

Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC

Undergraduate program

2014- 2015

Name of Institution: University of North Alabama

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: John G. Thornell, Interim President

Name of Unit: Department of Mass Communications

Name and Title of Administrator: Dr. Greg Pitts, Chair, Department of Communications

Date of 2014 - 2015 Accrediting Visit: October 26-29, 2014

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: NA

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: NA

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: NA

Recommendation by 2014 - 2015 Visiting Team: Accreditation

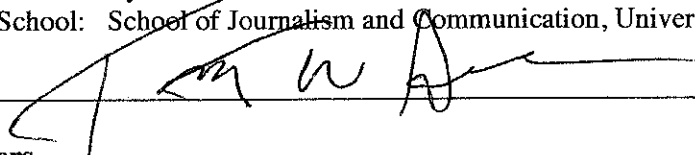
Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Timothy W. Gleason, Professor of Journalism

Organization/School: School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon

Signature _____



Team Members

Name and Title: Kathleen Fearn-Banks, Associate Professor of Communications

Organization/School: School of Communications, University of Washington

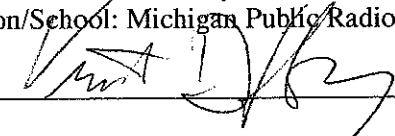
Signature _____



Name and Title: Vincent Duffy, News Director

Organization/School: Michigan Public Radio

Signature _____



Name and Title: Kathleen Richardson, Dean and Professor

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

Signature _____



Part I: General Information

UNA Department of Communications

Name of Institution: University of North Alabama

Name of Unit: Department of Communications

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

If the unit seeking accreditation is located outside the United States, provide the name(s) of the appropriate recognition or accreditation entities:

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

- Private
- Public
- Other (specify)

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

The University of North Alabama has degree-granting authority from the State of Alabama per Alabama State Legislature adoption of **Code of Alabama 1975, Section 16-51**. It specifies:

*The Governor and the State Superintendent of Education, by virtue of their respective offices, and the trustees appointed from the several congressional districts of the state, pursuant to Section 16-51-3, and their successors in office, are constituted a body corporate under the name of the University of North Alabama (**Code of Alabama 1975, Section 16-51-1**).*

*The board of trustees has the power to organize the university by appointing a president, whose salary shall be fixed by the board, and by employing a corps of instructors, who shall be nominated to the board in writing by the president and who shall be styled the faculty of the university and such other instructors and officers as the interests of the university may require; and to remove any instructors or other officers, and to fix their salaries or compensation and increase or reduce the same at their discretion; to delegate by resolution or bylaw to a committee of the board of trustees or to the president of the university the authority to establish and implement personnel rules, policies, and practices for hiring, promoting, demoting, and terminating instructors, officers, and employees or to take any other action authorized by this section; to regulate, alter, or modify the government of the university, as they 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; ...(**Code of Alabama 1975, Section 16-51-6**).*

Code of Alabama 1975, Section 16-51 was originally approved in 1967. The State Legislature in 1993 then approved an amendment of the statute (specifically in **Code of Alabama 1975, Section 16-51-6**) to include additional language relating to possible mergers with other higher education institutions in Alabama.

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: _____

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

NA

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

MISSION STATEMENT of the DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

Adopted November 18, 2009 and approved by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education on June 16, 2010.

The mission of the Mass Communications Program in the Department of Communications at the University of North Alabama is to prepare

students for professional careers in the public, private or government communications media and to assume communications leadership roles in these organizations. A cornerstone in this mission is to train students to gather, evaluate and convey information. The program values hands-on learning as well as theoretical learning, all grounded in ethical decision-making to reflect the importance of a free press and the free flow of information in a democratic society.

The department shares the College of Arts and Sciences' commitments to its students, expecting them "to graduate with an enhanced ability to acquire knowledge, to think clearly and critically, to communicate effectively, to respect and understand diversity, to appreciate aesthetic values, and to possess the skills necessary for a career and for lifelong learning."

The department works to provide students with an opportunity to develop ethical communication competency through academic and artistic performance, study, internships and co-curricular involvement in University, professional, and community activities. Faculty and department administration are expected to contribute to this student mission through academic leadership; quality teaching and advising; and participation in scholarship, creative presentation, and community projects of local and global significance.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of 16 weeks
Quarters of _____ weeks
Summer sessions of 8 weeks
Intersessions of 3 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. List the specific degrees being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication and Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication. With a concentration in:

- Option I: Journalism: Multimedia
- Option II: Public Relations
- Option III: Radio-Television and Interactive Media

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

121 semester hours (Prior to the Fall 2014 semester, the University required a minimum of 128 hours for graduation.)

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

1-3 semester hours required

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge
Journalism: Multimedia	Dr. Jim Martin
Public Relations	Dr. Beth Garfrerick
Radio-Television and Interactive Media	Dr. Janet McMullen

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

Full-time undergraduate students Spring 2014	4,310
Part-time undergraduate students Spring 2014	1,074
Total undergraduate students Spring 2014	5,384
Full-time undergraduate students Fall 2014	4648
Part-time undergraduate students Fall 2014	1237
Total undergraduate students Fall 2014	5,885

14. Number of undergraduate majors in the unit, by sequence and total (if the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total):

Name of Sequence or Specialty (Spring 2014)	Undergraduate majors
Journalism (includes Journalism: Multimedia, Journalism, Broadcast Journalism)	52
Public Relations (includes Public Relations, Integrated Communication)	66
Radio-Television and Interactive Media	25
TOTAL	144

Name of Sequence or Specialty (Fall 2014)	Undergraduate majors
Journalism (includes Journalism: Multimedia, Journalism, Broadcast Journalism)	43
Public Relations (includes Public Relations, Integrated Communication)	63

Radio-Television and Interactive Media
TOTAL

22
128

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

Skills course		Enrollment	
Course & Section #	Course Name	Spring 2014	Fall 2014
COM 215-01	Media Writing	17	19
COM 215-02	Media Writing	20	18
COM 215-03	Media Writing	18	17
COM 220-01	Basic Reporting	11	12
COM 220-02	Basic Reporting	17	16
COM 241-01	Intro. to Radio Production & Performance	NA	19
COM 242-01	Intro. to Television Production & Performance	11	NA
COM 243-01	Aural-Visual Production	18	18
COM 243-02	Aural-Visual Production	20	18
COM 243-03	Aural-Visual Production	NA	18
COM 317-01	Media Convergence	18	13
COM 326-01	Broadcast News Writing & Producing	NA	6
COM 356-01	Advanced Reporting	13	NA
COM 368-01	Editing	NA	15
COM 374-01	Public Relations Cases	13	12
COM 390-01	Public Relations Writing	13	NA
COM 410-01	Layout and Design	20	18
COM 441-01	Creative Audio Production	16	NA
COM 442-01	Public Relations Campaigns	10	11

Online skills course		Enrollment	
Course & Section #	Course Name	Spring 2014	Fall 2014
COM 370-I01	Feature Writing	NA	12

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

For the fiscal year October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015, the total budget was \$1,094,897. This included all faculty salaries and benefits, and the department operating budget for supplies, services, equipment and travel. See Appendix 7 for a budget history.

For the fiscal year October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014, the total budget was \$1,084,832. This included all faculty salaries and benefits, and the department operating budget for supplies, services, equipment and travel.

The fiscal year October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013, the total budget was \$1,127,127. This included all faculty salaries and benefits, the department operating budget for supplies, services, equipment and travel, and a one-time \$50,000 allocation for the purchase of video production equipment to replace a TV studio system. A speech instructor, who left the department to assume other duties on campus, returned to the department during this budget year and a visiting assistant professor was hired, thus increasing the faculty salary line.

For the fiscal year October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012, the total budget was \$991,165. This included all faculty salaries and benefits, the department operating budget for supplies, services, equipment and travel.

Department salaries have varied slightly each year according to department staffing and modest changes in employment for specific individuals. For example, a faculty member was hired as a visiting assistant professor, the individual had not completed her Ph.D., but she replaced an instructor.

Percentage increase or decrease in three years: From 2011 to 2012, the budget increased 13.7%. From 2012 to 2013, the budget decreased 3.75% due to a one-time equipment allocation.

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: Our full-time faculty salaries for 2013 – 2014 are \$769,451.00. The salaries for 2014 – 2015 will increase due to changes in the faculty and approval by the Board of Trustees for a three percent salary increase effective October 1, 2014.

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

Ms.	Lisa	Darnell		Assistant Professor
Dr.	Mohamad	Elmasry		Assistant Professor*
Mr.	Jason	Flynn	MFA	Assistant Professor
Dr.	Beth	Garfrerick		Assistant Professor
Ms.	Laura	Hardin		Instructor
Dr.	Bill	Huddleston		Professor
Ms.	Joon Yea	Lee		Visiting Assistant Professor**
Dr.	Jim	Martin		Professor
Dr.	Janet	McMullen		Associate Professor

Ms.	Stephanie	Montgomery		Instructor
Mr.	Jason	Pangilinan	MFA	Assistant Professor*
Dr.	Greg	Pitts		Professor
Dr.	Pat	Sanders		Assistant Professor

*Dr. Elmasry and Mr. Pangilinan joined the faculty in August 2014.

**Ms. Lee left the faculty in August 2014.

None of the faculty members are currently on leave or sabbatical. See Appendix 13 for full-time and part-time faculty CVs.

18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2014. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2014. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2015, please provide the updated list of faculty at time of visit.)

					F '14	Sp '14	F '13
Ms.	Sherhonda	Allen		Adjunct		X	
Mr.	Michael	Blair	MFA	Instructional Staff*		X	X
Ms.	Desare	Frazier		Adjunct**	X	X	X
Mr.	Clayton	Jeffreys		Adjunct			X
Dr.	Andrew	Luna		Instructional Staff		X	
Ms.	Betsy	McInerney		Adjunct	X	X	
Mr.	Jay	Townsend		Adjunct	X	X	X
Ms.	Rebecca	Walker		Instructional Staff***		X	X
Ms.	Cathy	Wood		Adjunct	X	X	X

*Mr. Blair served as UNA Videographer until May 2014.

**Ms. Frazier unexpectedly left adjunct service on September 22, 2014, due to a full-time job offer in a non-academic area.

***Ms. Walker served as Coordinator of Student Publications for UNA until March 2014.

19. Schools on the semester system:

For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications.

Year	Total graduates	Graduates who earned 72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications	Percent
2013-2014	37	37	100
2012-2013	23	23	100

20. Schools on the quarter system:

For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 104 or more quarter hours outside of journalism and mass communications.

NA

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The University of North Alabama, the oldest state chartered institution in Alabama, has an enrollment of just under 6,000 undergraduates and has a clear focus on its mission as a regional comprehensive state university. It includes five colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business, Education and Human Services, Nursing, and University (Interdisciplinary and Professional Studies).

The Department of Communications was established in 2009. It is among the largest of 17 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, which is the largest college on campus. The department offers two majors: A BA/BS in Communication Arts with concentrations in Film and Digital Media Production, Public Communication, and Theatre; and a BA/BS in Mass Communication with concentrations in Journalism: Multimedia, Public Relations, and Radio-Television and Interactive Media. Only the Mass Communication major is under ACEJMC review.

There is a long history of teaching Journalism and Public Relations at the university. Journalism was first offered in the English department and Public Relations courses were first offered by faculty in Speech and Theater. Over the years, Journalism moved from English to the Department of Speech Communication and Theater, which also included radio-television and film. Students graduating from the program received a BA/BS in Communication Arts. In 2009 the unit's name changed to the Department of Communication, and in 2010, a new BA/BS degree in Mass Communication was approved. It enabled the department to offer concentrations in Journalism, Public Relations, Radio-Television & Interactive Media and Media Studies. The Media Studies concentration was dropped in 2012. The department started preparation for ACEJMC accreditation prior to approval of the new major. This is the initial ACEJMC review.

In Fall 2014, the department enrolled 269 majors with a total of 141 in Communication Arts and 128 in Mass Communication: Journalism (includes Journalism: Multimedia, Journalism, Broadcast Journalism) (43); Public Relations (includes Public Relations, Integrated Communication) (63); Radio-Television and Interactive Media (22).

The Department of Communications mission statement for the Mass Communication major was adopted November 18, 2009, and approved by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education on June 16, 2010. It articulates a clear focus on education for the

communication professions and for preparing students to serve the public interest. It also embraces the college's commitment to "to graduate [students] with an enhanced ability to acquire knowledge, to think clearly and critically, to communicate effectively, to respect and understand diversity, to appreciate aesthetic values, and to possess the skills necessary for a career and for lifelong learning."

The department's current five-year strategic plan was adopted in Fall 2009. It calls for an overhauled curriculum, new focus on facilities and technology, measures for program assessment and steps to enhance the faculty, through development programs for existing faculty and the addition of new faculty. Having achieved many of the goals in the current plan, the department is aware of the need to develop a new five-year plan and expects to begin that process in this academic year.

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

Sources of departmental policies include the university catalog and faculty and student handbooks. All are available on the UNA website. All full-time faculty are voting members in the department. Curriculum and course-related changes require a vote of the faculty. The department reserves a designated time for faculty meetings each semester and meets six to eight times in a typical term. The department has identified its current practice of appointing ad hoc committees rather than having a clear standing committee structure as an area for improvement.

(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 university is in a period of significant leadership transition. Currently UNA has an interim president and an interim provost. The dean of the College of Arts and Sciences is in her first year. A presidential search is in its final stages, with the final candidates on campus shortly before the site visit. It is expected that a new president will be named early in November. The department chair is a member of the presidential search committee.

The department chair reports to the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The current chair was recruited to UNA in 2009. He was the first externally recruited chair in the history of the department and followed the 19-year tenure of a well-regarded director. He is well-respected in the department and across campus and is credited with aggressively moving the department forward in a time of change. While there is no formal leadership structure in the three concentrations in the Mass Communication major, the chair works closely with lead faculty in each of the areas on curricular operations and changes.

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

Department chairs are selected for four-year renewable terms by the college dean with the approval of the provost and the president. The university has a standardized plan for

the selection process. Chairs are evaluated every two years in a process that includes faculty input.

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

At the department level concerns and complaints are addressed through the chair's office. While the department does not have a written policy for filing complaints, faculty, staff and students are comfortable with the informal process. If necessary, the office of the dean of Arts and Sciences is the next step in the university's conflict resolution process, with the university ombudsman's office available should a neutral third-party be required. University policies regarding complaints and grievances are detailed in the student and faculty handbooks. The department does have an academic honesty policy that is distributed to all classes at the beginning of the semester.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

Students in the Department of Communications are required to complete at least 121 credit hours in order to graduate. The department requires that 72 credit hours be taken in classes outside of the Department of Communications; 53 of those hours must be from an approved list of Arts and Sciences/Liberal Arts courses. The Department reports that 100 percent of the graduates in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 met the 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 a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication (with a language requirement) and Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication. There are concentrations in Journalism: Multimedia, Public Relations, and Radio-Television & Interactive Media.

The department conducted a curriculum review and mapped the ACEJMC core competencies against the curriculum to identify any gaps and remedy them. The 20-22 hour core curriculum now mixes theory classes (COM 205 Communication in a Global Age, COM 314 Communication Theory and Public Interest) with professional skills courses (COM 215 Media Writing, COM 243 Aural/Visual Production, COM 420 Portfolio Preparation, COM 499 Internship/Independent Study) and integrated study (COM 303W Communication Research Methods, COM 400W Communication Law and Ethics).

The Department has adapted the ACEJMC standards as the Twelve COMpetencies, all of which are emphasized in at least two core classes as well as in the major courses. For example, issues of free speech and press, diversity, ethics, the ability to evaluate information and to critically evaluate one's own work and the work of others are incorporated into almost every class.

Journalism: Multimedia

The Journalism: Multimedia concentration consists of a 12-credit hour core of COM 220 Basic Reporting, COM 356 Advanced Reporting, COM 317 Media Convergence and COM 470 Media Management and Diversity. Students must take at least two electives from a menu of skills classes (COM 326 Broadcast Newswriting and Producing, COM 368 Editing, COM 370 Feature Writing and COM 410 Layout and Design) and at least one course from among more theoretical courses (COM 340 Media Criticism, COM 455 Media History and COM 465 Global Media Systems), with an additional elective for a total of 24 credit hours.

The core media convergence class is praised by students as providing rigorous training in multimedia skills, and students report assignments related to social media and diversity woven through core journalism reporting and editing classes.

Public Relations

After taking the core courses, Public Relations requirements are 24 credits. Six required courses, all three credits, are COM 220 Basic Reporting, COM 230 Foundations of Public Relations, COM 374 Public Relations Cases, COM 390 Public Relations Writing, COM 410 Layout and Design and COM 442 Public Relations Campaigns. COM 499 Independent Study/Internships is required for one to three credits hours. In addition, six hours of 300/400 electives are required. Many PR majors minor in marketing/business.

PRIDE or Public Relations Individuals Dedicated to Excellence is the name of the student public relations organization. Majors join it for \$100 annually and they become members of three supporting professional or pre-professional organizations: PRSSA (national Public Relations Student Society of America) based in Birmingham; PRCA (Public Relations Council of Alabama) in Huntsville, and the Southern Public Relations Foundation in southern states.

Radio-Television & Interactive Media

Students in the Radio-Television & Interactive Media sequence are required to take the Mass Communication Core, and 21 additional credits. Those requirements include COM 241 Introduction to Radio Production and Performance, COM 242 Introduction to TV Production and Performance, COM 256 Fundamentals of Electronic Media, COM 317 Media Convergence, COM 440 Media Criticism and COM 470 Media Management and Diversity. The sequence is completed with at least one additional 3-credit course at the COM 300/400 level.

Students in the Radio-Television & Interactive Media major spend much of their time in the courses listed above completing assignments that give them hands-on experience with audio and video field recording equipment and editing and post-production software.

There are also opportunities to participate as talent or on the production crew of the weekly television program “Good Day UNA” and a weekly sports roundup.

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

The culture of the institution focuses heavily on effective teaching, and it is an integral part of tenure and promotion. Communications faculty members have been recognized for teaching excellence, including Southern Public Relations Federation Educator of the Year, Reelshow International Film Tutor of the Year, Public Relations Council of Alabama Educator of the Year and Eleanor Gaunder Excellence in Teaching Award. Several faculty members have also won awards for excellence in advising.

The department recognizes student academic achievement through the Lambda Pi Eta Communications Honorary and nominations as the University's Promising Alumni. However, the department is aware that it should put more effort into acknowledging students' accomplishments.

Students report that they are bolstering their core communications courses with elective classes and non-communications classes (for example, the social media marketing class in the business school) to provide the new media skills they need. Of their communications classes, the media convergence and audio-visual production classes were cited as especially useful in providing technical skills.

Students say that an advantage of attending a smaller institution is the accessibility of faculty and the personal attention they receive. They indicate that the faculty go out of their way to help them: "We're like family. . . . We all care about what we are doing." They say faculty members "are excited because we are learning. . . . They know we're going to take [our education] and run with it." Students seem passionate about what they're doing in their classes and media activities, and proud of the Department of Communications. Students remark especially on the fact that faculty incorporate professional development and preparation into many of their courses.

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

The number of students in skills courses did not exceed 20 during the self-study year and the Fall 2014 semester, and many classes had fewer 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. Schools may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed six semester credits (or nine quarter credit hours). Students may take up to two semester courses (or their quarter equivalent) at an appropriate professional organization where the unit can show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit's faculty and professionals. Students may take up to three semester courses (or their quarter equivalent) at a professional media outlet owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.

The department requires one to three credit hours of internship experience, a focus on hands-on experience that is praised by students, faculty and campus constituencies. The university has a career development office, but most communications internships are arranged by the students themselves with help from faculty, who tap into their alumni and professional connections.

The department has developed a mutually beneficial relationship with the local newspaper, the *Florence Times Daily*, which hires UNA students for both unpaid internships and paid part-time jobs. Public relations internships are often in nonprofits in Huntsville, and the four Shoals: Muscle Shoals, Florence, Tuscumbia and Sheffield. Some government agencies, companies and corporations offer internships, like NASA in Huntsville and Children's Hospital in Birmingham. Students go as far as Nashville and Birmingham or beyond if they can make living arrangements.

The department has a comprehensive and detailed policy, procedure and documentation for its required internships. Students and their supervisors complete both midterm and final reports. Faculty members rotate through the responsibility as summer internship coordinator. The department is also planning a Center for Strategic Communications as an in-house agency to provide digital production, public relations and other media services for clients and also to provide more experiential learning for students.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a)The unit has a written plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan. The diversity plan should focus on domestic minority groups and, where applicable, international groups. The written plan must include the unit’s definition of diversity and identify the under-represented groups.

The department adopted a diversity plan in 2011 that builds on the University of North Alabama values statement. It says the goal is to “embrace diversity of cultural background, personal characteristics, and life situations represented in the community.” It advocates an atmosphere free of discrimination and includes ethnicity, gender, religion, age, nationality, physical ability, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

The department acknowledges that the state has a poor record of diversity and that diversity was not a top priority prior to 2009. Change came about after a statewide discrimination lawsuit, Knight-Sims v. State of Alabama. All schools and universities were required to establish diversity plans by 2008.

Since adopting a diversity plan (the first of its kind in the university) the department has increased the percentage of full-time minority faculty from 0 percent to 33 percent and maintained female faculty at 50 percent, with all female faculty being tenured. The percentage of minority faculty in the department is nearly twice as high as minority faculty representation at the university. Minority student enrollment in the department also exceeds university percentages. The department has also developed curriculum and events focused on diversity and inclusion as called for in its diversity plan. In Spring 2014, the department received the university’s Diversity Award for “significant achievements...toward developing a more culturally diverse, competent, and inclusive university community.”

The university has an Office of Diversity and Institutional Equity with a strategic diversity plan developed in 2009. The plan aspires for greater inclusion of faculty, staff and student population and globalization of curriculum. Each external search committee must include one person who reflects diversity. The committee looks at whether searches are advertised in publications read by potential minority candidates as well as how candidates are evaluated.

At the time of the site visit, the most recent statistics showed 54 full-time minority faculty (including those of international backgrounds) out of a total of 335. Out of a student body of 5,993 (Fall 2013), there were 798 African-Americans, 147 Latinos, 65

Native Americans, 28 Asians, 120 of mixed races, and 284 from foreign countries. The percentage of Black/African-American students enrolled in the university is significantly greater than the population of the geographic service area. There are recruitment plans that include busing high school students to campus for a preview day.

(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.

There is not a course centering on diversity, but 12 courses include diversity components – a lecture, discussion, or assignment. These subjects range from minority issues in the U.S. to global issues. Students say discussion in class often includes race and other issues of diversity. There is a course, COM 470 Media Management and Diversity, taken by students in Journalism: Multimedia and Radio-Television & Interactive Media that focuses on diversity in management; it features case studies and exercises in diversity.

In international diversity, there was a program from 2009-2013 in which journalists and students from Serbia and Macedonia visited UNA. Faculty members have international connections or study-abroad experiences. Staff members are of various international origins. Students study international affairs. There are three courses dealing with globalization.

The department has a program placing emphasis, through courses, on the 12 ACEJMC core competencies. The syllabi address these. Two of the competencies relate to diversity and inclusiveness:

3. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of peoples and culture and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

Posters of the core competencies are seen prominently on the walls throughout the building.

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

The department has greater diversity in faculty than the university as a whole and greater than the geographic area that serves the university. The area is 84.5 percent white with a small percentage of minority races; African-Americans are the dominant minority at 9 percent. The university is 18.6 percent faculty of color compared to the department's

33.3 percent. An African-American female in a faculty/staff position began working on a Ph.D. and earned it in 2008. She was tenured in 2010.

Out of 12 faculty, eight are white, one is African-American, one is Native American/Alaska Native, one Pacific Islander, one international. Women make up 50 percent of the tenured or tenure-track faculty. To recruit women and minority faculty, announcements were placed in popular professional publications. There was an effort made to locate persons working on the Ph.D. and professionals willing to seek the advanced degrees while on the faculty. For adjuncts, searches were conducted in 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and Fall 2014. Offers were made to two African-American part-time faculty who were teaching classes when the Fall term 2014 began, but each of them were hired away by external institutions for more permanent or more lucrative positions.

(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.

In the current school year, out of 144 students, 29 are African-American, 11 did not report racial identity, four are Latinos, six others are of various other races.

To attract and retain students of color, a scholarship of \$600 is available and based on need. Another scholarship is offered to students with ACT scores between 22 and 24 to supplement financial aid. The University Success Center offered tutoring and other support services.

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

The department has a Safe Place statement relating that it respects all people regardless of background. The chair has an open door policy and is available to discuss issues of discrimination and harassment.

COMPLIANCE

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

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department follows hiring procedures laid out in the university faculty handbook. Search committees are required to create a candidate evaluation rubric to ensure that all candidates are reviewed fairly. Full-time instructors are required to hold at least a master's degree and tenure-track faculty are required to hold a Ph.D. or other terminal degree. Adjuncts must have an appropriate graduate degree in the field taught, though a professional with substantial experience may be considered for skills courses.

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

Full-time faculty teach 12 credit hours a semester and do not teach overloads except in unusual circumstances. Faculty members occasionally will receive a course release to encourage research productivity. Full-time faculty have taught from 81.11 percent to 90.91 percent of the courses in the past three years.

(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.

Of the department's 12 full-time faculty members, nine hold terminal degrees. It is a well established faculty: Five members have been at UNA for more than 10 years (three for more than 20 years), and five members for five to 10 years. The two new faculty bring active research agendas that promise to enrich the department's scholarly productivity.

Faculty professional experience ranges from none to 29 years, with three faculty members having 21 or more years of experience. Many faculty members have worked in their fields of expertise, from newspaper, television and radio reporting and producing to documentary producing and consulting. While it is sometimes a challenge to find qualified communications adjuncts in smaller communities, the department has been fortunate to hire local professionals who bring years of experience as reporters, broadcasters, videographers and PR professionals into the classroom.

Faculty belong to professional and scholarly organizations such as the Public Relations Council of Alabama, International Communication Association, Alabama Storytelling Society, American Journalism Historians Association, Broadcast Education Association, and Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and have such professional credentials as Accreditation in Public Relations (APR).

Faculty members have participated in academic training conferences to keep their skills current and have received grants and fellowships to attend multimedia “boot camps” and Poynter Institute seminars, and to shadow television productions. This training has energized faculty and had a visible and positive impact on the curriculum revisions.

Full-time faculty members hold an extensive range of service responsibilities on campus, including serving as advisers of student organizations. Communications faculty members have served in leadership roles on university accreditation committees, university search committees and numerous Faculty Senate committees, among others.

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

The university collects teaching performance evaluation data for each course every semester, and the results are reported to the department. Department chairs provide each teacher with a written performance evaluation — every year for non-tenured faculty and every two years for tenured faculty. As part of its overall assessment program, the department uses internship evaluations, a senior examination and the university’s Quality Enhancement Plan to assess student learning and, indirectly, the effectiveness of instruction.

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

The Department of Communications is recognized as a “good university citizen” for its contribution to the general education curriculum and its faculty service on university committees. The department’s focus on curriculum review and improvement is also admired. Faculty in other departments speak highly of communications students, and the adviser to the campus newspaper and yearbook, which are not part of the department, says that the communications students “come to us prepared” for publications work.

COMPLIANCE

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

With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

Outstanding teaching is, and has been, the dominant demand of the faculty of the department. Teaching trumps service and service trumps traditional academic research. Faculty-student collaborative research is encouraged but it is primarily intended to improve the educational experience of students.

Publication in juried academic journals is considered for tenure and promotion but not valued greater than creative or professional accomplishments. The newly named dean of the College of Arts and Sciences expresses a desire to embrace and promote a higher level of faculty research and creative activity.

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

Teaching, research and service are expected for tenure and promotion, but tenure and promotion are not simultaneous. The university and the department have clearly defined tenure and promotion practices and policies.

Tenure may be achieved after five years of performance evaluation at the university. The department guidelines require student teaching evaluations with minimum average scores of 4.0 on a 5.0 scale, demonstrated effectiveness in teaching and a teaching portfolio; effective scholarly or creative research; and a sufficient level of university, department, professional and community service.

Promotion from assistant professor to associate professor requires the candidate to hold a terminal degree; a minimum of eight years cumulative experience in the field with at least three of the eight years earned at UNA; successful experience in teaching, research, scholarship, or other creative activities; and service.

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

At the time of the site visit, there were three full professors, one associate professor, six assistant professors, and two instructors on the full-time faculty. To earn tenure, faculty may, following the demands of the university, attend conferences and meetings, publish in conference proceedings as well as do creative projects like television productions, exhibits, performances, invited book chapters, editing publications, winning internal and external awards and honors, etc. To be promoted to associate or full professor, the

faculty member must produce peer-reviewed works. This might be a film that wins a Broadcast Education Association competition or it might be work published in a traditional academic journal.

(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.

During the past six years, the faculty of 12 has produced 32 creative works (25 non-juried), 21 invited academic presentations and 18 invited academic papers. The faculty won 12 awards and 16 external grants. There were six (6) articles in academic journals (all assistant or associate professors), nine (9) book chapters (eight by full professors). There were no scholarly books or textbooks or monographs.

Two extremely prolific assistant professors joined the faculty recently. One has published, mostly in the past four years, numerous journal articles, book chapters, refereed conference papers, and political analyses. He has made numerous national and local radio/TV appearances, done invited talks, and earned several grants and honors. A second assistant professor has extensive credits including several awards, television productions, and exhibitions. The chair and a full professor both have extensive credits either in creative or traditional fields. All the other full-time faculty have some credits and they seem to show an average of one credit per year.

The Ph.D is the hiring standard for tenure-track assistant professors. In some cases, a Master of Fine Arts is required as well as an expectation of creative work. In addition to teaching and research, the faculty members are expected to perform service according to the university's mission.

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

Sabbaticals are available for full-time tenured faculty after six years of service at UNA; there must be at least six years between leaves.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

Academic advising is required for all students, and the advising is done by full-time faculty members for declared majors.

The graduation requirements for each major in the department are prominently displayed on a bulletin board in the lobby of the department building. Students are also given thorough advising checklists, which are kept in advising folders for all students. A two-part advising form is used to track student progress toward graduation, and provide course recommendations. These advising checklists and accompanying course descriptions are also posted on the wall and available online.

All students with majors in the department are given a copy of the Communications Student Handbook, which includes contact information for each faculty member, internship requirements and action steps to help a student graduate in four years. All graduation information and advising forms are also available on the department website and can be printed from there.

A major component of the department's career advising is accomplished by requiring students to complete COM 420, a one-credit Communication Portfolio Preparation course. In this course students learn strategies for developing resumes and cover letters, online portfolios and different approaches to help with career development and job interviews. Students report the class is extremely helpful in preparing to find and apply for jobs.

Faculty mentors provide students with job leads through individual contact. There is no central coordination within the department for job leads or connecting students with alumni who could assist them in a job search. Students report a very active but informal word-of-mouth network exists between students and recent graduates for job leads.

The university also has a Career Planning and Development Office that is available to all students for job search assistance.

(b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

Full-time faculty members are required to maintain at least seven hours of regularly scheduled office contact hours each week. Students report that faculty members, in their role as professors or advisers, are very accessible and helpful with course guidance and advising. Adjunct faculty members keep two office hours for each three-credit course.

Faculty post their office hours, email addresses and class schedules outside their office doors. The department office also maintains a faculty directory of office hours, and a

telephone in the department lobby lets students leave voicemail for faculty when the faculty member is not available.

Students must meet with an academic adviser before they can complete their schedule for the next semester, and they receive a personal identification number (PIN) to register once the advising is complete. This makes sure that students must meet with an adviser to register. Students say this does not impede timely registration.

Faculty and students both report email and social media communication is frequent and not discouraged outside of class hours, including nights and weekends. Some faculty supply their cell phone numbers to students.

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

Students are provided with a copy of the Communications Student Handbook. The eight-page handbook includes faculty contact information, internship requirements, action steps designed to help students graduate in four years, and covers policies of the department.

The department also keeps students informed about curriculum changes and other important information through emails, postings in the Communications Building, and large placards located in the building lobby.

The department has a very student-friendly website that contains information and pertinent forms for internships, advising and course selection. The activities, requirements and policies can all be found on this website.

Syllabi for all courses are kept in the department office for student access.

(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.

The department has a very active student organization for Public Relations majors called UNA PRIDE (Public Relations Individuals Dedicated to Excellence). The membership fee to join includes membership in three regional professional public relations organizations and PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America). The organization holds regular meetings, and is involved in professional and service-related activities.

Broadcasting students are active participants in the National Broadcasting Society and Alpha Epsilon Rho. Through the NBS chapter, a group of student volunteers produce a weekly program called “Good Day UNA.” This roughly 20 minute recorded program highlights events on campus of student interest.

Other student organizations within the department include Lion Com, a public communication club designed to improve public speaking skills, and a film/digital media production club.

There are no active student journalism chapters for print or electronic journalism majors to join. There is no RTDNA student chapter and multiple efforts to create a student SPJ chapter have failed due to recruiting the minimum number of members (10). One faculty

member is a member of SPJ and indicates he will try again to create a student SPJ chapter.

There is a student newspaper on campus (*Flor-Ala*) that publishes once a week on Thursdays during the academic year. The paper is available for free across campus and also in businesses throughout the community. It is financed through student fees but supplements its budget with advertising revenue. The paper is not operated by the department, but rather is part of the Office of Student Engagement. Other organizations operated by the Office of Student Engagement include Greek Affairs (fraternities and sororities) and Student Government. Journalism students report they feel this creates a conflict of interest when they cover these organizations in the newspaper. The student newspaper is open to anyone on campus and is volunteer run, although there are scholarships available to editors and other staffers. A former local newspaper editor serves as the newspaper's full-time adviser. There has been discussion between the department and the Office of Student Engagement about moving the student newspaper into the Department of Communications.

Students can also work for the student yearbook, *The Diorama*, which also operates under the Office of Student Engagement.

The department maintains a three-camera HD television studio, but there is no news set and no news broadcasts are produced by the department. The studio does contain a green-screen that is used mostly by film classes.

The university has been granted an LPFM construction permit and plans to operate an over-the-air FM radio station beginning next summer (2015). The initiative for this station originated in the Department of Communications, and it will have oversight of the station, but in speaking with faculty and administrators across campus, there seems to be uncertainty as to how it will be programmed, funded or managed. The College of Arts and Sciences associate dean reports there is strong administration support for the station and its eventual success. With a population of 123,500, Florence, Alabama, is radio media market #248. The department may be overestimating the amount of commercial revenue the station could sustain, and underestimating the personnel that will be required to manage and operate the station.

The department also makes efforts to provide students with exposure to international press practices and journalists. Visiting foreign journalists are hosted each year, most recently a group from Serbia and Macedonia. Two faculty members led more than a dozen students on a study abroad trip to China in May 2013, and a second, smaller group in May 2014. On these trips the students studied a multidisciplinary introduction to culture, customs, public relations practices and communication practices. While not yet scheduled, future possible trips to London or New Zealand are being discussed.

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

First to second year retention at the university is 71 percent. This is higher than the Alabama Peer average of 62 percent.

For the 2013-2014 academic year, the four-year department graduation rate of 44 percent is more than three times higher than the overall university four-year graduation rate. Many faculty members and administrators indicated that a high percentage of students in the department are working more than 20 hours a week to help pay for tuition or living expenses, and this often impedes their ability to graduate within four years. A small survey of students supported this assertion that many of them are working more than traditional student part-time hours.

The department recently reduced the total course hours required to graduate from 128 to 121. The department hopes this will improve the four-year graduation rate.

The department publishes retention and graduation information on its website. It can be found at:

<http://www.una.edu/communications/public-accountability.html>

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department's annual budget is aligned with its current strategic plan and is consistent with unit budgets across the university. Given transitions in university leadership, changes in university budgeting practices, the realities of state funding and the anticipated university capital fundraising campaign, the department will need to pay significant attention to revenue and budgeting strategies focused on building excellence as it develops a new five-year strategic plan.

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

The department operational budget has been relatively flat in recent years. From 2011-2012 to 2014-2015 the budget increased 10.4 percent, which includes a 3 percent across-the-board raise for faculty and staff in the current year. It is the first salary increase in five years. During this same period the department successfully used operational budget surpluses and secured a mix of central funding, student government fees and student course fees totaling nearly \$150,000 to invest in building and technology upgrades. Increased course fees are expected to support some replacement computers and software upgrades going forward; however, the capacity for increased or new course fee revenue is limited. While the department has been notably successful in the creative use of existing resources, building capacity to support the department's aspirations and the expectations of the college and the university will require the department to make efficient use of existing resources and to aggressively seek new funding sources.

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

The department's classrooms, offices, studios and equipment facilities are all located in the same building. The building was built in the 1930s as a gymnasium but has been substantially renovated numerous times.

Many recent improvements are evident in the building, including remodeled classrooms and a new second computer lab. A small auditorium-style classroom (roughly 36 seats) is in the process of being constructed. All classrooms are smart-board enabled and both students and faculty were witnessed making use of the smart boards. The building is completely Wi-Fi enabled and easily accessible for guests as well as students and faculty.

The broadcast production facilities in the building include a publishing lab, a production lab, HD screening room (theater-style), two digital radio production labs, an advanced editing suite for video and film, and a television production studio with a green screen. The television studio is adequate for one-time productions, but is not properly equipped to produce a newscast. There is no news set available to students to use for production or talent instruction.

In both radio and television, there is adequate, up-to-date equipment for remote field recording and broadcast production, arguably the most important skill for a broadcast student to learn. There is a deficit; however, in the ability of students to train in live broadcast situations and newscasts due to the limited studio capabilities.

The department plans to operate a commercial LPFM radio station beginning in Summer 2015. Studio and engineering space for the new station will be temporarily housed in the television studio. This will further limit the variety of productions that can be done by students in the television studio. There is also no office space available at the moment for expected staff to run the radio station.

Full-time faculty members have private offices; adjunct faculty share two offices. The department is short on storage space for equipment and for student organizations to operate.

(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.

Audio, video and film field kits are acquired and maintained through student course fees. Students can sign out Canon T4i and T5i DSLR for video and film assignments. There are various professional and prosumer model audio recorders and microphones available for students to sign out as well. The department tries to keep the equipment available at a 3:1 ratio for film students and a 5:1 ratio for radio and television students. The students report the equipment is kept in good working order and there is rarely a problem getting equipment when it is desired.

Production labs are adequately equipped with current editing software. Many students report they have editing software on their personal computers and do not utilize the editing labs frequently. Other students complain that the editing labs are only open during office hours, and that there frequently isn't time to finish projects and assignments in one sitting. The building closes at 6 p.m. and is closed over the weekend. Students have no access to production facilities or editing labs at those times when the building is closed. Students report some teachers will allow students to sit at extra computers during lab instruction so they can work on their projects as long as they are not disruptive.

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

There is no library in the department building, but the main university library is a short distance away. Student and faculty both report the information resources available

through the library and interlibrary loans are adequate for their assignments and research. Faculty report major academic journals in journalism and public relations are available at the library, or online to students. There is a communication materials allocation in the library budget and the chair receives regular reports on acquisitions.

The library is open and staffed from 7:30 a.m. until 1 a.m. during the week, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Saturday and from 2 p.m. until 1 a.m. on Sunday.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

While many of the faculty maintain contact and professional relationships with recent alumni through social media and other networks, there is no established department-wide coordinated effort to stay in contact with alumni or offer services to them. Most alumni contact takes place at the university central administration level through the Office of Alumni Relations and its quarterly alumni magazine. The department reports the university maintains centralized control over alumni information and communication. The self-study reflects recognition by the department that alumni relations is an institutional weakness, and there are both institutional and departmental plans to improve them.

As part of this effort, the department has restarted an earlier, short-lived alumni newsletter. The first edition of this new effort was published in October 2014 and is available on the department website. It was also emailed to the alumni database which the department is compiling.

Alumni have been helpful in placing students in internships and entry-level jobs, but again this is due to the individual relationships between faculty members and alumni, and not through any organized effort or program within the department.

The department plans to launch an Academic Outreach and Engagement Council to better include alumni in curriculum formulation and instructional opportunities. The goal is to have an initial meeting in Spring 2015.

- (b) The unit provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice through such activities as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.**

The participation of the faculty in these areas is uneven. Some faculty members are active in professional associations and academic organizations, but it is not consistent throughout the department. While the department as a whole has participated in judging contests, reviewing outside work and participating on academic and professional panels, some faculty members are carrying the load for the department in these areas.

The department does have a strong and widely recognized commitment to educating the university population and surrounding community about the First Amendment. It has designated April as First Amendment Awareness Month, and increases its efforts to educate the community about the First Amendment during this month with free lectures and service activities. The efforts behind First Amendment awareness are a significant and successful continuing education effort for the department.

Visiting international journalists are hosted by the department most years in an effort to educate foreign journalists about American press practices and the First Amendment, and allow students and faculty to learn how the press operates in other countries. The most recent visitors (2013-2014 academic year) were journalists from Serbia and Macedonia.

The department assists in improving the quality and standards of the student newspaper by holding a Journalism Boot Camp each year for new staff members. Staff members of the student newspaper are not always communications department majors, so the boot camp gives them an opportunity to learn best practices and ethics.

(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.

The Public Relations faculty appear, by far, the most engaged in professional and academic associations. Public Relations faculty and students alike are active participants in the Public Relations Council of Alabama, PRSA and PRSSA, and attend many regional meetings and statewide conferences.

Journalism and broadcast faculty are members of the Broadcast Education Association and attend the annual convention, but participation in professional associations is less robust. None of the faculty are current members of RTDNA and only one faculty member belongs to SPJ.

The department has an adequate travel budget to assist faculty members in attending professional and academic conferences, but does not pay for faculty membership in these organizations. The department chair has expressed a desire to find support funding to encourage faculty members to be dues-paying members of these professional and academic organizations.

One broadcast faculty member maintains close professional ties with many members of the media in the region, and effectively uses those connections as a job-seeking network for her students and to arrange numerous field trips for her upper-level courses to visit broadcast stations.

(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.

In 2011 the department adopted a unit-wide mission to promote the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment and it maintains a permanent First Amendment

display in the building lobby. This is an impressive outreach program and students and faculty alike discuss it frequently and unprompted. The department has designated April as First Amendment Awareness Month and planted a “Liberty Tree” in front of its building with a marker identifying the tree as having been planted in recognition of the First Amendment.

As part of its First Amendment Awareness outreach, speakers are invited to the campus for events open to the public. Speakers have included nationally known journalists and authors. Students in the COM 442 PR Campaigns course promote First Amendment Awareness Month as one of their class campaigns. The department has produced a business card with the First Amendment printed on the card. The card is distributed to all communications students.

The department has partnered with the Tennessee Valley Art Association to teach children about the First Amendment by making presentations at co-sponsored art camps. Last December the department participated in the TVAA’s “Trees of Christmas” program by creating a tree that promoted the First Amendment. Another community service event is the Cinderella Project run by UNA-PRIDE, the student public relations organization. This project collects donated dresses for economically disadvantaged girls who might not be able to afford a prom dress.

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

In conjunction with the Alabama Press Association Education Foundation, the department co-sponsored a journalism and documentary production workshop for middle school students. The event was free for students from two area middle schools.

The department reports high school journalism is almost non-existent in their area. None of the area public or private high schools publish a student newspaper. High schools are notified about visiting lectures and presentations, and their students are welcome.

The department often invites professional speakers for events open to students, the campus community and the surrounding population. In 2011 it launched the Parker-Qualls Distinguished Lecture in Communication. This event is free and open to the public and has featured national authors, news executives, publishers and editors. Promotional posters from these lectures remain framed on a wall in the department building. The department reports more than 100 persons attend these lectures.

The department assists in improving the quality and standards of the student newspaper by holding a Journalism Boot Camp for new staff members.

The department also recognizes Black History Month with related journalism and media material, including movie screenings. Past films included “The Black Press,” “The

Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman” and “Freedom Riders.” The department also invited Robert Friedman, the founder of the Birmingham Black Radio Museum project, to give a lecture.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department’s “Twelve COMpetencies” mirror the ACEJMC values and competencies. The department mapped the competencies against its core courses and adjusted the curriculum to ensure that all competencies are addressed in at least two classes, and most cover more than that. The Twelve COMpetencies are well publicized to students, including being posted prominently in the communications building.

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

The department adopted a written assessment plan in 2010 and has revised it twice since then. Assessment tools include a senior assessment examination; evaluations from internship supervisors; course evaluations, and reviews of student resumes, cover letters and online professional portfolios. The faculty conducts an ongoing review of the curriculum. In addition, the department participates in the university’s “Quality Enhancement Plan” for its regional accreditation, and as part of that project receives feedback on the progression of learning in the communications program.

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

The department has systematically reviewed the results of its assessment measures and adjusted both the tools and the curriculum as necessary. It is attempting to revise the senior exam to ensure it accurately reflects student achievement. Even though its students have scored high on internship evaluations, the department is amending the form to more explicitly reflect more of the Twelve COMpetencies. Ongoing curriculum review has resulted in a reorganization of majors, the addition of aural-visual communication and writing classes, and the revision of other courses to remedy identified gaps. The department has spent much time in recent years setting up and refining the necessary assessment mechanisms, and can now move on to fully implement the feedback from that process.

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

The university attempts to keep track of alumni, apparently with mixed results. The university is laying the groundwork, through purchase of software, to keep in better

communication with alumni and to obtain feedback on alums' satisfaction with their college experience and employment. Current and former students say individual communications faculty members do a good job of keeping in touch with their own alumni and utilizing that network as guest speakers and to help students find internships and jobs.

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

This appears to be a gap in the unit's assessment program, outside the feedback that students and faculty receive from internship supervisors. Internship supervisors generally say that UNA students come to the internships well prepared. The department's self-study identified the lack of professional input into its senior portfolio review as a weakness in assessment to be remedied.

COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- The department is well-regarded within its college and university and viewed as a potential center of excellence.
- Strong department leadership with a chair who has worked closely with faculty and staff to prepare the department for accreditation.
- A faculty committed to student success.
- Individual faculty efforts to network with professionals to place interns.

Weaknesses:

- As the college and university place greater emphasis on research and scholarship, the department will need to increase its creative and scholarly productivity.
- Inadequate facilities and curriculum to support studio production in broadcast journalism.
- An uncertain budget climate for program innovation and expansion.
- The lack of a structured internship placement, especially in light of being in a small media market.
- Need to build much stronger relationship with alumni and the professional community.
- Need to integrate more professional feedback into the assessment process.

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

NA

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

NA

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

NA

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

NA

- 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.**

NA

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

The self-study was well organized, reflective and comprehensive.