

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

Name of Institution: Jacksonville State University  
Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Bill Meehan  
Name of Unit: Department of Communication  
Name and Title of Administrator: Dr. Kingsley Harbor

Date of 2013 - 2014 Accrediting Visit: January 26-29, 2014

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Feb.3-6, 2008  
Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Accreditation  
Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Accreditation

Recommendation by 2013 - 2014 Visiting Team: Re-accreditation

*Prepared and submitted by:*

**Team Chair**

Name and Title: **Jannette L. Dates, Dean Emerita**  
Organization/School: Howard University

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

**Team Members**

Name and Title: **Jan Quarles, Professor**  
Organization/School: Middle Tennessee State University

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

Name and Title: **Thomas Mattesky, Adjunct Professor CBS News (Retired)**  
Organization/School: Georgetown University

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

PART I: General Information

Name of Institution: Jacksonville State University

Name of Unit: Department of Communication

Year of Visit: 2014

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

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges

**2. Indicate the institution's type of control; check more than one if necessary.**

- Private
- Public
- Other (specify)

**3. Provide assurance that the institution has legal authorization to provide education beyond the secondary level in your state. It is not necessary to include entire authorizing documents. Public institutions may cite legislative acts; private institutions may cite charters or other authorizing documents.**

Jacksonville State University's legal authority to operate as a university is provided for under *The Code of Alabama 1975, Title 16, Section 52.*

That code gives the board of trustees power to operate Jacksonville State University by appointing the faculty of the University and other personnel necessary to operate the university. It also gives it power to retain or terminate personnel, fix their salaries or compensation; and increase or reduce the same at its discretion. Furthermore, it is authorized to regulate, alter or modify the government of the University as it may deem advisable; to prescribe courses of instruction, rates of tuition and fees; to confer such academic and honorary degrees as are usually conferred by institutions of similar character; and to do whatever else it may deem best for promoting the interest of the university.

**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: February 3-5, 2008

**5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? May 2008**

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

## MISSION OF DEPARTMENT

Date of adoption: August 2003

The purpose of the Department of Communication is to provide students with a professional education, within the context of a broad liberal arts and sciences curriculum, which will enable them to compete effectively in a variety of fields of communication. The concepts of learning to read, write, speak, think critically, reason quantitatively and qualitatively, use technology, and apply theory are inherent in the BA in communication. Within this context, four major goals guide the operation of the Department of Communication: 1) To impart to students the practical skills appropriate for their communication disciplines of interest; 2) To develop in students an understanding of research and quantitative applications relevant and appropriate to journalism and mass communications; 3) To develop in students an understanding of the history and theories of mass communications and how to apply them to the journalism and mass communications profession; and 4) To imbue students with the skills that enable them to apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press and practice ethical principles in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

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

Semesters of 16 weeks

Quarters of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

Summer sessions of 12 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 by the university for graduation. Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.

128 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 required

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty

Person in Charge

Broadcasting  
 Digital Journalism  
 Public Relations

Dr. J. Patrick McGrail  
 Mr. Jerry G. Chandler  
 Dr. Augustine Ihator

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

Full-time students in spring 2014 = 5,388  
 Full-time and part-time students, spring 2014 = 7,948

**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 (Spring 2014)</b>	
Broadcasting	86
Print Journalism (Prior to Digital Journalism)	7
Public Relations	71
Pre-major/Undecided	----
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>

**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.**

**Enrollment**

<u>Skills Course</u>	<u>Fall 2013</u>	<u>Spring 2014</u>
COM 205 Intro to Broadcast Writing	18	18
COM 301 Intro to TV Production	16	19
COM 302 Intro to Audio Production	16	15
COM 315-01 Intro to News	18	15
COM 315-02 Intro to News	19	16
COM 320 Video Production and Editing	16	13
COM 325 Publication Design	18	18
COM 340 Public Relations Writing	12	15
COM 375 Internet Production	14	8
COM 420 Advanced Reporting	3	5
COM 440 PR Campaign Management	7	15
COM 470 Advanced Electronic News	6	15

**15. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2013 – 2014 academic year:  
 Percentage increase or decrease in three years:  
 Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:**

Our annual budgets for 2010-2011 = \$560,452.39; 2011-2012 = \$560,383.39; 2012-2013 = \$583,486.49; and 2013-2014 = \$603,002.96. This amounts to a budget decrease of 0.0001 percent in 2011-2012; an increase of 4.1 percent in 2012-13; and another increase of 3.3 percent in 2013-14 (Please see Table 10, Budget and Expenditures, in Standard 7, #1).

Our full-time faculty salaries for the 2013-2014 session are \$353,212.02.

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

\*Dr. Jeffrey Hedrick, Assistant Professor

\*Mr. Jerry Chandler, Asst. Professor

\*Dr. Augustine Ihator, Professor

\*Dr. Kingsley O. Harbor, Professor

\*Dr. J. Patrick McGrail, Assistant Professor

\*None of our faculty members is on leave or sabbaticals now.

**17. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2013. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2013. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2014, please provide the updated list of faculty at time of visit.)**

**Part-time/adjunct faculty in spring 2013**

Mr. Mike Stedham, part-time faculty and manager of the student media

Ms. Pamela Hill, adjunct faculty

Ms. Anita Stiefel, adjunct faculty

**Part-time/adjunct faculty in Fall 2013**

Mr. Mike Stedham, part-time faculty and manager of the student media

Ms. Pamela Hill, adjunct faculty

Ms. Anita Stiefel, adjunct faculty

**Part-time/adjunct faculty in Spring 2014**

Mr. Mike Stedham, part-time faculty and manager of the student media

Ms. Pamela Hill, adjunct faculty

Ms. Anita Stiefel, adjunct faculty

Dr. Stacey Mann, Assistant Professor

**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 Percent	80 or more semester hours outside the major		65 or more semester hours in liberal arts/sciences	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2012-2013 academic year	<u>32</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>96.9</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>100</u>
2011-2012 academic year	<u>44</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>100</u>

## Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

*The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment.*

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

**(a) The unit has a written mission statement and a written strategic or long-range plan that provides vision and direction for its future, identifies needs and resources for its mission and goals and is supported by university administration outside the unit.**

A broadcasting concentration was first offered at the University in 1986 in the Department of Communication with print journalism as an ancillary concentration. Then, as a unit in the College of Communication and Fine Arts, beginning in 1988-89 the department offered a BA in Communication. In the 1990s, the department began to focus on broadcasting, print and new media. During these years (and currently), the unit worked closely with the University's campus radio station and weekly student-run newspaper, and it was additionally supported through a special fund endowed by the Ayers family, owners of *The Anniston Star*, the city's major newspaper.

By 2013-14, residing in the College of Education and Professional Studies, the department has a written mission statement that clearly provides a vision and direction for its future. With its concentrations changed to broadcasting, public relations and digital media, the department developed a new mission statement when it decided to seek ACEJMC accreditation in 2002. The mission was distilled into four major goals that branched out into 11 (now 12) departmental objectives in consonance with the 11 (now 12) professional values and competencies established by ACEJMC. The University's upper administration was continuously supportive of the department: in its quest for accreditation, in its funding as compared with other units on campus, in hiring faculty as needed, ...etc.

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

The unit has a written strategic plan, as well as a faculty policy manual, handbook and other documents that provide vision and direction for its future and that allow for substantive faculty governance and oversight. The faculty began to design a strategic plan in 2009 by identifying specific and measurable objectives that could be accomplished within five years. They identified and articulated their purpose -- and products -- and how to best achieve that purpose. The head of the department, with continued faculty input, developed the five-year goals into a step-by-step plan that was implemented following the scheduled timeline. At the time of the site visit, the department was in the fifth year of the five-year plan.

All full-time faculty members participate in faculty meetings, while part-time faculty members are welcome to participate in departmental meetings, and some do when they can. The Department of Communication has typical standing committees that meet regularly. Students serve on most departmental committees, and the department seeks and obtains their input into educational policies through these committees and senior

exit surveys.

**(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's head reports to the Dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies. In his 11<sup>th</sup> year as head, the head is respected by colleagues within the department and across the campus. The position of department head is recognized as a primary leadership position at the university. The head manages five budgets—department, newspaper, radio station, endowed chair, and foundation accounts. He oversees faculty hiring, class scheduling, curriculum development and management; and he represents the department to the higher administration and to the outside public. The head interprets university policies and procedures to faculty, staff, and students, and participates in their implementation. He is an effective spokesperson in dealings with other units on the campus, as well as with upper administration. He has worked to develop and maintain a strong foundation for the department and is respected for his leadership and for the program's robust development. He is active in national communication associations.

The unit head was encouraged by upper administrators to become more collaborative in working with them to achieve the goals he and his faculty mutually agree are needed to move the program to the next level. That level includes development of a larger and stronger faculty that focuses on scholarship and creative activities as they engage students in the processes for their development; subsequently, the unit can assess the feasibility of establishing a graduate program. With such movement by the unit's leadership, the upper administration believes the department can become one of the showcase programs on campus.

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

There is a well-developed University-wide system for selecting and evaluating administrators, involving faculty and administrators both within and outside of the unit. There are files on faculty and staff searches and hiring.

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

In addition to the policies and procedures of faculty governance, faculty members can take up concerns with the department head. The unit has a clearly stated system for handling different types of concerns and issues. It also has systems for handling student concerns involving grade disputes and other student issues.

## COMPLIANCE



## PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

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

### Overview

The Department of Communication at Jacksonville State currently has three sequences: Broadcasting, Digital Journalism and Public Relations. In spring 2014, the department had 164 majors across the three areas. Broadcasting had 86 students, Print Journalism had seven but this was prior to the deletion of the print journalism concentration in Fall 2013 and the replacement with the new concentration in digital journalism. In Spring 2014, seven digital journalism students were enrolled. Not all students have changed their major so the numbers are soft.

Students must take 128 hours to graduate, and 48 of those hours will be in the core and major areas. Seventy-two hours must be taken outside the department and 50 of those hours must be in the liberal arts as defined by the university. The curriculum, catalog and advising materials were all updated to reflect that change for 2013-2014.

Students share the following 24 hours of core courses as of Fall 2013:

COM 200, Introduction to Mass Communication (3 hrs.)  
COM 380, Communication Law (3 hrs.)  
COM 390, Communication Ethics (3 hrs.)  
COM 415, Mass Com Research (3 hrs.)  
COM 491, Internship (3 hrs.)  
COM 404, Media Workshop 1 (1 hr.) (optional for PR, but recommended)  
COM 405, Media Workshop 2 (1 hr.) (optional for PR, but recommended)  
COM 406, Media Workshop 3 (1 hr.) (optional for PR, but recommended)  
COM 345, Social Media and Society (3 hrs.)  
COM 385, Multimedia Production (3 hrs.)

The department increased the number of core courses by one course (3 hours) to enhance capacity for digital communication instruction.

### **Broadcast sequence**

Students in the broadcasting sequence take the following courses: Intro to Broadcast Writing, Intro to TV Production, Intro to Audio Production, Video Production and Editing, and Advanced Electronic News. They also take six hours of COM electives.

### **Digital Journalism Sequence**

Students in this sequence take Intro to News, Publication Design, Internet Production, Media Features and Advanced Reporting, plus six hours of COM electives. One of the electives is a new Social Media course.

## **Public Relations**

Students take Intro to News, Publication Design, Intro to Public Relations, Public Relations Writing, Public Relations Case Studies, Public Relations Campaign Management and six hours of COM electives.

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

**(a) Revised: The unit requires that students take a minimum of 72 semester credit hours (or 104 quarter credit hours) required for a baccalaureate degree outside of the unit and meet the liberal arts and sciences-general education requirements of the institution. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet these requirements.**

In academic year 2011-2012, the Department of Communication at Jacksonville State had 32 graduates, and 31 of the students had 80 or more semester hours outside the major (or 96.9 percent) and all had 65 or more semester hours in liberal arts. In 2012-2013, 44 students graduated and all were in compliance with ACEJMC expectations with 100 percent in both categories.

**(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.)**

Prior to fall 2013, the department defined 11 learning outcomes that it designated the JSU 4+7 (now 5). The four referenced values and the seven referenced competencies. The department has integrated the JSU 4 + 7 (now 5) into every aspect of the curriculum in a commendable fashion. This framework addresses the balance of theoretical and practical courses and every syllabus includes which values and competencies are addressed in each class session. Graphics of the JSU 4+7 (now 5) have long been in place in Self Hall and students can cite them. All syllabi include the JSU 4+7 (now 5) as well as the listing of courses required for graduation.

The department teaches both a required course and an elective course in communication ethics and law; both ethics and law are required courses and have been required for more than 10 years. The department teaches a separate elective course in communication theory, but they conceptualize theory in a broad way "to include the basic operations of journalism and mass communication entities" in other courses. Media history is taught as part of one or more courses in each sequence, and an examination of syllabi shows that the unit provides both courses and theoretical and professional skills. The department also developed a course objective handbook to assure that multiple sections of courses (there are few) are consistent.

## **Broadcasting**

The Broadcast Production Sequence's Outcome Map shows how the infusion of the JSU 4+7 (now 5) is woven into the curriculum. The faculty members have conscientiously and creatively designed a system that weaves in the theoretical and conceptual courses, along with the professional skills courses, in a way that can systematically achieve the values and competencies defined by the Accrediting Council. All courses in the sequence touch on many of the JSU 4+7 (now 5), but each course emphasizes those

values and competencies that were designated as one of their major objectives. The courses are presented in a logical sequence and clearly explain to students what is expected of them. The rubrics prepared by the faculty offer guidance on how to evaluate student performance—and help the students and the faculty members as they assess each student’s work.

### **Digital Journalism**

In the fall of 2013, the department replaced its print journalism concentration with a concentration in digital journalism. The department believed this new sequence would better prepare its students for ongoing technical and other changes in today’s digital workplace. This newly designed sequence provides a solid balance between theoretical and conceptual courses and professional skills training to achieve the competencies and values defined by ACEJMC. All courses in this sequence touch on as many of the university’s 4+7 (now 5) as possible, and an easy to understand Digital Journalism Concentration Outcome Map provided to students details which of those values and competencies is emphasized in each course.

### **Public Relations**

Students in the sequence benefit from both conceptual and professional skills courses. The department cast the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies into the JSU 4+7 (now 5) and includes those competencies in major course objectives and learning outcomes. For instance, ethics and law values and competencies serve as major course objectives in the majority of the public relations core courses (ethics for eight of the 15 core courses and law for eight). Public relations history is covered in both the Introduction to Mass Communication and Introduction to Public Relations and Case Studies in Public Relations. Professional skills are covered in all the PR core courses and more specifically in Intro to News, Publication Design and Public Relations Writing as well as in Case Studies and Campaigns. Students also gain experience in the workplace with the required Internship. The unit evaluates its performance on this balance in its assessment program.

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

### **Broadcasting**

The courses in the Broadcast Production Sequence reflect current professional expectations

### **Digital Journalism**

This newly created sequence was developed because the department believed the instruction in its previous print sequence was not sufficiently current to meet the demands of today’s digital media world. Courses have been crafted to teach the digital, technological and multimedia competencies required in today’s newsrooms. Syllabi reflect instruction that is demanding and current and there are ample opportunities provided by the department as well as the university to recognize achievements in teaching, learning and performance. Even with its heavy emphasis on new and developing media, the digital journalism sequence also stresses the importance of solid,

traditional journalism. Clear evidence of that commitment is the digital concentration's capstone requirement, which is an advanced reporting course.

### **Public Relations**

Public relations students in Case Studies and Campaign Management clearly explore digital and multimedia aspects of public relations, referring often to social media inclusion in the class projects. Students in the sequence learn digital technological skills in the required Publication Design course and many take Internet Publishing as an elective. In that class they work with blogs, websites and social media. In addition, if they choose Media Workshop as an elective, they work in a student media organization. Students in general and sequence-specific meetings spoke highly of their experience. One student said that, as a digital native, she thought the social media class would be repetitive, but she learned many new aspects of proper social media use. When asked if the public relations courses were current and demanding, another student said she thought the major was one of the most challenging in the department because students did so much project-based work that required independent research and knowledge of current issues in practice. "It's the best preparation for the real world," she added.

### **Achievements in teaching and learning**

The department and the university recognize achievements in teaching and learning. One of the full-time faculty members teaching public relations has received teaching awards from students and has garnered alumni recognition as well. Another has consistently high teaching evaluations. Achievements in student learning are recognized in many ways, from appointment into leadership in student media to an annual Communication Week with student awards in academics, practical skills, character, leadership, and peer-to-peer top staff awards. The department also presents its highest award, the John S. Turner award, to a student on the basis of GPA, character, service to the department and leadership.

#### **(d) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses; the ratio in skills and laboratory sections, whether on-site or online, should not exceed 20-1.**

An examination of the number of students enrolled in skills courses in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 show that the department is in compliance with this guideline. The highest number of students in a skills course was 19 in Intro to News, and the lowest enrollment was in Advanced Reporting in Fall 2013, with three students.

#### **(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.)**

An external internship, COM 491, is required of all students, and in this sense, the department plays more than an advocacy role. Not all universities require the internship and JSU makes it an important part of the core. The unit also encourages opportunities for professional experience in other ways.

In the Media Workshops required of Broadcasting and Digital Journalism majors, students gain internal practicum experience working with faculty with extensive professional experience and with other students on the Chanticleer, the radio station or

in Television Services. In meetings, students knew the importance of the internships and noted that several students had been hired for jobs in broadcasting, public relations and print based on their preparation for and performance in their internships.

Professionals also visit campus, both for individual classes and for Communications Week. Students in public relations cases and campaigns classes made field trips to client sites and worked alongside communication professionals (often JSU grads) as they conducted research and planned campaigns. Students in other sequences had much the same experience. Of note here is also the level of faculty experience in professional activities. Several not only have professional backgrounds but also continue to work in the industry.

An external internship, COM 491, is also required of all communication majors and is taken one time for three hours credit for 350 hours of experience in the workplace. The number of internship hours required will change from 350 to 250 beginning in Summer 2014.

An internship coordinator helps place a student in a professional workplace in which the skills and competencies students have been taught can be put to use. Faculty members take a supportive role in advising students on possible internship sites but the students must secure the placement on their own and meet all required deadlines. The student must perform a minimum of 350 hours of supervised work and is required to complete a daily activity log as well as write a two-page critique of an article about a subject related to the internship placement. Fifty percent of the student's grade is determined by the input from the student's on-the-job supervisor. The internship coordinator grades the student's journal and required two-page critique as the other fifty percent. The same faculty member coordinates and evaluates that portion of the internship experience for all three sequences.

### **Broadcasting**

Broadcasting students must take the external internship, and students have interned at TV 24, and many radio stations in the area as well as at Central Sports South. One December graduate moved into a job as morning producer within a month of completing her studies and graduating.

### **Digital Journalism**

An internship is a requirement for a student enrolled in the department's digital journalism sequence. It also is considered a vital part of the student's preparation for professional work. In addition to the internship, the department encourages its digital sequence students to work for campus media, especially the student newspaper, which has both print and online editions. It also recommends that students seek other on-the-job experiences by networking with industry professional during the department's annual Communication Week events and alumni reunions.

### **Public Relations**

Internships are required in the sequence, and supervisors at the numerous organizations contacted by site team members praised the preparedness and professionalism of the public relations interns. One supervisor said, "students come with the skills we need, and we get to pick the best of the best." Upon graduation,

several students in public relations have taken full-time positions in the same organization where they interned (examples include the United Way and One Oak Ranch).

**A future direction?**

In discussions with students, faculty and administrators, one question consistently arose: Does the department need a graduate degree in communication? Students said they wanted and would stay for such a degree, and several faculty voiced interest in developing a graduate degree with a specific focus but said more faculty positions would be needed. Administrators said they would be supportive of such an initiative if the department had maximized its potential in the undergraduate area by further strengthening the curricular connection with professional practice and acquiring sufficient resources. Such a direction would also depend on demonstrated need and feasibility studies required by the state system.

**COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

*The unit has an inclusive program that values domestic and global diversity, and serves and reflects society.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department has a diversity plan that was implemented according to a timeframe established in 2002, when the plan was first written; it was updated in the summer of 2013. Since 2002, the set targets and goals have been reached, with few exceptions, and the unit has made steady progress toward achievement of most of the elements in the plan.

Diversity milestones for the department include the following: between 2002 and 2007 there was a 73 percent increase in minority fulltime faculty; the two African American fulltime associate professors were promoted to full professors with tenure; since 2008 there has been a 54.5 percent increase in minority fulltime faculty; there has been an 87 percent infusion of diversity within the Broadcasting core curriculum; the minority enrollment rate averaged nearly 50 percent between 2009-2013; and the minority graduation rate went from 28.9 to 47.5 between 2009 and 2013.

**(b) The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. The unit's curriculum includes instruction in issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society.**

The department's curricula contain issues and perspectives that address diversity. Each concentration has an outcome map that focuses on implementation of the JSU 4 + 7 (now 5) that parallel ACEJMC's professional values and competencies. Each of the concentrations has diversity as one of its major objectives, and there was a demonstration that the objectives were met during instruction in the courses and in meetings with students.

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

The unit's department chair is a Nigerian American male. Hired 12 years ago, the chair has been a campus leader on diversity and inclusiveness --and growth on the diversity front in the department has been dramatic. Under his leadership there are now three minority faculty members of the five full-time faculty; the department at one point hired an African American female (now gone elsewhere) to serve as its endowed chair; the unit has a high retention rate among minority faculty and staff members, retaining all three faculty members in the past six years; and the chair assisted in helping two minority faculty members achieve tenure and promotion to full professorships with the third currently working toward that goal, as well. However, the department, with

support from the university, acknowledged that it must actively recruit at least one female faculty member, particularly in light of the fact that the student body is 58 percent female. There are three female adjuncts.

**(d) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit and retain a student population reflecting the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population it serves, with special attention to recruiting under-represented groups.**

The department has developed aggressive recruitment strategies for seeking, recruiting and retaining minority students. By using the department's scholastic journalism activities, they have been able to reach out to high school students in the community—with particular emphasis on African Americans-- with increasing success. The department head has led the unit's recruitment and retention efforts. For example, he seeks out minority students with slipping GPAs and counsels them. The unit's minority enrollment has grown steadily and averaged 50 percent between 2009-2013, and its minority graduation rate moved from 28.9 percent to 47.5 percent between 2009-2013.

**(e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and discrimination, in keeping with the acceptable cultural practices of the population it serves, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.**

The unit has a disability accommodation statement included in each syllabus and the university installed equipment and facilities to accommodate persons with physical disabilities. The unit supports all aspects of diversity and inclusiveness.

## COMPLIANCE



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

*The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit's mission.*

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

The Department of Communication is small, with five full-time faculty members carrying the majority of the teaching responsibilities. The five include two full professors, and three assistant professors. Part-time faculty include three or four instructors (depending on the semester) with one of those also serving as manager of the student media, and all have professional experience in their relevant fields.

#### **(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 is part of the College of Education and Professional Studies and as such adheres to the selection and evaluation processes of the college. Selection of new faculty proceeds through higher administration and national searches ensue. Selected candidates are interviewed by a committee including all full-time faculty members, a part-time faculty member and a student. Candidates must meet the minimum standards required by Jacksonville State and must be approved by the Dean, the Provost/Vice-President and the President. Part-time faculty must meet the university's minimum requirement and be approved by the Dean and Provost. Team members examined both policies for hiring and the various evaluation forms. Faculty members say the process is clear and that they receive the information they need.

All teaching faculty (full-time and part-time) are evaluated by student evaluations at the end of every semester. In addition, all full-time faculty members undergo a comprehensive evaluation at the end of the spring semester each year. The College of Education and Professional Services changed its evaluation instrument two years ago and now uses an instrument that includes a teaching, research and service portfolio and a rubric of criteria and scales for measuring qualities defined in the portfolio. Student evaluations are now handled using the online IDEA program.

Faculty members submit activities for the year online to the department head (including a self-narrative detailing how the faculty member has met his or her goals in all three areas for the year as well as goals for the next academic year). The department head then meets with the faculty member to discuss this and both sign an evaluation form. Part-time faculty members use the same system, but they are only evaluated on the aspects of teaching effectiveness.

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

Full-time faculty members teach the majority of the 29 communication courses listed in the JSU catalogue. In 2010-2011, the number was 100 percent, while in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, the number was 89.7 percent. Although part-time faculty members do participate in public service in many ways, only full-time faculty are evaluated in a formal, systematic way for research/creative activity and public service activity.

The unit and central administrators agreed that hiring a staff person to handle academic and some career advising would help reduce the extraordinary advising load some faculty members bear in addition to their teaching and other faculty responsibilities.

**(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 JSU Department of Communication is small, with five full-time faculty members and supplementation of that number with adjuncts. At the time of the site visit, the department had two professors, and three assistant professors, all male. One of the professors is primarily a scholar but with professional experience. He is active in professional organizations on a national basis and also serves as a board member for an international consortium. The second professor has been both a scholar and a communications consultant. The three assistant professors also bring both scholarly and professional experience to their positions, with one, who is a tenured assistant professor, being an internationally known aviation journalist with more than 2,500 articles while another has extensive experience with technology. The third faculty member publishes extensively and has a background in broadcasting and theatrical production. All are active in professional organizations. At the time of the site visit, three female adjuncts taught classes. One teaches both Introduction to Public Relations and Mass Media Ethics, while another teaches Media Literacy and Social Media and Society. A third teaches an Introduction to News. All three have professional experience. The unit head and central administrators noted that a top priority for them will be hiring at least one full-time female faculty member.

Faculty members receive funds for external workshops and they also attend faculty development activities in the college. From 2011 to 2013, they attended 11 workshops including online course development, iPad training, Blackboard Collaborate, Creating a Podcast and Live Text Training.

The Ayers Chair has been vacant since May 2013, and from discussions it appears that funding and the availability of a high-profile individual with enough significant experience have played roles in the continued vacancy. Filling the position again will allow increased integration of professional experience into the classroom and help lift the profile of the program.

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

Both full-time and part-time faculty members are evaluated each semester by students using the online IDEA program. Instruction is also evaluated in the annual end-of-the-year assessment in terms of course preparation and delivery (which includes other criteria such as quality of syllabi, use of technology, pedagogical innovations, etc.), professional development and advisement (including quality of advisement sheet, accessibility and the online student evaluations.)

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

Faculty members and administrators from across campus consistently praised the members of the department for their preparation of outstanding students and their participation in leadership activities on campus. One participant noted that JSU students were often more well prepared than their counterparts at other universities in the area for internships, the first job and beyond.

**COMPLIANCE**

## **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:**

Jacksonville State University policies support scholarly research and creative activity and annual evaluations consider research/creative activity as one of the three major criteria. The department, with five full-time faculty members, adopts a broad definition of research that includes both faculty members' professional and scholarly interest. The university considers itself primarily a teaching institution but realizes in a JSU goal that pedagogy must be "cushioned with scholarship in order for it to be factual, reflective of contemporary knowledge-evolution, and effective."

From Fall 2008 to Fall 2013, the five faculty members who engaged in scholarship and creative activity as part of their full-time position requirements produced one edited book, two book chapters, eight articles in refereed journals, 24 refereed conference papers, three invited academic papers, five book reviews, more than 20 articles in non-refereed publications, and two non-juried creative works. The department received three internal and two external grants.

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

From the time an individual joins the JSU faculty, he or she is made aware of the research/creative activity requirements. Such activities are tied to employment as a faculty member and to promotion, tenure and merit. The department supports and emphasizes the importance of these activities by paying 100 percent of the cost for all faculty presentations at conferences and for memberships in professional organizations. Faculty may also be assigned lighter teaching loads to help them complete research and creative activities. The university also offers additional financial incentives such as self-improvement grants. Professional development leaves are available after six years and leaves of absence may be taken. JSU also holds an annual faculty research award forum and several departmental faculty have received rewards.

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

JSU has detailed criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure. In addition to the research/creative activity requirements on a university level, the College of Education and Professional Studies (where the department is housed) has even more specific guidelines and enumerates them in promotion and tenure documents and in the annual faculty evaluation instrument. An example of this guideline is found in the self-study, as it notes that "promotion from assistant to associate professor requires "sustained scholarship with a minimum of five (5) major scholarly activities, to include at least

three (3) publications.” Similar statements are in place for tenure and for other levels of promotion.

The department has one professor without a terminal degree who has gained tenure and promotion. This is not the norm. His tenure and promotion was based on creative activity as the department broadly defines scholarship, but the university does not have a policy that extends tenure or promotion to faculty without the terminal degree.

Faculty members said expectations were clearly outlined.

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

Faculty members in the small department of five have terminal degrees (Ph.D.) or extensive professional experience. The department’s definition of scholarship is broad and includes both the scholarship of discovery (traditional research) and the scholarship of application (expected of those with professional experience.) One professor works in creative activities while four pursue traditional research.

**(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.**

For this small faculty, attendance at conferences and refereed conference presentations are adequate, with 24 presentations since the last accreditation visit. The number of research activities noted in the overview show that the five professors work actively to communicate in the larger academic and professional communities, but administrators noted that, across the faculty, more scholarship could be done.

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

The department hosts several annual programs to bring professionals and intellectuals to campus to interact with students and faculty. Examples include the Ayers Lecture Series, Communication Week and the unit’s participation in the *Anniston Star’s* Community Journalism Week. Students noted that faculty members really wanted them to think and to develop new media habits to be exposed to different points of view and that they actively encouraged energetic discussions in class.

## COMPLIANCE

## Standard 6: Student Services

*The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.*

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

#### **(a) Faculty and/or professional advising staff ensure that students are aware of unit and institutional requirements for graduation and receive career and academic advising.**

Academic advising and career counseling are high priorities of the department. The university as a whole places strong emphasis on advising and assigns significant weight to the “teaching and advising” criteria for annual faculty evaluations.

Upon arrival on campus, each new communication student is assigned an adviser within the department and is provided a checklist corresponding to his or her selected sequence. Additionally, a one-page supplement that details graduation requirements is included in every course syllabus. Academic advising is an on-going component of the relationship between students and their advisers. Career counseling becomes part of that relationship as early as the sophomore year when students begin exploring internship options.

Students interviewed by the site team expressed satisfaction with the counseling and information they are receiving, and a student survey conducted in 2013 indicated more than three-quarters of the respondents rated the department’s advising to be good, very good or excellent.

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

Students told site team interviewers that they’re generally pleased with the availability and accessibility of faculty members. The department requires faculty members to keep regular office hours, at least ten hours each week during the fall and spring semesters and five hours each week during the university’s short term. Faculty members have an “open door” policy for students during office hours and students also can make appointments.

Faculty office hours and phone numbers are included in the syllabus for each course and that information also is available from the department secretary. Additionally, business cards of faculty members are displayed in the department’s main office. Students told the site team that some faculty members also welcome calls at home or on their cells.

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

Following encouragement from the last site team, the department developed and distributes to each student a handbook detailing requirements, policies and procedures. Similar information is available in the university's catalog along with a semester-by-semester breakdown of courses that students are required to take. The department also maintains a comprehensive and regularly updated website. Students told the site team the department's website has become a fast go-to location for information and guidance.

The department utilizes its annual faculty/student meeting to inform and communicate with students, and any changes in methods, policies and procedures are communicated to students directly through their email accounts. At least one faculty member also is using social media, including Facebook, to communicate with his students. Additionally, posters are displayed prominently throughout the department's home building, Self Hall, detailing information about meetings, activities and other events. The unit head and central administrators agreed that hiring a fulltime staff person to handle academic and some career advising will help strengthen the program.

**(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.**

Some students observed that the department could do more to promote its products, services and activities—and that such promotions would help to increase enrollments as well as perceptions of the department across the campus.

A 24-hour radio station affiliated with NPR and a weekly, student-staffed newspaper serve the Jacksonville State University community. Both media outlets offer training opportunities and hands-on experience for department students and both are managed by a full-time department staffer who reports directly to the department head. Students told the site team that their work at the radio station and student newspaper complement their classroom instruction. Students face regular deadlines as well as ethical, legal and other on-the-job issues. The newspaper's editor is selected by the department's faculty and four of the newspaper's staffers, including the editor, are paid by the department for their work.

Other extra-curricular opportunities for students are available at JSU's Television Service, which provides television coverage of the university's sports teams, and at JSU's News Bureau, which is the university's public relations arm. Department students also work for the university's marketing wing.

Professional opportunities are supported and enriched by the department through sponsorships of a Society of Professional Journalists chapter and also the department-developed JSU Public Relations Organization. The 2008 site team encouraged the department to explore affiliation with the Public Relations Student Society of America

(PRSSA). While affiliation with PRSSA remains a goal of the department, budgetary constraints have prevented the department from achieving that goal. This site team encourages the department to continue pursuit of a PRSSA affiliation.

Students' professional and intellectual interests are served by the Ayers Lecture Series, which each year brings a high profile journalist or media professional to campus to address current issues in journalism or the media. The department also sponsors an annual Communication Week, which is a four-day series of lectures and workshops involving invited media professionals.

To compete for national and regional recognition, students can be included in more submissions to communication associations and organizations that review and assess scholarly and creative work.

**(e) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success. Clear and accurate data are published on the accredited unit's website.**

The university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment compiles university-wide and department-specific data on enrollment, retention, graduation rates and the department is using that information to develop a strategy to improve its retentions and graduations. The department also is using the results from a survey of students to help shape that strategy and it is exploring enrolling faculty members in additional workshops designed to improve retentions and graduations. According to figures made available to the site team, the university-wide retention rates for first-time, full-time and freshmen from 2010 through 2012 were 67.82, 66.76 and 87.94 percents respectively. Those rates for the department over the same period were 68.29, 77.27 and 87.88 percent. Those statistics are available from a variety of printed and online sources, including the department's website.

## COMPLIANCE



## Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

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

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources, which also includes funding for the student newspaper and campus radio station. Like other units within the university, the department's funds are allocated by higher administration on the basis of need as demonstrated by the unit's strategic plan and assessment outcomes. Other factors, including staff size, also affect resource allocation.

The department's involvement of faculty and staff in the budget process is a year-round effort. Needs identified by staffers at faculty meetings are considered and faculty-supplied requests are solicited and collected by the department's secretary. All budgeting needs and decisions are linked to the department's mission that reflects the larger university mission statement as well as ACEJMC standards. Upper administrators encourage department heads to carefully assess their needs and make requests based on their visions for future development. The site team encourages that as well.

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

The size of a department's faculty and staff plays a large role in resource allocation at Jacksonville State University. Market forces, such as the demand for a department's graduates, also are factored into the funding equation. The department believes it has the full support of the university's administration and that it receives its fair share of resources. It has no complaints about its budget or the resources and support provided by the administration. As one faculty member put it, "we don't always get everything we want, but we get what we need."

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

The unit is housed in Self Hall where courses are taught in five classrooms and labs. The classrooms include an auditorium-like facility that seats 77 and a smaller, more traditional classroom which can accommodate 25 students. The other facilities are a 21-station Macintosh computer lab and two television studios. With the exception of the larger of the two television studios, these facilities as well as the department's library are fitted with multimedia instructional equipment or "smart" technology.

As part of a campus-wide program labeled "The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom," the department's classrooms in the all of 2013 also received an infusion of additional

technology, including Apple televisions and HDMI splitters. Both students and faculty members mentioned the added flexibility and benefits these upgrades have brought to the department's instruction. The department's self-study described its faculty offices as "fairly moderate" when compared to several other institutions. However, neither the size of faculty offices nor their furnishings and equipment were cited by faculty members as areas of concern.

**(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.**

Overall, the department's equipment is state of the art, digital gear similar to what students would use in professional newsrooms and agencies. Students and faculty interviewed by the site team reported few issues regarding accessibility or availability. Much of the department's gear is new or has been upgraded within the past year. Newly purchased broadcast equipment includes: six Sony HXR-NX5U video field cameras and Varizoom VZ-TK74A tripods; four licenses for Adobe Production Premium CS6 video editing software; three JVC GY-HM790U studio cameras; 3 Prompter People Flex D17 teleprompters; one Tricaster 855 production video switcher; and one Blackmagic Hyper Deck disk recorder with two 480 GB hard drives.

The radio station and student newspaper also offer professional quality equipment. The radio station, WLJS-FM 91.9, features a fully-equipped broadcast studio and control room. The weekly student newspaper, *The Chanticleer*, features three iMac computers offering InDesign, PhotoShop and other programs as well as two Nikon digital cameras. The paper's staffers also use the department's computer lab, which features Macintosh equipment and the Adobe Creative Suite package of software for graphic design and web development.

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

The department provides a library for students and faculty, which is located in Self Hall. The department head told the site team he is working with the university's main library to provide additional books and other material. WiFi is available throughout Self Hall and across the university campus.

## COMPLIANCE

## Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

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

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**(a) The unit consults and communicates regularly with its alumni and is actively engaged with its alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching, whether on site or online, current and to promote the exchange of ideas.**

The department maintains contact with alumni and working professionals through annually scheduled events that include an alumni reunion, a four-day program known as “Communication Week” and a journalism lecture series held in collaboration with a regional newspaper, The Anniston Star. These programs attract alumni back to campus and bring working professionals into the department’s classrooms and learning laboratories. They also afford students an opportunity to share their work and resumes with prospective employers, while providing faculty members the ability to consult face-to-face with professionals about changes and developments in the current workplace. Several students interviewed by the site team specifically cited these programs for their networking opportunities. Several faculty members cited the interaction with working professionals afforded by these programs as tools that help keep their teaching and the department’s curriculum current. In addition to these programs, the department’s outreach includes an annual alumni newsletter and a survey of alumni conducted every three to four years. Alumni also serve on the department’s advisory board, which meets twice a year, and helps place students in internships and jobs. A link to an alumni directory is included in the department’s website.

**(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.**

In collaboration with *The Anniston Star* newspaper, the university hosts the Ayers Lecture Series, which brings a prominent speaker to campus for two days each year to address contemporary issues facing journalists and media professionals. The 26<sup>th</sup> Ayers Lecture was delivered in March 2013 by Pulitzer Prize winning author and journalist Diane McWhorter. Others Ayers lecturers have included media luminaries such as Judy Woodruff, Tom Johnson and R.W. Apple. In addition to the speech, the lecturer visits classrooms and meets with students in formal and informal settings to discuss challenges and issues facing current and future journalists and others in the media. According to students interviewed by the site team, similar opportunities for student exposure to professional viewpoints and insights often surface during the department’s annual Communication Week. That program draws working media professionals, many of them alumni, back to campus for four days of lectures and informal sessions with current students. The department also assumes a leadership role in providing professional guidance to the university’s student media. The university’s newspaper

and radio station, for example, are managed by a full-time department employee.

**(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.**

During the current academic year, the department has resumed its practice of paying fully for the professional memberships in national organizations of its full-time faculty members. Citing budgetary constraints, that practice had been suspended for the past two years. With the department's support, all full-time instructors hold memberships in at least one professional organization. Those range from The Society of Professional Journalists to The Public Relations Society of America.

One faculty member continues to work professionally as a freelancer, and there is evidence of recent continuing education and professional workshop participation by staff members. The department also pays the expenses of faculty members who present papers at professional or academic conferences and it encourages faculty members with terminal degrees to serve as reviewers for conferences and scholarly journals.

**(d) The unit contributes to its communities through *unit*-based service projects and events, service learning of its students, and civic engagement of its faculty.**

Department staffers have moderated debates by local political candidates; they've provided pro bono public relations support to local non-profits; and, they've served community organizations from local churches to the Girls Scouts of North-Central Alabama. Civic engagement clearly is a priority of the department and its faculty. As a unit, the department's service projects largely have been aimed at assisting high school journalists and the development of high school newspapers in the region. The department hosts and staffs an annual summer workshop for high school journalists and its Society of Professional Journalists chapter has dispatched department majors to speak to high school students about the department's offerings and possible careers in journalism and the media.

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

Each summer, the department hosts a workshop for high school journalists. Students enrolled in the Summer Journalism Institute (SJI) are taught by department faculty members and use department equipment and facilities during their four days on campus. SJI students are taught a range of skills from producing an online newspaper to the production of radio and television newscasts. They also tour local media organizations and meet with media personnel to discuss career opportunities. Additionally, the department has dispatched faculty members and students to advise the staffs of high school newspapers in surrounding counties, including *Teen Scene*, a small newspaper written by students from several area high schools and aimed at a local audience.

## COMPLIANCE

## Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

*The unit regularly assesses student learning and applies results to improve curriculum and instruction.*

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

**(a) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the “Professional Values and Competencies” of this Council.**

Prior to fall 2013, the department defined 11 learning outcomes that they designated “The JSU 4+7” (now 5). The four referenced values and the seven referenced competencies. Beginning in the 2013 fall semester, they defined 12 values and competencies to include both domestic diversity and global diversity—bringing the JSU values and competencies to 12.

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

The unit has a written assessment plan that was designed to implement/promote and assess “The JSU 4+7.” (now 5). To assess student learning, the plan includes four direct measures (exit exam, capstone project, course-embedded assessments, and internships) and two indirect measures (senior exit survey and alumni survey). Based on the results of its collection of outcomes assessment information, the department systematically makes curricular changes.

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

The department keeps in close contact with alumni; they are among the professionals who are an integral part of the assessment team. Through emails, newsletters and the alumni survey, the department contacts alumni regularly. Alumni serve as members of the department’s advisory board and they also serve as adjunct faculty members.

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

When the unit began to design the rubrics for evaluations of elements in the program, it included alumni who were professionals in the field. When student portfolios are analyzed, professionals have been among the team that analyzes and evaluates students’ work.

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

The department has a clearly stated, well-defined plan for collecting and reporting data from its assessment activities. Each of the three-capstone courses serves as a forum for accomplishing a significant part of the department’s data collection. The exit exam is administered to all students taking the capstone course in each sequence; this is required of all graduating students. The three concentrations use rubrics in assessing

the capstone projects. Subsequently, the department uses information gathered within the assessment process to focus upon curricular planning.

## **COMPLIANCE**

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

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

### **Strengths**

Focused leadership by department head  
Accessible and engaged faculty  
Supportive upper administration  
Passionate and engaged students  
State of the art equipment

### **Weaknesses**

Minimum research by some faculty members  
Empty Ayers Chair  
Absence of PRSSA affiliation  
Limitations of Self Hall layout and design

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

NONE

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

NONE

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

NOT APPLICABLE

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

NOT APPLICABLE

**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 non-compliance 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 previous site team listed weaknesses, nearly all of which were addressed in the self-study.

**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 exceptionally well done and it was a pleasure to find materials with a minimum amount of searching.