge their batteries and update their skills, in some cases. "The faculty take full advantage of local media and professional communicators via the Press Institute experience," added one participant.

For years, faculty members have regularly provided commentary and served as consultants to local TV stations as well as national events such as the National Black Leadership Initiative on Cancer.

**(c) The unit contributes to the improvement of journalism and mass communication as academic disciplines by supporting the faculty's involvement in academic associations and related activities.**

Faculty and staff are active in approximately 10 professional organizations and have attended national conventions for organizations such as the AEJMC, BEA, NABJ, PRSA and NCA, to name a few. In addition to the academic associations, faculty members provide valuable community service to organizations such as the Georgia Historical Society and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

**(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.**

While students and recent graduates are responsible for finding internships and jobs post-graduation, students applaud and appreciate faculty's efforts to locate internships and other placement opportunities plus build professional relationships. A part-time special projects coordinator oversees the internship placement program and the Southern Regional Press Institute. The self-study identified nearly 30 companies on the active list for internships and they range from Radio One in Atlanta to the Savannah Convention and Visitors Bureau. There also is a strong complement of TV network affiliates for CBS, NBC, Fox, ABC as well as newspapers such as the Savannah Morning News, Savannah Tribune and Savannah Herald. Excellent internship opportunities have been developed within the University Relations, the Athletics Department and radio stations, too. Most internships are unpaid. The good news is the required 3-credit hour internship class is largely online. Students are required to work at least 20 hours per week, maintain a daily work diary, and outcomes at the end of the internship include 5-6 news clips, a video/audio production or a PR/advertising campaign depending on the student's focus. Strong accountability is built into the process for internship supervisors as well with weekly reports.

There are about 400 Department alumni in a database, and they receive email blasts of the newsletter known as the Mass Connection. In the last six years there have been six issues of the Department newsletter and they are available on the Department's website. The last issue was produced in spring 2012, and reflects accomplishments of students, alumni, faculty and staff. Another issue is expected in the spring 2013. As with most programs, there is an opportunity to strengthen alumni relations and development. Long-time faculty members said they remain connected with alumni via a Facebook page known as The Village, which has more than 220 friends. Students say the alumni network is strong and it has helped them land internships as far away as New York City. There is an opportunity to establish a LinkedIn network online for Department alumni as well.

Faculty and staff report the Department has been supportive of travel and professional development on both the national and international scene. For example, professors have supervised student trips to Egypt and Brazil.

Faculty often serve as consultants in their respective fields whether it's offering their expertise to a non-profit, government agency or C-Span TV appearance. The Department also has hosted seminars for the local Boy Scouts Explorer Program for the last three years.

In addition to hosting the SPRI each year, the small faculty has been very productive in public service initiatives as more than 50 have been documented in the self-study ranging from consulting on police videos to serving as reviewers for convention papers.

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

One of the major strengths of the professional and public service component of the Department is the Southern Regional Press Institute, which is now in its 62<sup>nd</sup> year. It attracts about 300 students and professionals from across the Southeast. In recent years, the program has attracted speakers with global

credentials including those with ties to CNN and USA Today. The next SPRI is scheduled for Feb. 21-23, 2013 and the theme is “Politics, the Press and Platforms: The Role of Mass Media in Political Campaigns.” The event, which offers a wealth of networking and recruitment opportunities, is a smorgasbord of training with more than 30 workshops that clearly reflect the digital age. For example, workshops range from “Using Social Media to Report Campus News” targeting high school students to “The Digital Portfolio: Creating an Online Presence” for college students. There is even a session targeting elementary and middle school students titled “Broadcasting: A Hands-On Experience.” The SRPI is the third oldest scholastic institute founded at an HBCU. Alumni often participate in the SRPI as well as professional development events around the fall Homecoming celebration.

The Department has created a wonderful legacy of scholastic journalism, thanks to more than six decades of producing the SRPI. Alumni of the program include world-class media professionals such as Dr. Harold Jackson, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Wanda Lloyd and Alexis Scott-Reeves to name a few. SRPI provides critiques of student works from elementary school through college, and also coordinates an awards contest. In 2012 alone, more than 30 awards were distributed to recognize excellence and encourage the next generation of talent. As outlined in the self-study, key contest categories of the SRPI include high school and college newspapers, documentaries, photo, web design, sports writing and feature writing.

## **Compliance**

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

### **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 adopted the 11 ACEJMC values and competencies as the program learning objectives when it became an independent department in 2002. When ACEJMC added a twelfth value and competency, the Department revised its list to become the “Mass Comm Twelve.” The 12 values and competencies are found on posters in every classroom, handouts throughout the building, and in every syllabus. The Department expresses these values and competencies in the following way:

We acclaim . . .

- Truth, accuracy & fairness
- Freedom of expression
- Ethical ways of thinking
- History & roles of media
- Diversity of people in a global society
- Diversity of people in a domestic society

. . . And emphasize these competencies

- Write clearly & accurately
- Use technology tools & software
- Apply theories in presenting images & information
- Engage in research & critical evaluation
- Understand data & statistics
- Think creatively & analytically

Students are familiar with the values and competencies, which is not surprising considering how pervasively they are displayed throughout the building.

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

The assessment plan was first adopted in spring 2006 and most recently revised in spring 2012. The current plan identifies four direct measures and two indirect measures. They are the same measures used in the 2006 plan, but they have been refined to improve their ability to accurately measure learning and enhance curriculum. The direct measures are internship reviews, senior exit examinations, capstone courses and portfolio reviews. The two indirect measures are student surveys and alumni surveys.

The direct measures have been improved by including the 12 values and competencies as part of the evaluation rubrics. The internship, capstone and portfolio reviews now include evaluation of a student’s demonstration of these values and competencies. The capstone project is now presented to a jury composed of faculty and staff, which will be expanded to include members of the Media Advisory Committee. The capstone project is done in COMM 4106 Communication Practicum and requires each student to complete a project that demonstrates proficiency in his or her program. The students may work with a faculty or staff advisor to complete the project. The jury of Department faculty is able to

identify strengths and weaknesses in the projects that can be used to enhance the programs. For example, in fall 2012, public relations and advertising students included audio and video in their projects and it was apparent that they didn't have the skills to produce this content to professional standards. The result was to increase collaboration between the public relations students and audio/video students.

Efforts to improve the exit exams have resulted in higher scores. The Department learned that students didn't take the exams seriously because they weren't tied to any requirements to graduate. The Department then moved the exam into the capstone course and added a graded value to the performance on the exam. Scores have improved dramatically.

Based on the self-study and conversations with faculty, it appears that the indirect measures, surveys of students and alumni, have been infrequent. The assessment plan states that this information is most useful when data has been collected and compared over several years. The student survey data was compared to the alumni survey data and found that alumni gave more favorable scores to the Department's ability to meet the values and competencies. This data may be misleading because the student survey included freshmen, sophomores and juniors. Since non-seniors haven't completed the program, they are not able to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in meeting its learning objectives. More attention needs to be given to these surveys if they are going to provide useful data.

The previous accreditation report identified the need to continue with systematic assessment. There have been annual efforts to collect data, particularly with senior exit exams and internship evaluations, but it is not apparent that the data has always been used to improve learning through course or curriculum revisions. Efforts to improve the assessment process are evident in the two years prior to the self-study. The site-team recognizes that part of the reason for a lack of regular and systematic assessment is the turnover of faculty and Department leadership. While not an excuse, it explains the difficulty of maintaining a systematic assessment process. The current assessment measures are good ones and have improved over the last two years. Now that the Department is fully staffed, the site-team is more confident that the faculty can develop a systematic process.

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

As noted above, surveys of alumni have occurred, but without regularity. The alumni evaluated how well their educational experience prepared them for their careers. Overall, they were mostly positive in the Department's ability to prepare them in the 12 values and competencies. The exceptions were in the areas of mastering tools and software, acquiring proficiency in statistics, data analysis and evaluation, and in helping them understand media economics. The Media Advisory Board also regularly reviews syllabi and discusses curriculum with the Department. At least one member of the board is an alumnus. The Department also manages a Facebook page, called *The Village*, where faculty, students and alumni interact. This has been used to collect data and information from alumni and was used to distribute the latest alumni survey.

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

The Media Advisory Board is made of professionals. The board is used regularly to review syllabi and discuss curriculum with the Department. The current assessment plan states that they will be included in the future judging of senior projects and portfolios.



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

The Department identifies several improvements that have occurred as a result of assessment data. The current changes to the curriculum are attributed to assessment, including the addition of two courses for diversity. However, these are more the result of polling students rather than assessing learning. Additional laboratory space and computers have benefitted students, but, again, these were identified through polling students and not evaluating outcomes. Improvements to student projects and portfolios have been made to the Communications Practicum course based on evaluations of those student artifacts, but the curriculum hasn't necessarily been evaluated to address strengths or deficiencies.

Despite this unevenness, interviews with the full-time faculty, evaluation of assessment data, and evidence that the faculty members are assessing the assessment instruments, suggest a culture of assessment has increased over the last three years and that there is a commitment to continue.

**Compliance**

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

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

#### Strengths:

- An annual, long-running regional press institute that connects faculty and professionals with aspiring journalists
- Growing student media and co-curricular activities
- Strong technical staff to support faculty and students in skills courses
- University support for improved facilities, new equipment and up-to-date technology
- Strategic use of Title III grants from the U.S. Department of Education
- Hard-working faculty committed to student learning and development
- A creative senior practicum course that readies students for professions

#### Weaknesses:

- Unknown Departmental leadership after June 30
- Heavy advising load for faculty, given their four-four teaching load
- Low scholarship expectations
- Non-systematic application and analysis of assessment instruments over the past six years

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

Standard One: Mission and Governance

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

The University must quickly appoint a strong Chair for the Department to ensure consistent leadership over the next six years.

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

N.A.

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

**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 Department was initially accredited in 2007 and found to be in compliance on all nine standards. The team noted several challenges, which have largely been addressed. One that would still warrant more attention is a “need for additional support to enable faculty members to become even more visible regionally and nationally through participation in academic and professional conferences.” The Department has allocated more money for faculty to *attend* conferences but could go a step further and encourage greater *participation* in conferences through presentations.

**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 written and attractively presented in folders as well as electronically. The team appreciated the report’s organization and the inclusion of photos. Some information was not complete or consistent, but the Department responded promptly to questions and requests for additional information.