

Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC
Undergraduate program
2015-2016

Name of Institution: University of Southern Mississippi

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Rodney D. Bennett, President

Name of Unit: School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Name and Title of Administrator: David R. Davies, Director

Date of 2015 - 2016 Accrediting Visit: November 15-18, 2015

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: November 15-18, 2009

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Re-accreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Re-accreditation

Recommendation by 2015 - 2016 Visiting Team: Provisional Re-accreditation

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Barbara Cochran, Professor and Curtis B. Hurley Chair in Public Affairs Journalism

Organization/School: University of Missouri School of Journalism

Signature

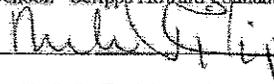


Team Members

Name and Title: Mike Philipps, President CEO (retired)

Organization/School: Scripps Howard Foundation / The Cincinnati Post and The Kentucky Post

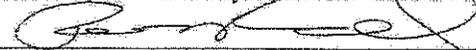
Signature



Name and Title: Rochelle Ford, Chair & Professor, Public Relations Department

Organization/School: Syracuse University, SI Newhouse School of Public Communications

Signature



Name and Title: B. William Silcock, Director, Cronkite Global Initiatives, and Curator, Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

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

Signature



PART I: General information

Name of Institution: The University of Southern Mississippi

Name of Unit: School of Mass Communication and Journalism

Year of Visit: Fall 2015

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 Commission on Colleges
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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

- Private
- Public
- Other (specify)

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

The university was originally established by a legislative act in 1910 (The authorizing document is included in the Appendices Part I). Information can also be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin:
<http://catalog.usm.edu/content.php?catoid=9&navoid=506>

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: November 15-18, 2009

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

The Department of Journalism was first accredited in 1984-85.

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

The School of Mass Communication and Journalism mission statement follows here. It is also included in the Appendices . The mission statement can be found at: <http://www.usm.edu/school-of-journalism-and-media-studies/mission>

School of Mass Communication and Journalism
Mission Statement

(adopted 2008; revised 2013)

The mission of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism at The University of Southern Mississippi is to prepare students for careers in advertising, broadcasting, film, journalism, public relations, and the recording industry and to foster an understanding of the important role the mass media play in preserving First Amendment freedoms in a democratic society and protecting those rights and freedoms in America's diverse society. The school is committed to preparing students for the media industry's intersection with technology and commerce. Because of the make-up of the USM student body, the faculty specifically recognizes the school's opportunity to give voice to groups who have been historically underrepresented in the mass media, and the school embraces the opportunity to educate students who are the first from their families to attend college or are from demographic groups lacking representation in the mass media. In addition, the school strives to:

- Make sure students receive a broad liberal arts background and benefit from a mass communication and journalism curriculum that develops appropriate and current professional skills as well as an understanding of the ethical responsibilities faced by media professionals.
- Create opportunities for students to practice newly acquired skills and training in preparation for real world application through the Student Media Center and through internships.
- Graduate a highly qualified pool of media professionals who are ready to enter the workforce and prepared to make valid contributions to the profession and society at large.
- Support faculty members who produce important scholarly and creative work that contributes significantly to the academy and the profession.
- Maintain healthy relationships with alumni and media professionals through the school's professional advisory board and other networking opportunities.
- Serve the community at large by creating 1) opportunities to teach individuals and organizations how mass media can be utilized for the purpose of empowerment and 2) service learning experiences for students and faculty to contribute to regional interests through the media.
- Promote the school, its outstanding students and dedicated faculty and consistently work toward the improvement of the school in terms of facilities, technology and reputation.
- Teach and routinely reinforce the professional values and competencies outlined by ACEJMC:
 - 1) Develop proficiency in the essential practical skills long valued by media professionals: information gathering; effective written, visual and oral communication; and production.
 - 2) Foster diversity and the coverage of diversity in the mass media in order to instill knowledge of, respect for, and engagement with the diversity found in the population of the area, state, and nation.
 - 3) Integrate knowledge of the evolving new media environment with the understanding of the organization and operations, as well as the historical, social, political and economic significance of traditional media forms.
 - 4) Prepare students for lifelong learning and advanced education as well as professional careers by offering major course work that amplifies the liberal arts education provided by the university's

- general education core and by infusing the mass communication curriculum with the study of theory, research methods, aesthetic principles and ethical concepts.
- 5) Create an open and diverse learning environment in the classroom, in student media, internships and other venues that foster critical and analytical thinking and stimulate creative activities.
 - 6) Cultivate understanding of the global dimensions of media and mass communication education.
 - 7) Promote media literacy and knowledge of mediated communication as essential elements of a university education.
 - 8) Foster the personal integrity that is vital to high standards of truth, honesty, fairness and clarity necessary for successful careers in the Information Age.
 - 9) Produce theoretical and applied scholarship for those who work in and study media institutions that adds to the understanding of the mass communication process and its effects, the media industry, the legal and policy environments in which it exists and the historical context from which it continues to evolve.
 - 10) Produce creative works that demonstrate and enhance proficiency in creative media practice, either as works of artistic expression or as creative projects that serve specific communication goals.
 - 11) Encourage the development of professional and creative activities through class projects, student media, student organizations and other means that contribute to public discourse that is crucial to a free and open society and enrich audiences by providing meaning, context and inspiration.
 - 12) Serve the media industry, state, and region through applied research projects, training activities and other endeavors.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of 16 weeks
Quarters of weeks
Summer sessions of 4.5 or 9 weeks
Intersessions of 2 weeks

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

Bachelor's degree
 Master's degree
 Ph.D. degree

9. List the specific degrees being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

Advertising
Entertainment Industry – Media Production
Journalism – Broadcast Journalism
Journalism – News Editorial
Journalism – Photojournalism
Journalism – Public Relations

10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree: (Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)

124 semester hours.

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

Students may earn 3-6 semester hours in the professional internship (3 semester hours prior to 2014-15).

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

<u>Name of Sequence or Specialty</u>	<u>Person in Charge</u>
Advertising	Fei Xue
Entertainment Industry – Media Production	Jared Hollingsworth
Journalism – Broadcast Journalism	Mary Lou Sheffer
Journalism – News Editorial	Cheryl Jenkins
Journalism – Photojournalism	Steve Coleman
Journalism – Public Relations	Jae-Hwa Shin

(In addition, the School of Mass Communication and Journalism offers three other emphasis areas in Entertainment Industry – film, recording industry management, and recording industry production. These programs are not part of the ACEJMC self-study review.)

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

14,579 students in Fall 2015.

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):

<u>Name of Sequence or Specialty</u>	<u>Undergraduate majors (Fall 2015)</u>
Advertising	37
Entertainment Industry – Film	39
Entertainment Industry – Media Production	62
Entertainment Industry – Recording Industry Management	28
Entertainment Industry – Recording Industry Production	64
Journalism – Broadcast Journalism	89
Journalism – News Editorial	22
Journalism – Photojournalism	23
Journalism – Public Relations	98
Total	462

15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and the preceding term. Attach separate pages if necessary. Include a separate list for online skills courses, which also must meet the 20-1 ratio. (* The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)

Spring 2015

Course	Enrollment
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 01)	16

MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 02)	16
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 03)	16
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 04)	16
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 01)	17
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 02)	16
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 03)	16
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 04)	16
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 05)	18
MCJ 203 Reporting (Sec 01)	15
MCJ 203 Reporting (Sec 02)	15
MCJ 241 Basic Elements of Photography	13
MCJ 241L Basic Elements of Photography Laboratory (Sec 01)	6
MCJ 241L Basic Elements of Photography Laboratory (Sec 02)	7
MCJ 242 Introduction to Digital Photography	13
MCJ 300 Multimedia Storytelling (Sec 01)	10
MCJ 300 Multimedia Storytelling (Sec 02)	11
MCJ 301 Feature Writing	5
MCJ 304 Broadcast Reporting I	10
MCJ 304L Broadcast Reporting I Lab (Sec 01)	7
MCJ 304L Broadcast Reporting I Lab (Sec 02)	3
MCJ 312 Graphic Design (Sec 01)	17
MCJ 312 Graphic Design (Sec 02)	17
MCJ 334 Radio Production	10
MCJ 334L Radio Production Lab (Sec 01)	3
MCJ 334L Radio Production Lab (Sec 02)	5
MCJ 334L Radio Production Lab (Sec 03)	2
MCJ 335 Video Production Techniques	14
MCJ 335L Video Production Techniques Lab (Sec 01)	6
MCJ 335L Video Production Techniques Lab (Sec 02)	8
MCJ 340 Intermediate TV Production	7
MCJ 402 Advanced Reporting	7
MCJ 404 Broadcast Reporting II	10
MCJ 404L Broadcast Reporting II Lab (Sec 01)	10
MCJ 406 Broadcast Journalism Workshop	13
MCJ 411 Advanced Audio Production	10
MCJ 422 Public Relations Writing and Publication Design	17 (plus 1 in MCJ 522)
MCJ 440 Advanced Television Production	10
MCJ 441 Photojournalism Portfolio	7
MCJ 442 Writing for Radio & TV	19
MCJ 447 Television Production Workshop	3

Summer 2015

Course	Enrollment
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production	18
MCJ 300 Multimedia Storytelling	9

Fall 2015

Course	Enrollment
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 01)	16
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 02)	16
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 03)	16
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 04)	16
MCJ 102 Introduction to Media Writing (Sec 05)	16
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 01)	16

MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 02)	15
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 03)	16
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 04)	16
MCJ 200 Introduction to Digital Media Production (Sec 05)	16
MCJ 203 Reporting	16
MCJ 241 Basic Elements of Photography	15
MCJ 241L Basic Elements of Photography Laboratory (Sec 01)	15
MCJ 300 Multimedia Storytelling	19
MCJ 303 Investigative Strategies for Journalists	11
MCJ 304 Broadcast Reporting I	16
MCJ 304L Broadcast Reporting I Lab (Sec 01)	8
MCJ 304L Broadcast Reporting I Lab (Sec 02)	8
MCJ 311 News Editing and Design	10
MCJ 312 Graphic Design (Sec 01)	16
MCJ 312 Graphic Design (Sec 02)	16
MCJ 330 Advertising Creative Strategies	13
MCJ 334 Radio Production	14
MCJ 334L Radio Production Lab(Sec 01)	2
MCJ 334L Radio Production Lab(Sec 02)	6
MCJ 334L Radio Production Lab(Sec 03)	6
MCJ 335 Video Production Techniques	18
MCJ 335L Video Production Techniques Lab (Sec 01)	10
MCJ 335L Video Production Techniques Lab (Sec 02)	8
MCJ 340 Intermediate Television Production	7
MCJ 341 Photojournalism	10
MCJ 402 Advanced Reporting	1
MCJ 404 Broadcast Reporting II	10
MCJ 404L Broadcast Reporting II Lab (Sec 01)	10
MCJ 406 Broadcast Journalism Workshop	12
MCJ 411 Advanced Audio Production	6
MCJ 422 Public Relations Writing and Publication Design	10
MCJ 440 Advanced Television Production	4
MCJ 447 Television Production Workshop	2

16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2015 – 2016 academic year: \$1,805,777

Percentage increase or decrease in three years: 5.62 percent increase

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$1,332,105

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.

Christopher Campbell	Professor
Loren Coleman	Assistant Professor
Steve Coleman	Instructor and Tech Support Director
Lindsey Conlin	Assistant Professor
Dave Davies	Professor and Interim Director
Jared Hollingsworth	Visiting Instructor
Cheryl Jenkins	Associate Professor
Vanessa Murphree	Associate Professor and Graduate Coordinator
Mary Lou Sheffer	Associate Professor
Jae-Hwa Shin	Professor
Maggie Williams	Instructor and Internship Coordinator

Fei Xue Associate Professor

Faculty in non-accredited programs:

Miles Doleac	Assistant Professor
Phil Gentile	Assistant Professor (Gulf Coast campus)
Paul Linden	Associate Professor
Vincenzo Mistretta	Assistant Professor (Gulf coast campus)
Jonathan Pluskota	Assistant Professor
Jeff Rassier	Instructor

18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2015. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2015.

During the budget cut in the 2014-2015 academic year, we were asked to discontinue hiring adjuncts. Below are part-time faculty for Spring 2015 and Fall 2015, including one part-time faculty, two staff members who teach for us, and graduate assistants who are listed as Instructors of Record.

Spring 2015:

Cindy Blackwell
 Chen-Wei Chang
 Chuck Cook
 Sheryl Kennedy Haydel
 Wilbur Justin Martin
 Patrick McGuire
 Willie Tubbs
 Danianese Woods

Fall 2015:

Cindy Blackwell
 Chuck Cook
 Tamar Gregorian
 Wilbur Justin Martin
 Will Tubbs
 Danianese Woods
 Matthew Godfrey

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	72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications		
	Total Graduates	Number	Percent
2014-2015 academic year	__107__	__107__	__100%__
2013-2014 academic year	__105__	__105__	__100%__

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

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

OVERVIEW

The School of Mass Communication and Journalism is the largest of 15 units and one of two schools in the College of Arts and Letters of the University of Southern Mississippi. The university, with its main campus in Hattiesburg, MS, and another campus in Gulfport, is the third largest of eight public universities in the state. With an enrollment of 14,579 students in Fall 2015, the university is located in the Pine Belt in the southern part of the state and draws students from neighboring Gulf Coast states. The university and the school pride themselves on serving first-generation college students and report the most diverse student body of any of the Mississippi institutions of higher learning.

The university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The current university president, who is the first African-American to serve in the top position at any of Mississippi's majority-white campuses, took office in 2013 and is the fourth president of the university in the past 10 years. The president said he faced a slow economy, high turnover among administrators and declining enrollment. Between 2012 and 2015, the university endured what the president called a "perfect storm" of disruptive factors.

The school was first accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications in 1984-1985 and most recently reaccredited in 2009-2010.

The school offers six sequences that are under review by ACEJMC. They are Advertising, Media Production, Broadcast Journalism, News Editorial, Photojournalism and Public Relations. The school also offers three other sequences in film, recording industry management and recording industry production that are not under review. The film sequence is taught at the Gulfport campus. All other sequences are taught in Hattiesburg.

The school has undergone significant change since the last visit. The most positive visible change was the move to newly renovated College Hall from facilities in the basement of Southern Hall, whose conditions caused the school to be found out of compliance on Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment in 2009-2010. Three sequences were added to the Entertainment Industry specialty, including the Media Production sequence, which is under ACEJMC review. Four faculty members departed and three new faculty members arrived, creating a need for a new advertising faculty member.

Additionally, on Feb. 10, 2013 an EF-4 tornado struck Hattiesburg and destroyed a significant portion of the front section of the Southern Miss campus. The tornado inflicted heavy damage on the visual and studio arts facilities and an historic building and wiped out 75 mature live oak trees. As a result, fund-raising attention turned to restoring buildings and grounds and stalled a fund-raising campaign that had been started by the school's director.

Most significantly, the director, who had served since 2005, was removed from the position by the dean and forced to return to faculty in June 2014. An interim director was named for 2014-2015 and a planned national search was postponed and finally called off. This change in leadership was a very unsettling process from all accounts from the president through faculty and staff. However, students did not seem to be aware of the administrative turmoil.

This administrative transition, along with economic difficulties the university has faced and the devastating tornado, have had a negative impact on the School's ability to live up to its mission through curriculum revision in response to assessment and to implement its strategic plan.

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.

While the school maintained a consistent mission statement and updated its strategic plan prior to the dismissal of its director in 2014, all of the disruptive factors creating what the university president called "a perfect storm" crippled the school's ability to carry out that mission and to implement its strategic plan. In particular, the school was unable to fully institute the curriculum changes indicated by its assessment process nor was it able to mount the kind of development effort needed to garner the resources to fulfill the ambitions of the strategic plan.

The school's mission statement has remained the same for the six years since the last accreditation visit. It says the school "is committed to preparing students for the media industry's intersection with technology and commerce" and "specifically recognizes the school's opportunity to give voice to groups who have been historically underrepresented in the mass media, and the school embraces the opportunity to educate students who are the first from their families to attend college or are from demographic groups lacking representation in the mass media." The statement specifies eight goals, including to "graduate a highly qualified pool of media professionals who are ready to enter the workforce" and to "teach and routinely reinforce the professional values and competencies outlined by ACEJMC."

The school adopted a strategic plan for 2008-2013 in advance of the previous reaccreditation visit. That plan was revised in 2013 to cover the five-year period ending in 2018. The first objective stated in the plan is to seek status as a free-standing College of Mass Communication and Journalism. Additional objectives include launching a fund-raising campaign, developing a professional master's program, creating a Center for Media Innovation to house student media, expanding the undergraduate program to the Gulf Coast campus and creating a new sequence in the entertainment industry program for video game production.

None of these objectives was achieved and some, such as the move to a free-standing college, are opposed by college and university administrators. Furthermore, the newly named director, appointed the week of the 2015 site visit, has not had the authority or the time to create a new strategic plan or articulate a clear vision for the unit. Although a new strategic plan has not been adopted, in October 2015, the faculty adopted goals for the academic year that included revising the curriculum and re-evaluating the Student Media Center.

In spite of the turmoil of the past few years, the president described Mass Communication and Journalism as a "marquee program" and one of the 10 strongest units at the university.

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

The Faculty Handbook spells out governance policy and procedures that are applied university-wide. The school has seven standing faculty committees: assessment, curriculum, diversity, Hall of Fame, planning, personnel and technology. All policies are brought to the full faculty for a vote.

The school has passed curriculum revisions; however, its proposed revisions were not approved by the College of Arts & Letters. Two of the proposed new courses subsequently were added as electives, but have yet to become part of the core requirements as had been sought.

The other committees operate within their purview effectively. Minutes from the faculty meetings demonstrate the unit's commitment to faculty governance.

Regarding its own leadership, many faculty members felt their opinions had not been given real consideration in making the final decision about the directorship of their own school. A number of faculty members told the site team that, while given the opportunity to vote on matters regarding the permanent appointment of a director, they felt they had little real choice.

(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.

As mentioned previously, the school has experienced disruption in leadership in the last three years.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, the dean of the College of Arts and Letters initiated a periodic review of the then-director, who had served since 2005, which resulted in his being removed from the position of director. The process, which followed university policies and guidelines and will be detailed below, resulted in the faculty expressing concerns to site team members not about the outcome but about how the decisions were reached and to what extent their voices were considered in the final decisions. Furthermore, they expressed concerns that when presented with the opportunity to vote on matters, they felt no real choices were given to them.

The Faculty Handbook states: "An academic chair or director...is appointed by the dean of the college following consultation with the department/school faculty and the provost." The handbook says chairs will be reviewed annually by the unit's personnel committee and a continuing chair will be reviewed in the fifth year before being reappointed. The previous director had been reviewed by the personnel committee, but had not been reviewed by the dean. The handbook says "a chair's performance may be reviewed by the dean at any time," and the dean initiated the review in the director's ninth year.

In 2013-14, the dean followed the procedure spelled out in the handbook to consult with senior and junior faculty and staff. Some faculty members said that they felt their positive comments were given

little weight. The periodic review resulted in the dean removing the director from his post. The director appealed that decision and an external reviewer was engaged to provide insights. The external reviewer talked with some faculty members, but those faculty members who saw his final report say their input was not included. During this time of review and appeal, it appears there were no faculty meetings between January and August 2014, because there is no record of minutes. During that period, the school said faculty were kept informed by email updates from the director.

While most faculty members were supportive of the previous director, the administrators to whom he reported had differences with him on procedures and direction, which led to his replacement. He succeeded in getting the school moved into new and much better quarters in College Hall, forged helpful relations with alumni and industry professionals and won approval of course fees, which brought in much-needed revenue for equipment purchases. But he was unable to win approval of the school's proposed curriculum changes and had differences with the dean over several procedural issues. As a result, the objectives of the strategic plan were not realized and the feedback loop from assessment to address technology and currency of curriculum issues has yet to be formally addressed.

After the spring 2014 semester ended, the dean met with the faculty and informed them of his final decision and announced the appointment of the interim director. In interviews, faculty members were supportive of the interim director, who had previously served as the interim director of the School, as an associate dean in the College of Arts and Letters and as the dean of the Honors College for seven years. School faculty members perceive him to have a positive relationship with those serving in leadership roles in the college and central administration.

In summer 2014, the dean told the school's faculty that a national search would be conducted for a new director. However, no search occurred in the 2014-15 academic year, due to budgetary constraints. During the 2014-2015 academic year, the central administration responded to declining enrollment and tuition revenue by initiating a 2.9 percent budget cut. In his year as interim director, he managed the budget cuts, which affected personnel and staff, won approval to search for a broadcast journalism and advertising position, won approval for a spousal hire which bolstered the public relations faculty and enhanced diversity and got money for equipment purchases. The president, the provost and the interim dean all expressed support for him and his colleagues from across campus were complimentary as well.

As a result of postponing the national search, the interim director was asked by the dean to continue as interim director for a second year, the year in which the ACEJMC team would visit.

In the summer of 2015, the dean of the College of Arts and Letters became interim provost. His replacement, the interim dean, met with the faculty in the fall of 2015 to discuss how the school faculty wanted to proceed in selecting a permanent director. When told that resources to pay for a national search in 2015-16 for a new director would come from funds set aside to fill a faculty vacancy in advertising, the faculty voted to offer the permanent position to the interim director. He was notified and accepted the position two days before the ACEJMC team arrived on campus.

Faculty members and administrators continue to support him; however, none of the full-time faculty members wanted to serve as the associate director for the unit, many giving personal reasons of family obligations or other administrative duties. As a result, a part-time faculty member, highly respected by

her colleagues, became the associate director of the school. The graduate director has expressed her desire to step down at the end of the 2015-16 academic year. The site team sensed that these administrative processes have led to a hesitancy among full-time faculty members to want to serve in leadership roles.

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

As described in (b), the procedure for selecting the school's director was followed as described in the Faculty Handbook. However, most faculty felt that their views were not heeded by administrators and that the choice between taking money for a faculty position to conduct a national search or affirming the interim director as permanent was not really a choice. Communication about the national search was particularly confusing, with faculty being told in Fall 2014 that the search was being postponed, not canceled. Even the self-study said a national search would be conducted in 2015-2016. Because there was no search process, the interim director never had the opportunity to present his vision to the faculty before he received the position permanently.

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

Grievance procedures are spelled out in the Faculty Handbook, Employee Handbook, Undergraduate Bulletin and New Student Survival Guide. The school has not been subject to any formal grievances in the past six years.

SUMMARY

A perfect storm of budget problems, administrator turnover and natural disaster left the school unable to act on its own strategic plan. Two years of embattled or temporary leadership and uncertainty about whether the school would seek leadership from outside the university left the program unable to move forward on curriculum change, to seek external support for equipment or to fully implement the results of its assessment findings. Thanks to dedicated faculty and the calming influence of the new director, the program continued to serve students but made little forward progress in fulfilling its mission and implementing a feasible strategic plan.

NON-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.

Indicators:

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

The school requires students to earn 124 credit hours to graduate. The vast majority of classes are 3 credit hour courses. For each of the past two years 100% of the graduates earned 72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communication.

Academic Year	Total Graduates	Number Earning 72 Outside Hours	Percent
2014-2015	107	107	100%
2013-2014	107	107	100%

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

Curriculum Overview

The School of Mass Communication and Journalism (MCJ) seeks reaccreditation for programs designed for undergraduate majors in three major areas: Advertising, Journalism, and Entertainment Industry. The Journalism major has four sequences that were reviewed for reaccreditation: Broadcast Journalism, News Editorial, Photojournalism and Public Relations. Only one sequence within the Entertainment Industry major called Media Production was included in the accreditation process. Media Production is the newest sequence being reviewed by ACEJMC in the school. The other Entertainment Industry sequences of Film, Recording Industry Management and Recording Industry Production were not part of this accreditation review.

The school requires four areas of course work for all ACEJMC reviewed sequences: MCJ core, MCJ values courses, skill courses in the major (sequence) area of study, and MCJ electives.

ACEJMC Competencies

The School has chosen to take the 12 ACEJMC competencies and condense them into what is called the “Southern Mississippi Six.” These Southern Mississippi Six are emphasized most strongly in the MCJ

Core and in the MCJ Values Requirement. Then the major sequences drill them down according to the discipline taught. The assessment plan measures these six competencies using direct and indirect measures and reports the results at the Major level, and not at the sequence level consistently. A large video screen on each of the MCJ's College Hall three floors includes graphics of these competencies displayed in rotation with current events, the academic integrity policy and faculty and staff office locations. During student meetings a general awareness of them could be detected.

MCJ Core

All students must take five core skills courses and at least elective value course:

MCJ 101 (3 hrs) Survey of Mass Communication

MCJ 102 (3 hrs) Introduction to Media Writing

MCJ 103 (1 hrs) Literacy Skills for the Mass Media (including a Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation exam)

MCJ 200 (2 hrs) Introduction to Digital Media Production

MCJ 454 (3 hrs) Media Law and Ethics

The Survey of Mass Communication provides an historical overview of print, electronic and multimedia history with syllabi showing the course objectives include the "Southern Mississippi Six", a combination of the 12 Professional Values and Competencies of ACEJMC. The course is theory-based and taught in a large lecture hall with approximately 100 or more students.

The Introduction to Media Writing course is a skills course that requires students to write assignments across media and industries. Assignments include print journalism with an emphasis on leads, online communication including blogs and tweets, broadcast journalism, and public relations and advertising copy. While the syllabi learning outcomes were consistent between sections of the course, the assignments and attention to social media writing varied greatly. This lack of consistency may be a cause for the uneven preparation of students noted by upper division course instructors.

The Literacy Skills for the Mass Media course reteach basic literacy skills so that students can pass a required Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation exam. The course uses *When Words Collide: A Journalist's Guide to Grammar* as its required text.

The combined media law and ethics course required of all students is taught not by a faculty member but by a full-time staff member hired in 2010 as the general manager of WUSM radio. He holds a law degree and has completed coursework toward a Ph.D. at the university. Students find this course challenging.

The Introduction to Media Production course emphasizes multimedia storytelling both in terms of software and using cameras. The approach of the individual faculty and the limited availability of technology leads to an unevenness in the capabilities of the students completing this course. After this course, which is offered in a lab equipped with Macintosh mini computers loaded with the appropriate software, students then have to use their own Mac laptops and software to continue to apply the skills taught.

MCJ Values

Students also must select at least one of the MCJ values elective, which aim to emphasize diversity, history, theory and theory and other social and cultural factors needed to understand the media and society. These electives are non-skills courses and include:

MCJ 355 Gender, Race and Media
MCJ 407 Mass Communication Theory
MCJ 461 Mass Media History
MCJ 462 Media Criticism
MCJ 463 Media Management and Economics

Students referenced these courses most frequently when asked about diversity, theory, history and other ACEJMC competencies.

Major Requirements

ADVERTISING

This major has six required courses within the School and one required course in the College of Business:

- MCJ 312 Graphic Design
- MCJ 329 Introduction to Advertising
- MCJ 330 Advertising Creative Strategy
- MCJ 333 Advertising Media
- MCJ 425 Mass Media Research
- MCJ 431 Advertising Campaigns (capstone course)
- MKT 300 Principles of Marketing (through the School of Business)

Some students are concerned that the research course does not require them to collect and analyze actual data and that media analytics are not incorporated formally into the curriculum currently although they are conceptually addressed. The students do have access to critical advertising databases and software needed for media planning and buying. Overall faculty and students report that the students are prepared for the campaigns course, which at times is the AAF National Student Advertising Competition, in which they placed first in their district in 2015. At other times students complete projects for local clients. The advertising curriculum is comprehensive with the exception of learning about advertising sales, which is only discussed in the introductory course; however, some students do obtain a certificate in sales from the marketing department in the School of Business. Faculty report that recruiters do seek student talent for sales positions and a need exists for media sales representatives for student media, but few Southern Mississippi students are prepared for these opportunities.

Advertising students also are required to complete three to six credit hours of elective courses selected from: Special Problems in Advertising (MCJ 492), Seminar in Advertising (MCJ 482), Public Relations (MCJ 421), Cases in Advertising (MCJ 433) and Internship (MCJ 429). Both faculty and students desire the new social media course (MCJ 210) to be required and promoted more. The official advising sheets do not list the social media course as an elective option. Students are concerned that they are obtaining information about analytics and measurement mainly through internships. Currently only one full-time faculty member is teaching within the major (sequence), and students express concern over lack of consistency and the low number of professionals teaching in a full-time capacity.

ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY – MEDIA PRODUCTION

This sequence has five required courses within the School

- MCJ 334 Intro to Radio Production
- MCJ 335 Video production techniques
- MCJ 340 Intermediate TV Production
- MCJ 440 Advanced TV Production.
- MCJ 442 Writing for Radio and TV

The sequence is part of the Entertainment Industry major. However, the other three sequences in that major were not part of accreditation. There is only one faculty member in this sequence and he is a visiting instructor. This is a heavily hands-on production sequence with five required courses: During the student meeting, half attended by Media Production students, most students felt the curriculum and instruction exceeded their expectations. Class observations showed engaged students are instructed at a very high level. Students must purchase their own Apple laptops with the latest Adobe Software. The capstone course involves group projects such as creating public service announcements for real local clients. Media Production students, and especially the faculty member, play a central role in “Hub City TV,” a weekly program consisting of news packages produced by the broadcast news capstone course with studio anchor introductions. Media Production students learn post-production techniques as they help create this weekly broadcast. The faculty member is focused on individualized instruction working closely with seniors to structure their demo reels around the career choice they seek. Recent alumni include a production assistant/sound engineer in Sacramento working on American Idol and the Sci Fi Channel.

JOURNALISM - BROADCAST NEWS SEQUENCE

There are four required courses in this sequence.

- MCJ 300 Multimedia Storytelling
- MCJ 304 Broadcast Reporting I
- MCJ 404 Broadcasting Reporting II
- MCJ 406 Capstone

Broadcast news core classes are designed to prepare students to find entry-level positions in television news by the time of graduation. This is achieving mixed results. Some students are getting jobs, especially those who take advantage of internship opportunities, but others do not. The succession of courses does not build to a high enough level of skills for students to compete, especially because the capstone experience does not include a typical student newscast. No producer course is offered. The students never have the opportunity to practice any “live shot” opportunities.

Faculty in the sequence are seasoned broadcast journalists who understand what it takes to secure a job in a competitive market. Until the fall of 2015 when a new assistant professor in broadcast news was hired, only one faculty member delivered the entire curriculum. The faculty members are very alert to contemporary changes in television news. Multimedia platforms and social media are highly integrated into the course work with students required to have a professional Twitter account and maintain a blog that showcases their work. This blog becomes part of their professional portfolio. During the student session a success story was shared. Based entirely upon blogging and social media work, a student was hired for an entry level TV job in Utah.

Students indicated First Amendment rights are thoroughly discussed in all broadcast news classes.

Interestingly, nowhere in the curriculum, in conversations with students or in interviews with faculty was the importance of thinking about how television news is increasingly moving to a mobile platform discussed.

JOURNALISM - NEWS EDITORIAL SEQUENCE

The “Journalism – News Editorial” sequence is one of the two smallest of the programs the team reviewed and has about 5 percent of undergraduate majors with 22 students.

This program is said by the unit “to prepare students for positions in the news media (print and online) as reporters, editors and writers.” This description has not changed since the 2010 team visit.

The news editorial sequence requires a minimum of 39 hours.

All News Editorial students are required to take the unit’s five core courses. Students then are required to take another five courses (15 hours):

- MCJ 203 Reporting
- MCJ 300 Multimedia Storytelling
- MCJ 303 Investigative Strategies
- MCJ 311 News Editing and Design
- MCJ 402 Advanced Reporting.

A minimum of six additional hours are required from within the offerings of the School.

The school offers News Editorial students up to six hours credit for the real world experience of internships, but while internships are said to be “strongly encouraged,” they are not required. About half of graduates are reported to have participated in one or more internship opportunities for credit. The curriculum is enhanced by a student-operated, faculty supervised newspaper/website which provides an opportunity for a hands-on reporting, editing and management experience.

Content of courses, as indicated by syllabuses reviewed, adequately covers the fundamentals of the discipline. There is a balance between skills and theory classes, and classes are presented in logical order. However, despite required courses in Digital Media Production (2 hours) and Multi-Media Storytelling (3 hours), course offerings do not appear to have fully kept pace with industry practices with respect to social media and multiplatform delivery of news and information. Administrators and faculty seem to recognize this weakness and have proposed adding as required courses Introduction to Social Media, and Introduction to Digital Photography as well as an elective, Entrepreneurial Journalism. Such a proposal was rejected by the College of Arts and Letters Academic Council. Social Media and Introduction to Digital Photography are currently available as electives, but Entrepreneurial Journalism is not taught.

JOURNALISM - PHOTOJOURNALISM SEQUENCE

The “Photojournalism” sequence is the other smallest of the programs the team reviewed and has about 5 percent of undergraduate majors with 22 students.

This program is said by the unit “to prepare students for positions in the news media (print and online) as photojournalists.”

The photojournalism sequence requires a minimum of 38 hours.

All news editorial students are required to take the unit’s five core courses. Students then are required to take another five courses (16 hours):

- MCJ 241 Introduction to Photography
- MCJ 300 Multimedia Storytelling
- MCJ 341 Photojournalism
- MCJ 343 Photo Essay
- MCJ 441 Photojournalism Portfolio.

A minimum of six additional hours are required from within the offerings of the School.

The school offers Photojournalism students up to six hours of credit for the real world experience of internships, but while internships are said to be “strongly encouraged,” they are not required.

The curriculum is enhanced by a student-operated, faculty supervised newspaper/website which provides an opportunity for a hands-on reporting, editing and management experience.

Content of courses, as indicated by syllabuses reviewed, adequately covers the fundamentals of the discipline. There is a balance between skills and theory classes, and classes are presented in logical order. However, despite required courses in Digital Media Production (2 hours) and Multi-Media Storytelling (3 hours), course offerings do not appear to have fully kept pace with industry practices, particularly the now widespread practice of hiring photographers on a freelance basis. Only this year did the school close its film, paper, and chemical-era darkroom in favor of an all-digital photography experience. Administrators and faculty seem to recognize these issues and have proposed adding required courses Introduction to Social Media, and Introduction to Digital Photography as well as an elective, Entrepreneurial Journalism. Such a proposal was rejected by the College of Arts and Letters Academic Council. Social Media and Introduction to Digital Photography are currently available as electives, but Entrepreneurial Journalism is not taught.

JOURNALISM - PUBLIC RELATIONS SEQUENCE

Within the public relations sequence, the school offers a blend of theory and skills courses. The students are required to take:

- MCJ 203 Reporting
- MCJ 312 Graphic Design
- MCJ 421 Public Relations
- MCJ 422 PR Writing and Design
- MCJ 426 Public Relations Research
- MCJ 428 Public Relations Campaigns, which serves as the capstone course

These courses align with the five-course minimum recommended by the Public Relations Society of America. Before completing the required public relations research course, students must complete Intro to Statistics (PSY 360) or Quantitative Math (SOC 460). Students are required to take an additional three to six hours of MCJ elective courses. Like the advertising major, the PR faculty and students desire for the social media course to be required. Students with internships tend to have deeper insights into analytics. The professors of the campaigns course require students' projects to be multimedia, incorporating completed video PSAs, social media, print, web and news releases. The students use both their mobile devices and equipment from the department to complete these projects. Using assessment feedback, the faculty began requiring the campaigns to be implemented within the semester, which enabled students to experience the entire process of public relations from planning research to monitoring and evaluation research. The students and faculty expressed concern that there is an unevenness of preparation for the capstone project depending on the electives and the professors teaching certain courses that students completed in preparation for the campaigns course.

(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.

The curriculum covers the basics of each discipline and begins to address the changing technologies. But faculty and students both agree more could and should be done. The workload of the faculty and the challenge in passing curricular revisions during the last three years have stalled the unit's ability to be responsive to the changing multimedia environment. Furthermore, the limitations in budget have hampered the unit's ability to provide the technology to deliver a more robust curriculum. The faculty attempt to provide theoretical introductions to convergence, mobile environments and social media analytics. However, some of the sequences are not requiring students to apply that knowledge. The students who have internships, professional part-time jobs or freelance opportunities not only recognize this gap in their educational experience but are the only ones who are able to apply the more current digital and multimedia competencies. The site team heard this from both general and sequence meetings with students as well as in graduating senior exit surveys and from alumni feedback. Internship site supervisors and local media employers also expressed concern some students are falling behind. Faculty, students and employers all agree the students have solid foundational skills.

Despite not being able to require courses that emphasize these technological changes, the faculty developed five new elective courses in the Fall of 2013 focused on media technology:

MCJ 210 Introduction to Social Media
MCJ 242 Introduction to Digital Photography
MCJ 464 Entrepreneurial Journalism
MCJ 406L Broadcast Journalism Workshop Lab
MCJ 405 Problems in Publication Production

Three have been offered as electives: Introduction to Social Media, Introduction to Digital Photography and Broadcast Journalism Workshop Lab. One course, Introduction to Digital Photography, now replaces the Intro to Photography course that was part of the Photojournalism Major (Sequence) Requirement. These elective courses and the one newly required course provide evidence of their effort to stay current, to use feedback from the School's 49-member board of advisers, and "close the loop" of assessment.

The school approved curriculum revisions that would have added six hours to each major sequence drawn from those elective courses listed above and submitted its curriculum proposal for adoption by the College of Arts and Letters. However, the College Academic Council tabled the proposal due to concern over the reduction in the foreign language requirement that would have been necessary to accommodate the additional six hours. In site team conversations with representatives of campus academic units, including the provost's office, and a separate meeting with the interim dean of the College of Arts and Letters Dean, it was confirmed that, providing the proper paperwork is filled out, proposed curriculum changes could take place in a timely manner – certainly within a one-year cycle.

It was noted that already a new brochure prominently displayed in the leadership suite lists the new MCJ 210 Social Media course in the centerfold along with MJC 300 Multimedia Storytelling which is required in the three journalism sequences (broadcast, news editorial and photography). As planned, the new social media course would become part of the core, required in each of the six sequences.

Through classroom observations, feedback from student meetings and individual interviews, it is clear the school's faculty are powerful, influential teachers in the lives of their students. Beyond the students, faculty teaching excellence is recognized as reported in the self-study. For example, two faculty members were competitively selected for nationwide teaching fellowships. Others have attended workshops at the Poynter Institute or stayed current on skills by attending Final Cut Pro and Avid software training workshops.

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

Skills course enrollments were spot-checked using enrollment data and found to be in compliance with this requirement.

(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.

Since the previous self-study, the percentage of students who complete internships has increased. Although not required, students complete a professional internship before graduation and can receive up to a total of six credit hours. An interview with the faculty member who supervises internships indicated those students who complete the internship find jobs the fastest. The most recent senior exit survey reveals the number of internships has increased the past few years with most remaining unpaid. Starting in the fall of 2014, students can complete two internships. An internship coordinator, a faculty member in the news editorial sequence, properly administers the internship. Students knew her name and found

her reputation to be helpful. Both the professional organization and the student evaluate the internship experience.

SUMMARY

Although individual classes might be as excellent as those in peer institutions, the curriculum needs to be more responsive to current trends across all sequences. Curriculum changes indicated by assessment were delayed during the protracted leadership transition of the past two years. The adoption of some new courses as electives has helped to meet that need, but students, faculty and employers agree more needs to be done.

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 unit has a written diversity plan that addresses curriculum, faculty and students and the climate of the school. The plan highlights how issues of race, gender and other elements of diversity are incorporated into the core curriculum and throughout the specializations within the school. The plan also reports on its enrollment and its faculty diversity. Neither the university nor the school conduct a climate survey, so there is no built in plan to identify if the climate is inclusive or not. While the plan offers evidence of how it is achieving the broadly outlined goals for diversity and inclusion, it doesn't set any benchmarks to determine if success has been achieved.

In meetings with students, staff and faculty, all seem to express that a positive inclusive environment can be found in the school. Students, faculty and staff pride themselves on being student-focused and willing to meet the individual needs of students. In fact the National Association of Black Journalists appears to be one of the strongest student organizations with students who gain experience across disciplines. African American students are also leaders in PRSSA and have obtained national recognition from such groups as the PR Council (formerly Council of PR Firms).

(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 school has carefully laid out its curriculum to include issues of race, gender, orientation, ethnicity and other elements of diversity into its core and into specific courses in each specialization. Specific assignments were highlighted in the self study and evident in the syllabi. The students not only are exposed to issues related to domestic diversity, but they are also introduced to international communication, particularly in the Survey of Mass Communication course. All students must select one "values" course that also has domestic diversity and global issues as a central theme. Students were able to cite examples of inclusion of diversity and global understanding from those courses, specifically. The site team's observation of classes found attention to domestic diversity and global perspectives. However, few students could give specific examples from upper division major courses (e.g. advertising, public relations, media production) where domestic diversity and global perspectives were taught. The outcome assessment of diversity from senior capstone courses showed 83 percent of advertising, 100 percent of media production, and 94.7 percent of journalism students reflected an

appreciation of human diversity. Likewise, senior portfolio reviews demonstrated 100 percent of journalism students and 80 percent of advertising students reflected an appreciation of human diversity.

Faculty members and student organizations also host guest lecturers from industry who represent various races, ethnicities, genders, and multicultural perspectives. Students gave multiple examples of such guests including School Hall of Fame members. Of particular note is student exposure to international graduate students and public relations projects related to Kenya and Mali. The school also has hosted scholars from Korea and China and a Venezuelan filmmaker to lecture and host workshops.

(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 unit has demonstrated women and minorities are successfully achieving promotions and tenure. The school's efforts to ensure diversity and inclusion have been recognized by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication earning an Honorable Mention in 2014 for its Equity and Diversity Award and by Southern States Communication Association (SSCA), receiving the Minority Recruitment and Retention Award in 2014.

While one Asian faculty member had a successful pre-tenure review before leaving the university in 2014, he left for a career opportunity in a larger city with a lower course load. An African American female, who was a tenured associate professor and the associate director of the school, left to become the chief diversity officer at the University of West Florida. The departure of a female faculty member was also related to a career opportunity in a larger market with a reduced course load. Finally, the departure of an African American male visiting professor was due to financial constraints and his being a visiting faculty member beyond the typical three-year limit. The school was able to hire through the university's spousal hiring program an African American female holding a doctorate with teaching and professional experience in public relations. This hire did not require a national search. This spousal hire enabled the school to increase its Black faculty from one to two, although at the last accrediting visit there were four African American faculty members. The school has one current search for an advertising professor and the pool has a lot of international diversity in it. The school has done considerable outreach to help locate African American candidates with doctoral degrees and experience. Currently, the faculty does not reflect the racial or ethnic makeup of the student body. The school does have one African American male staff member who manages the facilities and equipment in the school. The school remains committed to actively recruiting diverse faculty and staff.

(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 Black student population nearly reflects that of the state of Mississippi, with 37 percent in the state and 34 percent in the school (which is also higher than the university's percentage of Blacks). The Black student population grew 8 percent since the last accreditation visit. The Hispanic population in the school is higher than the state, and the Asian student population is on par with the state's Asian population.

To help recruit racial and ethnic minorities, the school operates a Dow Jones Newspaper Fund High School Multimedia Journalism Workshop annually and other high school workshops. The current Black students feel supported and attribute much of that to involvement in NABJ and to caring faculty.

(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.

Winning the two diversity awards is an indication of the positive climate at the school. Domestic and international minority students and faculty report feeling the school is supportive and pushes them to excel. One of the staff members and adjunct faculty members uses a wheelchair and finds the university and the school's new building to be accessible and meeting his needs. The climate appears to be free from harassment and discrimination. Black students are leaders in campus media and in communications organizations sponsored by the school.

SUMMARY

The school has won national recognition for its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Its curriculum incorporates both domestic and international diversity, and its faculty members conduct research about global and domestic diversity. While the faculty has balance in terms of gender, budget constraints and other career opportunities have limited the school's ability to retain some of its diverse faculty.

COMPLIANCE

Table 6. Faculty Populations, Full-time and Part-time

Show numbers of female, male, minority, white and international faculty members and the percentages they represent of the unit's total faculty. (Report international faculty the same way the university reports them.)

Academic year: 2014 – 2015 Full-time faculty
 (Excluding Film and Recording Industry faculty)

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African American	1	7.7	1	7.7
White	4	30.8	5	38.5
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0	0	0
Asian	1	7.7	0	0
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
Two or more races	0	0	0	0
Other race	0	0	0	0
International (any race)	0	0	1	7.7

Academic year: 2014 – 2015 Part-time/adjunct faculty
 (Excluding Film and Recording Industry faculty)

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African American	2	22.2	0	0
White	1	11.1	4	44.4
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0	0	0
Asian	0	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
Two or more races	0	0	0	0
Other race	0	0	0	0
International (any race)	0	0	2	22.2

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 unit has written criteria for selecting and evaluating the performance of its faculty. The tenure and promotion expectations are clearly outlined and explained in USM Faculty Handbook, 9.6.8, “Standard of Evaluation for Tenure”. The school’s current policies were adopted in 2009 and allow for a variety of scholarly and creative activities to count toward tenure and promotion. Likewise, the policy outlines expectations for service (both public/professional and university-related activities) and for teaching, which is a top priority for all faculty. Tenure is generally granted in the sixth year and in the seventh year at the latest. If tenure is not achieved, faculty members may have a final eighth year contract. Promotions are generally granted after five years of service, but promotions are not guaranteed.

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

The full-time faculty members have the primary responsibility for teaching, with 83.2 percent of the courses being taught by the full-time faculty in 2014-15. During the time of the site visit, full-time faculty taught about 45 percent of the undergraduate courses. Students appreciate having adjunct and visiting faculty; however, they do wish there were more full-time faculty in the advertising, media production and broadcast journalism. With more full-time faculty, the students and faculty themselves say that they could have more opportunities to support co-curricular and extra-credit programs like Hub City TV, The Agency (a student-run public relations agency) and AAF.

Full-time faculty are very engaged in service, especially academic and career advising. The students applaud the faculty for their attentiveness and for their willingness to be accessible including giving cell numbers to students to help with projects outside of class. Faculty members are engaged in supervising student media and in student organizations. Faculty members are also engaged in service to the department, school and university. In an unusual circumstance, a part-time faculty member, who has a Ph.D., is currently serving the school in three central roles: the school’s assistant director, the adviser to PRSSA and the adviser to The Agency. No other faculty members were interested in serving as the school’s assistant director.

The full-time faculty members are actively engaged in research and creative activities. They have graduate students assisting their research and they collaborate with colleagues within the school, across campus and at other universities.

(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 faculty represent a blend of professional and scholarly experience. The full-time faculty have between 2 years and 34 years of professional experience. All but two of its full-time faculty have doctoral degrees. The two without doctorates are instructors. The full-time faculty members remain current through completing workshops, seminars, internships and other professional activities. Furthermore, the full-time faculty members maintain active memberships in public relations, journalism and other communication associations. The full-time faculty members are engaged in scholarly research about issues related to the current practice of communication, journalism, advertising and public relations. The faculty have received grant funding for projects that would help them stay current in the field while contributing their expertise to solve problems. Travel funds between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per faculty member are available at the director's discretion. Some faculty will use more or less each year. Typically, the funds cover at least one conference per faculty member.

All but one part-time faculty member have at least a master's degree; the one with a bachelor's has 26 years of experience. The one part-time instructor without professional experience has a M.S.

Faculty members may obtain professional development in teaching through the Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) at the University of Southern Mississippi.

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

Full-time faculty are evaluated annually by the school's personnel committee, which has been made up of the director and two tenured faculty members who are elected by the faculty each fall. The evaluation is based on materials submitted individually by faculty members including a self-assessment, updated curriculum vitae, copies of student evaluations, syllabi, and copies of publications. Instruction is evaluated by students using SOAR, the online registration and records system each semester.

Adjunct (part-time) instructors are evaluated by the director of the school, based on student evaluations and feedback from other faculty. The SOAR system also is used to evaluate adjunct (part-time) faculty members.

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

Faculty members in the school are respected by other colleagues across campus. They participate in recruitment activities for the university. They are respected for their advising role of the campus radio programs and student newspaper. The current director previously served as the dean of the Honors

College and an associate professor serves as the associate director of the Black Studies Program. The associate provost said that several members of the faculty are considered to be “go-to” people for campus committees. Students praise the faculty as exemplars in terms of academic advising and creating a welcoming, supportive and inclusive academic environment. The interim dean of the College of Arts and Letters complimented the faculty for being very student-focused. The school is also considered to be one of the largest and strongest on campus by faculty and administrators.

SUMMARY

The tenure and tenure-track faculty all hold doctoral degrees and a range of professional experiences. The full-time instructors, visiting faculty and part-time faculty bring additional professional credentials that round out the faculty composition. The policies for tenure and promotion are clear, and the students, faculty and staff across the campus regard the school’s faculty as exemplars for being student-centered.

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.

Research is required of all tenured and tenure-track faculty members. Various types of scholarly and professional activities are accepted by the school including books, monographs, articles, presentations, publication of meritorious articles, reviews and commentaries in newspapers/magazines or other popular media that demonstrate high standards in the practice of mass communication and journalism. Faculty members are granted one course release to dedicate time for scholarly/professional activities from 4 courses to 3 each semester. Faculty members may also take sabbatical leaves to conduct research. Funding to support research is available from the College of Arts and Letters.

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

The school specifies expectations in its 2009 policies regarding evaluation standards for promotion and tenure. It gives details on the types of professional and scholarly activities that it will accept for consideration. The list is inclusive of online, print, broadcast and other technologies. Collaborative projects such as films and documentaries are included in the policy. Faculty members are expected to complete scholarly work above that required of a dissertation.

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

The evaluation criteria are inclusive. Faculty members at all levels expressed an understanding of what was required to be promoted and tenured. Below are listed the six categories of scholarly achievement considered appropriate for promotion, tenure and merit recognition:

- [1] books, monographs, articles, chapters, essays, reviews, and other scholarly works published by reputable professional/scholarly journals, presses and publishing houses that accept works only after rigorous review;
- [2] presentation and/or publication of original productions in print and non-print media;
- [3] presentation of scholarly papers before learned societies;
- [4] publication of meritorious articles, reviews and commentaries in newspapers/magazines or other popular media that demonstrate high standards in the practice of mass communication and journalism. In the areas of graphics/visual arts, photojournalism, film, and television production, original works made available for public presentation meet the creative activity standard. In general, original works in the professional areas of mass communication and journalism that

advance the state of the art or break new ground and presented in a public venue are considered creative activities;

[5] submission and receipt of competitive grants and contracts to finance research and/or creative activities;

[6] prizes and awards reflecting outstanding achievement in the discipline.

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

The school's faculty members have been very active in the last six years. They have completed the following:

3	Awards and Honors
8	Internal Grants
11	External Grants
3	Scholarly Books
4	Textbooks
7	Edited Books
35	Book Chapters
5	Monographs
107	Refereed Journals Articles
138	Refereed Conference Papers
5	Invited Academic Papers
12	Encyclopedia Entries
19	Book Reviews

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

The school has very active faculty members in terms of research, and many faculty members are doing research on diversity and inclusion and international topics. Furthermore, members across ranks are actively engaged in research. Collaboration with doctoral and master's students contribute to this climate of intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and expressions of differing points of view. Faculty from across campus said that while journals and conferences may be different, the faculty members have a reputation of being productive scholars and that both undergraduate and graduate students also have reputation of being solid researchers on interdisciplinary topics especially in the areas of history and Black studies.

SUMMARY

The research, creative and professional accomplishments of the faculty are strong. All tenure-track and tenured faculty produce scholarly research consistently at standards appropriate to the unit offering master's and doctoral degrees.

COMPLIANCE

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				Totals (12)
		Full Professors (3)	Associate Professors (4)	Assistant Professors (2)	Other Faculty* (3)	
Awards and Honors	3		2		1	
Grants Received Internal	8	1	7			
Grants Received External	11	2	8		1	
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	3		2		2	
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	4	3	1			
Books Edited	7	1	7			
Book Chapters	35	7	34			
Monographs	5		5			
Articles in Refereed Journals	107	20	86	12	1	
Refereed Conference Papers	138	57	78	18	8	
Invited Academic Papers	5		5			
Encyclopedia Entries	12	6	15			
Book Reviews	19	1	18			
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	2		1		1	
Juried Creative Works	16		10		6	
Non-juried Creative Works	42				42	
Other (Panel Moderator)	30		30			
Other (Journal Editor/Editorial Board)	6	3	3			

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.

Freshmen and new transfer students are first advised during university “Orientation” sessions. During those sessions, students meet the school’s administrative staff and available faculty members. Students are made aware of curricular requirements, Apple laptop computer requirements, and the Grammar Spelling and Punctuation Exam requirement. They also are made aware of student media opportunities, student organizations, and internships.

Returning students are advised by faculty members within their academic sequences. Students have the opportunity to request a specific faculty member or administrator, but the most recent survey of graduating seniors found some dissatisfaction with “flexibility in adviser selection.” That survey nevertheless found 71 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed “major advisers provided students with helpful guidance.”

Before the advisement sessions begin, the school communicates with students via listservs, class announcements, digital screens in the school’s building, and social media outlets.

Students uniformly praised the school’s academic advising, especially for intra- and inter-university transfer students.

(b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

All faculty members are required to maintain at least six office hours each week, to respond “promptly” to student communications, and to participate in student- and/or school-sponsored events. “Promptly” is defined in the School’s Faculty Engagement Policy as “within a 48-hour period, except communication received on weekends, when messages and calls should be answered within 72 hours.” All faculty members publish extended office hours during a two-week early registration period in October and March, during which most students select classes for the following semester. However, the Faculty Engagement Policy permits the requirement for office hours to be waived at the discretion of the director for “those with heavy on-campus service duties.” Unit faculty members are extremely busy, but some said teaching and helping students sometimes take priority over research.

In the most recent senior exit survey and alumni survey in 2014-2015, graduating students were said to have had high praise for the faculty and staff for the quality of the school’s academic advising. Details of the referenced study were not provided; however, site team conversations with current students uniformly confirmed such assertions, with students reporting many faculty members even provide students their mobile contact information to assist with projects on weekends and evenings.

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

Policies are available in the university catalog, advising worksheets and a detailed online degree progress audit. One-on-one advising sessions include detailed discussions of requirements and opportunities.

Students are kept informed about operations of the unit through listservs, class announcements, digital screens in College Hall, and social media outlets.

(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 School describes a fairly standard array of student organizations and media enterprises that provide students with extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities related to journalism and communications. These organizations are housed in the Student Media Center, located on the third floor of College Hall, the home of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism. This integration of student media into the school has the potential to be a significant advantage for students and for interactions with one another and with faculty. There is a business manager for the Student Media Center.

Located in the Student Media Center are:

The Student Printz is the campus newspaper. It publishes on Monday and Thursday during the academic year and provides news to its website. The newspaper is written and edited by students and overseen by the publications manager, who is a faculty member. Some of the student journalists are from outside the school. Students work in paid and voluntary capacities as editors, reporters, designers, photographers, etc. A small number of students receive academic credit through supervised practicum opportunities.

A review of The Student Printz website found a robust suite of informative news and features. Comparison of the print version, which is provided via PDF, with the content of the site found a variety of new material which had not yet appeared in print, suggesting an understanding among the student staff of the “digital first” principle.

The Student Printz would benefit from more careful editing and may not, therefore, fully reflect the standards promoted by the unit. Issues reviewed by the team contained graphics not fully or appropriately credited and incomplete references to the antecedent event which prompted a USM student demonstration.

Some students found the newspaper unresponsive to their interest in joining the staff.

WUSM-FM is a community radio station at which students can work in on-air and off-air positions. They are supervised by the station general manager, who is a faculty member. Some students earn academic credit through supervised practicum opportunities; the station offers a small number of paying positions each semester, and students who are eligible for federal work-study funding can find employment at the station.

The Agency at Southern Miss is a student-run public relations and advertising agency that serves on-campus and off-campus clients. The students are advised by a part-time faculty member. A small number of students receive academic credit through the Practicum (MCJ 418) course. The school has provided financial support and other resources, though there are currently no paid positions at the Agency.

Awareness of The Agency is limited and students do not know how to get involved in The Agency. Participation, therefore, has varied over the years. Many students told team members they are uncertain what The Agency does.

The Crew is a student-run organization focusing on creating and producing various types of audio and video content. Students have an opportunity for hands-on experience while learning how to carry a project from preproduction to its final phase in post-production. They are advised by a lecturer.

South City Records is an independent, student-run record label that signs and records local talent. SCR is intended to prepare students for all aspects of the entertainment industry by providing the tools and hands-on experience necessary to achieve great music, marketing, production and performance. South City Records is advised by a Jackson record company executive who is an adjunct professor, and by the recording industry sequence head.

The school has active chapters of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and an inactive chapter of the American Advertising Federation (AAF). The school reactivated its National Association of Black Journalists chapter, The Southern Miss Association of Black Journalists (SMABJ), in the spring of 2013 and it greatly benefits from active engagement by its faculty adviser.

However, the school does not have student chapters of the Radio Television Digital News Association, the Society of Professional Journalists, the National Press Photographers Association or the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. To address frustration expressed by some students during the site visit, the school has recently stepped up efforts to encourage students to participate in events such as the annual Hearst Awards competition.

There appears to be a lack of promotion, integration and appreciation of some student media and organizations. The unit seems to recognize this issue and one of the 2015-2016 goals adopted by the faculty on Oct. 2, 2015 asserts “the faculty will examine the organizational structure of the Student Media Center with the goal of maximizing efficiency in serving the educational goals of all sequences.”

(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 school maintains retention and graduation statistics that were provided to the team. The school’s website provided the fall 2014 enrollment, the retention rate or the class entering in fall 2013 and the four-year graduation rate for the class entering in fall 2010.

The school's most recent four-year graduation rate was 24 percent for the class entering in fall 2010, and over the last 10 years it ranged between 42 percent and 24 percent. The average four-year graduation rate for the school over the 10 years reported was 31.7 percent.

The school's four-year graduation rate has always exceeded that of the university overall. The university's most recent four-year graduation rate was 22 percent for the class entering in fall 2010 and over the last 10 years ranged between 25 percent and 21 percent. The average four-year graduation rate for the university as a whole over the 10 years reported was 23 percent.

The school's most recent six-year graduation rate was 64.4 percent for the class entering in fall 2008 and over the last eight years ranged between 64 percent and 49 percent. The average six-year graduation rate for the school over the eight years reported was 57 percent.

The university's most recent six-year graduation rate was 48 percent for the class entering in fall 2008 and over the last eight years ranged between 50 percent and 44 percent. The average four-year graduation rate for the university as a whole over the eight years reported was 47 percent.

Although the graduation rate is said to be the "primary program objective outcome" in the school's annual assessment process, the five-year strategic plan provided by the unit does not include any effort to improve upon these retention and graduation rates.

One of the president's primary objectives is to increase the retention and graduation rates of the entire university. Each school on campus must help in this effort.

SUMMARY

The unit is remarkable for its student-centered teaching culture. Students interviewed routinely describe their professors as engaged, responsive and approachable. The unit will benefit from a promised closer integration of The Student Printz with coursework.

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 school had a budget of \$1,865,212 for the self-study year of 2014-2015, a figure that has not increased since the last site visit. Because of declines in enrollment, the university began a process of budget cuts in the fall semester that totaled 2.9 percent. The school lost two professional practice faculty members – one from Journalism and one from Entertainment Industry -- who did not have tenure. In late Spring 2015, the school was permitted to hire a public relations faculty member as a spousal accommodation and also to accept the transfer of a professor from the Department of Modern Languages & Literatures to the Film sequence. Three other faculty searches were postponed, including the search for a director. The interim director continued for another year until the faculty voted in Fall 2015 to offer him the position. The search for an advertising position was reinstated in Fall 2015. Vacant lines have been filled by visiting instructors. They include the much-praised instructor who has sole responsibility for 62 students in media production, a solution that lacks permanency.

As the 2009-2010 site visit team wrote, the budget is “insufficient to fund its ambitious strategic plan.” That is just as true today. The former director won university approval to launch The Campaign for Mass Comm in 2012 but raised less than \$400,000 of a hoped-for \$5 million and that was used to purchase furniture for the new College Hall home for the school. The campaign was supposed to raise funds for the objectives of the strategic plan, but, because the goal was never met, those objectives were never achieved. The campaign came to an end when the previous director was removed. A new campaign could not be started until a permanent director was chosen.

(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.

While the budget does not address the objectives of the strategic plan, it is adequate to allow the school to achieve its current mission. Neither the provost nor the interim dean held out hope that the school’s budget would increase in the near future, but the provost said that the administration took steps during last year’s budget cuts to “protect” the department. This included allowing for the spousal accommodation hire and the transfer of the languages professor and also the special award from the college for television equipment upgrades.

Fund-raising is handled by a centralized university development office. With a change in the personnel of that office, the university is now considering decentralizing development functions to the colleges, schools and departments that are seeking funds outside the university to support their mission. The new director is planning to assign and train staff to pursue development opportunities for the school.

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

During the last accreditation visit the school was found out of compliance in Standard 7 with the site team summarizing “the facilities are the school’s major weakness.” Now the school is housed in a showcase renovated historic 30,000-square-foot building known as College Hall. The self-study reports the 100-year-old building cost \$7 million to renovate. Throughout the three floors with high ceilings College Hall creates a symbolic identity for the students, faculty and staff. Future students, alumni and potential donors see dramatic press photos shot by alumni hanging on the walls. Rocking chairs sitting on the large “front porch” veranda provide a welcoming feeling not only to the school but to the campus since the building has a prime location at the university’s front circular drive. The shape of the restored windows has become the School’s symbolic logo used on brochures and the website.

However, a \$5 million school fundraising campaign to support the strategic plan including furnishing and equipping College Hall was abruptly halted when a devastating tornado hit campus. Financial focus logically shifted to other pressing needs of the university recovering from this disaster. Despite the devastating financial climate time, “The Campaign for Mass Comm,” undertaken in 2013 and 2014, raised \$392,194. This was enough money to furnish the new building. Today there is ample space in the facility to foster a renewed synergy between teaching and learning since classrooms, labs and faculty offices are all within close proximity. Classrooms are fully equipped with internet and modern media displays. There is a small television studio with a chroma key wall, a separate TV control room, and a highly organized centrally located equipment check out room. The photo studio in the new building has replaced the old dark room. The third floor has a series of professional-level lab spaces for students to take advantage of the Student Media Center.

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

The School clearly recognizes, as cited in the self-study and confirmed by interviews with faculty and students, an equipment shortfall. This has been mitigated by the introduction of a course fee assessed on each student and dedicated to equipment purchases. In the summer of 2015 the College of Arts and Letters gave the school \$46,000 to upgrade field and studio television equipment. The students did indicate “we have improved a lot in the last six months.” Across the school, efforts have been made to address this deficit. For example, The Agency, the student run public relations firm, recently acquired a grant from a foundation to purchase a laptop fully loaded with software. This will allow them to service more clients.

The equipment shortage has the most impact on the Media Production and Broadcast Journalism sequence. Prior to the purchase of additional cameras only 10 video cameras were available for roughly 50 broadcast journalism students to check out for use on class assignments. There are no separate stand-alone video editing bays that can be used by students in these two sequences. The current editing room has eight Mac computers for project work but it is also used a classroom, limiting its availability to broadcast news and media production students. In addition, faculty and students tell team members that while the software is current (Adobe Suite) the computers are not powerful enough to effectively operate the software. One faculty observed, “The processing power on Macs are so outdated they can’t handle the footage and lag badly.” A student said, “Our equipment just can not handle what we do.” One

transfer student said, “I came from a community college where we had full HD cameras. I came here and I was shocked thinking we would have something more up to date.”

It is not uncommon to hear students at other universities complain about a lack of equipment but, when coupled with faculty voices, the concern rises. Faculty in both the Media Production and Broadcast News sequences specifically identified some equipment gaps. The students echoed many of these same shortfalls.

- There is only one light kit for 153 students in broadcast news and media production. At least eight were the minimum needed, according to one faculty member.
- The teleprompter in the studio has not worked for several months. Students have been denied the opportunity to use a basic tool in television news studio production.
- Additional lavalier microphones are needed.

Both faculty and students indicated the current system does a good job with maintenance on the existing equipment. However, some students who work in the equipment checkout room are from other departments across campus, not fully acquainted with the cameras, and students indicated this was problematic. Faculty noted as curriculum revisions unfold a renewed look at equipment resources should take place.

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

The scholarly needs are supported by a pair of libraries adjacent to the school. The library system maintains a web portal for journalism and mass communications to assist students and faculty research.

SUMMARY

The unit’s budget is adequate and the university administration has taken steps to protect the school during recent budget cuts. But the budget does not match the ambitions of the existing strategic plan and a fund-raising plan will need to be developed to achieve some of the faculty’s goals. The school has made great strides with the move to new facility. The unit has increased its equipment and technology by establishing course fees, securing an award from the college and a mini grant from a university foundation. However, it has not acquired equipment needed to adequately address increasing demands for multi-media story-telling.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

The unit and its faculty advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfill obligations to 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 school communicates annually with its alumni through an alumni newsletter, MCJ Journal, as well as through social media outlets including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Alumni are encouraged to provide updates on their careers, which are published in the newsletter. The school also uses an alumni listserv to communicate with graduates. Additionally, the school communicates with its alumni and friends about its annual symposium, held each fall since 2006.

Faculty members also organize informal gatherings of alumni occasionally, such as a Student Printz reunion on the homecoming weekend in 2014 and a gathering of photojournalists in the region. Public relations alumni are invited by faculty to guest lecture and participate in activities of PRSSA.

The school has a professional advisory board, made up of nearly 50 members, most of whom are alumni and who have established media, advertising and PR careers. The board meets twice a year to discuss curriculum and alignment of the program with industry needs. One or both of those meetings is on campus where board members can interact with students.

The 49 board members reported by the unit include representatives of USA Today, Great American Country Television, Mississippi Public Broadcasting, the Mississippi Press Association, The Times-Picayune, The Sun Herald, and local and regional advertising and public relations agencies. Ten of those listed as members participated in the last meeting on October 15, 2014.

The school's annual MCJ symposium grew out of an advisory board discussion. The school consulted with board members before determining to close its film, print and chemical darkroom in Summer 2015 to align the student experience with the industry's virtually universal adoption of all-digital photography.

Faculty are said to rely upon many of the school's alumni as guest speakers throughout the year.

Faculty vitae do not show a robust commitment to industry associations and networks and the associated opportunity to exchange ideas and keep curricula fresh and current with industry practice and needs.

(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 school sponsored a social media conference, PubCampMS, in July 2011. The conference focused on both the foundations of public media and the uses of social media for students, faculty and staff at Southern Miss. Over 70 faculty, staff, as well as media professionals from the region attended the conference.

Faculty members provided multimedia workshops for members of the Mississippi Press Association in 2009 and 2010.

The school provided workshops for high school students during the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association (MSPA) Journalism Day held each September since 2013. Between 125 and 150 high school students attend the workshop each year. The school has worked in partnership with the Dow Jones News Fund to support summer multimedia journalism workshops for high school students in 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2015.

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

Faculty members have demonstrated a substantial commitment to the academy and are involved in academic associations, serving as committee chair persons, reviewers, panelists and moderators.

Members of the faculty routinely attend meetings of regional and national academic and education organizations and workshops.

(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.

WUSM, the student radio station, is said by local media professionals to be an important and valuable daily source of community information and news in the Hattiesburg area.

WUSM started an annual Tailgate Concert Series on campus in 2011. Each concert in series is free and the public is invited to attend.

The school's annual symposium and Hall of Fame induction is promoted at the university and in the community and is said to attract a large and diverse attendance.

Service learning is a component of the capstone course in PR. Also, The Agency, the student-run PR firm, completes projects for local non-profit small businesses.

A number of faculty members show personal commitment to service in their off-campus communities.

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

The school provided workshops for high school students during the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association (MSPA) Journalism Day held each September since 2013. Between 125 and 150 high school students attend the workshop each year. The school has worked in partnership with the Dow Jones News Fund to support summer multimedia journalism workshops for high school students in 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2015.

School faculty members occasionally serve as judges for contests aimed at recognizing and promoting excellence in student reporting work.

SUMMARY

The school and its faculty advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfill obligations to community, alumni and the greater public. The school uses its alumni to engage and to mentor students and contribute to the academic life of the school, the university and the academy as a whole.

While faculty vitae suggest a robust commitment to academic organizations, the school and the faculty have not demonstrated a similar commitment to deep participation in industry professional organizations and networks. Nor has the transfer of knowledge from the academy to the industry been shown to be a priority. The unit seems to recognize this issue and one of the 2015-2016 goals adopted by the faculty on Oct. 2, 2015, asserts the school will explore ways to support “professional development opportunities for faculty to help keep up to date on evolving media practices.”

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.

A strong culture of assessment exists at the University of Southern Mississippi. Required across the campus since 2011-2012 (through WEAVE online) are two measures - the senior portfolio and the exit survey. The Assessment Committee for the University of Southern Mississippi requests that programs with external accreditation merge program-level requirements with those of the university. Thus, in preparation for the self-study, the school’s assessment committee, composed of the sequence heads, revised student-learning outcomes to map to ACEJMC standards. The school chose to brand the combined assessments in their own language naming it the “Southern Miss Six.” It was adopted October 14, 2014.

The assessment standards used by the school and known as the “Southern Miss Six” are seen below.

Student Learning Assessment: Southern Miss Six
(Adopted, October 14, 2014)

1. Demonstrate an appreciation of the relevant constitutional freedoms, history, legal issues and ethical principles involved in mass communication

Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.

Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

2. Demonstrate an appreciation of human diversity in our global village and local communities.

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

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

3. Demonstrate the ability to interpret and apply relevant theories and concepts.

Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.

4. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and research information and to apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

5. Demonstrate the ability to think critically, creatively and independently and to write and visualize stories accurately and fairly.

Think critically, creatively and independently.

Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

6. Demonstrate the ability to engage innovative tools and technology.

Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

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

A written assessment plan updated October 22, 2014 has a vision and mission statement. It also lists 12 objectives for the assessment process including proficiency in practical skills, fostering diversity and personal integrity and preparing students for life long learning.

Direct/Indirect Measures

The school created two direct and four indirect measures.

Direct Measures

- Capstone Courses (every year; collected by course instructor)
- Senior Portfolio (every year; collected by the MCJ office)

Indirect Measures

- Alumni Survey (every five years; collected by the MCJ office)
- Internship Evaluations (every semester; collected by Internship Coordinator)
- Senior Exit Survey (every semester; collected by the MCJ office)
- Student Competitions (every year starting 2015; collected by sequence heads)

There is evidence the School lets the values and competencies percolate down into the course syllabi. For example, they are clearly stated on the front page of the MCJ 101 syllabus, required of all majors. The school strives to create a culture of awareness of the standards, having them prominently displayed as the Southern Miss Six as one of the image rotations in hallway video screens.

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

There is clear evidence from the self study and the site team visit that the unit collects assessment data using both University required assessment tools (senior portfolio and exit surveys) as well four additional measures (capstone courses, alumni surveys, internship evaluations, and student competitions) mapped to ACEJMC standards. The faculty created an assessment report in 2014-15 supporting its assessment findings. However, recommended changes have yet to be implemented. Previous curricular changes have not been fully implemented, although recommended in previous assessment reports. What is not fully in evidence is how the unit applies assessment material and then closes the loop to refine the curriculum.

A curriculum revision will be undertaken in the coming semester pursuant to a stated faculty goal for 2015-2016. Without taking these assessment reports and recommendations when such revisions are undertaken, the faculty would not be “closing the loop” of assessment.

A faculty member of the assessment team noted, “the most important feedback is based on curriculum. When we do the alumni surveys we always get the same response that we should learn more about social media.” Yet social media has not been fully integrated into the current curriculum in the sequences despite this annual assessment feedback.

(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 school produces a full color alumni newsletter once a year in the fall.

As a direct result of an alumni survey, the topic of how to better prepare students for a job was discussed in a faculty meeting. That led one faculty member to receive a university summer grant for instruction improvement. The grant will permit an advertising course to take students to major regional media markets (Atlanta and New Orleans) for three- or four-day field trips. Plans call for at least one school alumnus to join in this special field trip course. If the course is successful, the plan is to duplicate the course for other sequences such as public relations.

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

Professionals are involved in portfolio reviews. During each spring's Media Week, professionals not only speak in classes and consult on careers but individually review student portfolios using a comprehensive form.

SUMMARY

Assessment data is being collected using both direct and indirect measures; however, recommended changes that would demonstrate closing the loop either have not been implemented or have not been implemented as planned. Changes in school leadership have been a major reason for the lack of closing the loop.

COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- Enthusiastic students who are proud of their program and eager to test their skills in the professional world.
- Dedicated faculty committed to student success and readily available to consult and advise students.
- A spacious new home, showcasing alumni and student photography, in a sensitively restored historic building in a prime location at the gateway to the campus
- Strong relations with professional organizations in the region
- Regarded by administration as a marquee unit in the College of Arts & Letters and in the University of Southern Mississippi

Weaknesses:

- The unit's strategic plan lacks feasibility, is outdated and is not being pursued
- Two years of embattled or temporary leadership preceding the site team's visit
- Inconsistent implementation of assessment findings to guide curricular changes within current courses
- The failure of leadership to win college-level approval of needed changes to curriculum to make instruction more current
- Lack of adequate equipment for productions across sequences

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

Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

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

- The unit's strategic plan at the time of the visit lacked feasibility, was outdated and was not being pursued. The unit must create a feasible and appropriate strategic plan and work toward achieving it.
- The unit lacked stable leadership that could achieve curricular reform in the years preceding the site team's visit. The unit must maintain a leadership team to achieve curricular reform.
- The unit's assessment report indicates changes are needed to the curriculum and co-curricular programs. The unit must demonstrate it has updated its current courses and relevant co-

curricular programs and begin offering and/or requiring any new recommended courses necessary to ensure its curriculum is current with the industry.

- The unit had not acquired sufficient modern equipment to adequately serve its sequences. The unit should increase its equipment to adequately serve all of its sequences' increasing demand for multimedia storytelling.

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

- The unit lacked stable effective leadership that could achieve curricular reform in the years leading to the evaluation. The unit must maintain a leadership team to achieve curricular reform.
- The unit's strategic plan at the time of the visit lacked feasibility, was outdated and was not being pursued. The unit must create a feasible and appropriate strategic plan and work toward achieving it.
- The unit's assessment data indicated changes are needed to the curriculum and co-curricular program. The unit must demonstrate action to update current courses and incorporate any new recommended courses it sees fit to ensure its curriculum is current with the industry.
- The unit had not acquired modern equipment to adequately serve all of its sequences. The unit should increase its equipment to adequately serve all of its sequences.
- Vacant full-time lines that result in some sequences having only one full-time faculty member. The unit should right size itself to ensure that all sequences have at least two full-time faculty.

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

N/A

6) If the unit was previously accredited, summarize the significant deficiencies noted in the previous report and the actions taken to correct them. If the unit was in noncompliance in the same standard(s) on the previous two visits, identify the standard(s) and the problems noted. Explain actions taken to correct the problems.

In the 2009-10 accreditation report, the major weaknesses were:

- Facilities that are inadequate: insufficient, inconvenient and oddly configured.
- Equipment and technology insufficient to support the school's teaching and research missions.
- Vacant full-time lines that result in some sequences having only one full-time faculty member

To correct these items, the unit:

- Moved into a spacious new home, showcasing alumni and student photography, in a sensitively restored historic building in a prime location at the gateway to the campus, which is considered a major strength in this site visit.

- Increased its equipment and technology, by establishing course fees, securing an award from the College and a mini grant from University Foundation for The Agency, a student-run public relations and advertising agency.
- Obtained a second faculty line for broadcast journalism and secured funding for a second advertising faculty member. The unit had acquired visiting faculty and professors of practice to fill the gap.

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 written and organized. However, it did not give a complete picture of the leadership challenges the unit faced in the last two years. The director gave the team specifics at dinner on the first night of the visit. The diversity plans was written more like a report than a plan of action. The tabs in appendices made navigating the supporting documentation easy. Site team members appreciated having the option of having a digital copy and printed copies for their review.



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Jan. 26, 2016

Susanne Shaw
ACEJMC
1435 Jayhawk Blvd.
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045

Dear Ms. Shaw:

The School of Mass Communication and Journalism respectfully objects to the recommendation of non-compliance in Standard 1, governance and administration. In our view, the School met all but one of the indicators for this standard, and its progress since 2009-2010 merits full reaccreditation in this cycle.

Let me reiterate the details of the leadership transition that is the focus of much of the team's report.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, the dean of the College of Arts & Letters undertook a periodic review of the director of the School, following the process outlined in our Faculty Handbook, ultimately determining that he would not recommend renewal, even though many faculty members supported the director. After the former director was not renewed, I was asked to become interim director beginning July 1, 2014. While initial plans called for a national search for a new permanent director, those plans were put on hold because of universitywide budget cuts, and the university ultimately decided that budget concerns dictated that the School should either give up a vacant faculty line to offset the cost of hiring a director from the outside, or, in the alternative, hire internally. The faculty voted in Fall 2015 to offer me a three-year appointment as director beginning July 1, 2016. (While I have served two school years already as interim director, the Faculty Handbook specifies that the initial appointments of chairs/directors are for three-year terms.)

The accrediting team faults the university for nonrenewal of the previous director despite faculty support for him, but in fact the dean closely followed the procedure for periodic review of chairs/directors. The team further criticizes the university for failing to create a new faculty line to hire a director from the outside, as some faculty had favored, but this position fails to appreciate the severe financial constraints faced by our university and many others in recent years.

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As I attended the accreditation workshop in Fall 2014, I asked ACEJMC officials in a brief conversation how to handle the delicate matter of the previous director's removal. I was told to explain details in full to the team at the Sunday night dinner the opening night of the team's visit. Accordingly, we included only the briefest mention of the transition in our self-study. I now realize this was an error on our part, as team members seemed surprised by the transition and devoted much of their conversation with faculty members to seeking additional information about it.

In its report, the team quotes the university president as saying that recent years have proven to be "a perfect storm" of disruptive events that have buffeted the university, including an EF-4 tornado that did millions of dollars in damage to the university in February 2013, statewide budget cuts that have cut the Southern Miss budget, an turnover in upper administration. Still, the accrediting team report blames the director transition for virtually any fault it found in the School, minimizing, we believe, external factors that were beyond the unit's control.

In fact, the School has made tremendous progress since the last accrediting cycle in 2009-2010, including a move to a newly renovated building. Except for the transition year of 2013-2014, when the dean was reviewing the previous director, the School has proved to be stable and has enjoyed the support of the upper administration (evidenced in the university's support for renovated facilities and for filling faculty lines). Students were unaware of issues underlying the director transition, and disagreements among faculty about the transition were collegial.

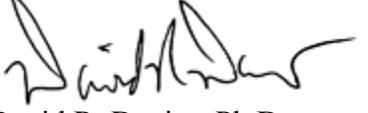
It is true that the timing of the previous director's nonrenewal in 2014, just one year before the ACEJMC team's arrival, hampered progress in updating the five-year plan and in revising our curriculum. In the School's defense, it seemed premature to update the five-year plan until a new permanent director was named, and it made sense to delay the curriculum revision until after the fast-approaching ACEJMC visit. (In fact, the faculty considered undertaking a curriculum review and revising its five-year plan just after I was hired but decided to wait until after the ACEJMC visit to proceed.) Despite delayed progress in these areas, the School was deemed in compliance with all other eight standards.

In our view, the School met all but one of the indicators for compliance with Standard 1. It is true that the transition in 2013-2014 would indicate noncompliance with indicator (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."), but we would argue that this circumstance was limited to 2013-2014. The accrediting team sites "embattled and temporary leadership" at the School, but this seems to us to overstate a not-uncommon leadership transition.

The School's faculty members have begun planning for a curriculum revision this calendar year, as they had planned to do even before the team report, utilizing assessment data. The School is seeking additional funding for equipment, as the team suggests. It will begin planning for a revised and more realistic five-year plan. In addition we are interviewing for a second advertising faculty member and will seek additional faculty lines. Plans for all of these efforts were under way – dating back to 2014 – before the team's arrival.

To reiterate, the School's faculty believe we have made tremendous progress since the previous visit and that while the leadership transition hampered progress in some areas, we nonetheless met most indicators for Standard 1 and deserve full reaccreditation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular box. The signature is cursive and appears to read "David R. Davies".

David R. Davies, Ph.D.
Professor & Interim Director