

**Academic Program Review
Department of Communication and Journalism
University of New Mexico
April 22-25, 2012**

During April 22-25, 2012 an Academic Program Review team composed of Robert Avery (University of Utah), Karen Tracy (University of Colorado), and Sherman Wilcox (University of New Mexico) conducted an on-site visit in conjunction with the scheduled academic review of the Department of Communication and Journalism (C & J). Prior to the visit the team members received a detailed two-volume Self-Study Report that clearly demonstrated that the departmental administration, faculty and staff value the importance of the self-study process as a means for enhancing existing strengths and correcting any possible weaknesses of the academic unit. During the three-day visit, the team met with representatives of the university, college, and department administration, department faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students. The review team was assisted throughout the on-site visit by Greg Heileman, Associate Provost; Nancy Middlebrook, University Accreditation Director; Bessie Gallegos, Academic Program Review Specialist; Glenda Balas, Department Chair; and Nancy Montoya, Department Administrator. The following report has been coauthored by the three APR team members.

Background

The existing Department of Communication and Journalism resulted from the merger of the former departments of Communication and Journalism in 1991. The merger was spearheaded by Robert Tiemens, the new unit's first chair, following the success of a similar merger at the University of Utah in 1972. The newly integrated department moved quickly to capitalize on the strengths brought to the merger, and the faculty successfully recruited Everett Rogers to be Department Chair in 1993. Rogers became the architect for a new Ph.D. program that was established in 1995, and by the end of the decade the doctoral program's concentration in intercultural communication was recognized by the National Communication Association as the top-ranked program in the nation. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the C&J faculty had added Ph.D. concentrations in health communication and media communication.

Since the department's inception, it has been blessed with gifted administrative talent in the role of Department Chair. In addition to Robert Tiemens and Everett Rogers, the department has benefited greatly from the effective leadership of Karen Foss, Bradford Hall, John Oetzel, and currently, Glenda Balas. Due largely to this effective leadership and the strong scholarly tradition associated with the C & J Department's faculty, the University of New Mexico is frequently identified as one of the most outstanding communication and journalism departments in the western region. As a highly respected academic unit within the Communication discipline, it should come as no surprise that the faculty has developed a clearly articulated mission statement that is consistent with the department's academic goals. The department has also succeeded in extending its reach into the community, and is guided in its decision-making by an active and supportive Community Advisory Board.

It is against this backdrop of a healthy, engaged, and energetic academic community of scholars and teachers that the APR team offers this summary of its observations and recommendations.

Undergraduate Program

The C & J undergraduate program enrolls roughly 700 students and, as of this past academic year (2011-2012), it has revised its undergraduate degrees so that three previously distinct degrees are now two: (1) Communication, and (2) Journalism and Mass Communication. Students majoring in Communication share a core set of courses and then select one of a number of potential emphases. Similarly, students in Journalism and Mass Communication also share core courses and then focus in either Strategic Communication or Multimedia Journalism. Course sequences in both Communication and Journalism and Mass Communication are comprehensive and up-to-date. The streamlining of Mass Communication and Journalism into a single degree with two tracks was an excellent change, showing responsiveness to student needs and the changing expectations of professional preparation.

C & J has been one of the university's department leaders in figuring out how to deliver a wide variety of courses online. Their online courses are well conceived, providing creative options that deliver reasonable course content similar to face-to-face classes while providing flexibility for students. By enabling students to take some of their courses on line, it seems likely that the department and university will better succeed in increasing the number of undergraduates completing degrees within six years.

The department also has impressive, to-be-emulated outcome assessment practices for both degrees, and increasingly for selected online courses. Student Learning Objectives are reasonable and clearly stated, and the assessment practices will enable the department to fine-tune class offerings and extracurricular experiences in light of the information it gathers. The department is also to be commended for its contributions to Freshman Learning Communities and interdisciplinary certification programs. In addition, it is clear that the quality of department teaching is excellent, as evidenced by the regularity of faculty and graduate students receiving teaching recognition awards.

Finally, the department has developed ways to give its strongest students a signature experience. The facilitator role with course credit offered to students who did well in the introductory communication theory course is a wonderful experience to make possible for its strongest students.

In terms of ways to sustain and strengthen this good undergraduate program, we recommend the following:

- Consider what other experiences the department and university could offer to its strongest students. A program is defined by what it does for its best students as well as what it offers every student. Are there ways to further develop departmental or university honors or create other experiences for the most able students?
- As online courses become increasingly available, it will be important to monitor the ratio of online to face-to-face experiences. Having online courses addresses student needs and is a wonderful feature of the education experience; having too many such courses can undermine a department's identity. Monitoring the number of online courses to insure that this kind of class does not exceed the desirable number is crucial.

- Given one focus of the C & J undergraduate program is Strategic Communication, consider having selected Strategic Communication courses take on the department (or particular programs) as a client to advance the goals of promoting and improving the visibility of the unit in the university, community, and in the larger communication field.
- The team also recommends that the department explore ways to take advantage of the growing convergence movement across all student media. It might be timely to open discussions regarding university-wide student media oversight through a governing board such as a Student Media Council that answers directly to the University's Board of Trustees and receives student media fees via semester registration that provide financial support for growing student media opportunities across campus. Notable opportunities for students include the absence of a student operated radio station and a Spanish language newspaper that focuses on the Hispanic and Latina/o community. The existing faculty expertise within the C & J Department should enable the department to provide the University with effective leadership in advancing these important student initiatives.

M.A. Program

The M.A. offers students a solid, well-conceived graduate program that is attentive to the diversity of academic and professional goals that motivate students. To conserve resources the 2001 review of the graduate program had suggested that the department might want to consider channeling more of its M.A. students away from the thesis option and into comprehensive exams. The department resisted that suggestion and in 2012 the vast majority of its students continue to do a Master project or thesis. We think that this profile of most M.A. students doing an academic thesis or a professional project is to be commended, a valuable way to prepare students for their likely post-M.A. paths as well as a good way to guard against a typical danger of M.A. programs within a Ph.D.-granting R1 department—privileging Ph.D. students over M.A.s.

Our one recommendation with regard to the M.A. program is that the department needs to continue looking for imaginative ways to raise money in order to support some M.A. students receiving both tuition remission and stipends. To recruit M.A. students nationally it is crucial that tuition remission be included in the funding package.

Ph.D. Program

The Ph.D. focuses on three specialty areas in communication: intercultural communication, media communication, and health communication. We see it as wise that the program restricts its foci to three areas and recruits students accordingly. In these times of tight resources no Ph.D. program can train doctoral students in all possible areas. For these focal areas the department has done a good job of building links to other programs on campus to assist Ph.D. students in gaining good preparation. We saw the links that the department's faculty has built with the

Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media certificate, the developing technology certificate, the Latin American and Iberian Institute, and to health science programs, as making good use of its larger environment.

Similar to its undergraduate programs, the department has developed good outcome assessment measures for its Ph.D. students. These are measures that insure the kind of mentoring that promotes academic success. The criteria are well-chosen indicators of doctoral student progress that attend to students' development as teachers and publishing scholars. The expected progression in the writing of scholarly papers, participation in conferences, and publishing are good experiences and quantifiable outcomes measures. The annual graduate student review that requires students and advisors to discuss progress each year and then has the student sign off on the department's assessment is good mentoring practice.

The department has been proactive and creative in developing ways to raise money to fund graduate travel. We encourage them to continue in these efforts. In terms of ways to sustain and strengthen this good Ph.D. program, we recommend the following:

- Given the changing profile of faculty, which includes a significant growth in junior faculty in the next year, it will be important for the department to involve new hires in the development and re-conceptualization of the graduate curriculum. This will be especially crucial for the intercultural communication area, given it is the department's signature area, and it is this area in which faculty change has been most prominent.
- Ph.D. supervision is currently done almost entirely by three faculty members. With the upcoming retirement of one of these people, it is important to find a way to better distribute Ph.D. supervision across the faculty, including particularly Associate Professors, but also involving Assistant Professors in serving on Ph.D. committees, as well as readying these incoming faculty members to become doctoral advisors in the years ahead.
- To remain a nationally competitive Ph.D. program, the department needs to rethink its policy of committing funding Ph.D. students for only three years. Even though most Ph.D. students do get funded in their fourth year, albeit often without tuition remission, the upfront promise of only three years is out-of-line with the funding practice in most Ph.D. programs in Communication. Guaranteeing four years of funding also seems important since scholars developing an expertise in intercultural communication in particular will often be expected to be able to use research methodologies that require lengthy periods of data collection and immersion in field sites.
- To sustain the visibility of the doctoral program, we encourage the department to seek sponsorship of the NCA summer doctoral honors conference within the next decade. Hosting this conference offers an excellent way for a program to showcase its faculty and help its students network.

Personnel

Faculty

Over the past few years the department experienced a serious loss of faculty. The department lost nine faculty between 2009 and 2012: seven tenured or tenure track, one full-time lecturer, and one half-time lecturer whose position was to become full-time.

Working with the Dean of Arts & Sciences and other UNM units such as UNM West, the department devised a creative plan to use Extended University monies to leverage the hiring of seven new faculty. This plan was imaginative and carefully conceived; indeed, it served as a model of entrepreneurial thinking for other departments in the College. The review team commends the department, especially the chair and department administrator, for meeting this challenge.

While not fully restoring faculty strength, the plan surely avoided a crisis that would have affected the department's students and national reputation for many years to come. Still, serious challenges persist in meeting undergraduate and graduate student needs, and in facing the upcoming accreditation process in 2013-2014.

Recommendation: Continue to Restore Faculty Strength

The team strongly endorses the department's amended hiring plan for 2012-13. This plan includes:

- (1) Tenure-Track Assistant Professor Strategic Communication
- (2) Lecturer II (Multimedia Journalism)
- (3) Advanced Tenured Associate Professor Communication Theory
- (4) Tenure-Track Assistant Professor Multimedia Journalism
- (5) Advanced Tenured Associate Professor Intercultural Communication

In addition, the College and Provost's office must recognize the precarious position in which the department still finds itself. Indeed, Communication and Journalism is indicative of the campus-wide problem of loss of faculty that the Provost's office has highlighted in recent months.

Recommendation: Faculty Mentoring

Because the department made several recent hires to replace lost faculty, it now faces a challenge in integrating these new faculty into the department and ensuring that they receive appropriate mentoring. Faculty expectations need to be clearly communicated to junior faculty regularly and not just at the time of the mid-probationary review. The team strongly encourages the department to provide the same kind of thoughtful mentoring to these new faculty that they currently provide to graduate students. The team also urges the department to institute a carefully articulated mentoring system to enable faculty development at both assistant and associate professor levels.

New faculty should be assigned, with their input, a mentor from among the associate and full professor ranks. The mentor should meet with the new faculty at least once a year, seeking input on any issues they may have, identifying their needs, and learning of their accomplishments. These data should then be reported to the department chair, associate chair, and appropriate personnel committees so that needs may be addressed and accomplishments recognized in a timely fashion.

Recommendation: Faculty Governance

The team firmly believes that the department must reconceptualize faculty self-governance. While the current system was no doubt successful in past years, the new department profile, with several new lecturers and junior faculty, and a number of retiring senior faculty, demands a new system.

We also strongly urge the department to return to an elected executive committee with representation at all ranks, including tenured and non-tenured (lecturer) representation. We believe this will be critical to creating a vital and engaged faculty as the department comes out of a period of faculty crisis and needs to build a sense of shared governance.

Recommendation: Faculty Service Duties

The faculty are over-burdened with service duties, which impedes their ability to give full attention to students and to sustain high research productivity.

While recognizing that some service commitments this year were due to loss of faculty, the team came to the conclusion that the department needs to find ways to reduce the service duties of faculty, especially the newly-hired junior faculty. The existing service burden faced by the current faculty also undermines the professional development of associate professors. With the number of retiring senior faculty, it is critical that the department prepare these faculty members to take on senior leadership roles. In fairness, it should be noted that infusing the professional development of the department's associate professors is not unique to the C & J Department or the UNM. Indeed, this is a critical problem across higher education and has become a subject of discussion in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (See http://chronicle.com/article/Why-Are-Associate-Professors/132071/?sid=pm&utm_source=pm&utm_medium=en).

One partial solution would be to rethink the current standing committee structure. The number of standing committees seems excessive, and we believe that many could be eliminated or restructured so as to reduce the service load of faculty.

Staff

The team was impressed with the quality of staff support the department enjoys. The department's staff members are dedicated and efficient. However, the staff is clearly overworked. The department is fortunate to have a highly competent department administrator in Nancy Montoya. She brings strength, knowledge, and many years of experience to the department.

The department, and indeed the university, must recognize that while units such as Communication and Journalism are operating in a buyer's market, and thus can retain over-worked and under-compensated staff, as the economy improves this situation will not continue. The department and the College must find ways to support staff so that they can feel appreciated for the exemplary service that they provide.

Recommendation: Administrative Staff Positions

The academic advisor is doing yeoman's service in meeting the needs of the department's students. The team strongly recommends the addition of either an additional academic advisor, or an administrative assistant to assist the current advisor. Also, there is a need to redistribute responsibilities and duties among existing staff with commensurate career laddering. We urge the chair and the department administrator to work with College staff and Human Resources to find a solution to the under-staffing that the department faces.

Recommendation: Technical Support Staff

It may not be widely recognized that Communication and Journalism is a highly technical-dependent unit. Faculty depend on a range of expensive hardware and software in order to teach their courses and conduct their research. Students must acquire knowledge and skills in the use of these technologies if they are to be competitive in the market place. Many of these technologies, such as video production hardware and software, are rapidly changing, requiring annual upgrade and replacement schedules. All require regular maintenance.

The department currently benefits from the outstanding service of a competent operations manager. However, like the other staff, this person is also vastly overworked, attempting to meet a multitude of demands on his time and expertise; for example, in addition to providing faculty, staff, and student technical support, he also teaches courses.

The team strongly recommends the addition of a technical support specialist to assist the operations manager. This should be a full-time staff position, not a work-study student.

Physical Plant and Facilities

As will be noted in the next section, the Department of Communication and Journalism was awarded a major facilities improvement grant from central administration as an incentive to secure re-accreditation by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) in 2007. While the total restoration of the department's historic building caused enormous relocation challenges for faculty, staff and students during the lengthy restoration process, the resulting facilities are truly state-of-the-art and a source of pride for the entire departmental community.

Given the recent major investment in both building restoration and the upgrading of instructional facilities, the existing building and equipment is extremely impressive.

Recommendation: Physical Plant and Facilities

Although the team was repeatedly reminded that the University has a systematic equipment upgrade and replacement schedule for the campus, the team recommends that the department administration and the operations manager think in terms of a regular amortization schedule for facilities and equipment, and to build these capital expenditures into budgetary planning on an annual basis. Whereas access to production equipment was once the sole province of media students, the entire Communication and Journalism curriculum has become ever-increasingly equipment dependent, and this trend will most certainly continue. New software contracts are becoming more and more restrictive, and hence pushing new costs onto license holders. Hence, department administration will need to continue making maintenance and upgrading of technical facilities, hardware, and software a high priority in its strategic planning process.

Advancement

Although the merger of the former departments of Communication and Journalism into a single Department of Communication and Journalism in 1991 should be considered a definite success story, it has not been without some growing pains. The former Journalism department had been accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications and department administration was attuned to the expectations of the accreditation teams. The team report of 1997 recommended reaccreditation, but pointed to a number of glaring deficiencies, including substandard advising, limited physical resources, inadequate professional internships, and a lack of diversity among the faculty. The report made clear that these shortcomings needed to be addressed before the time of the next accreditation team visit. That visit came in October of 2002, and the team was not pleased with what they found.

The accreditation team concluded that department administration was completely out of touch with the standards required for accreditation, and had failed to follow the directives of the 1997 reaccreditation report. Indeed, the 2002 team found that those responsible for the journalism and mass communication program lacked a familiarity with the accreditation principles, guidelines and standards and the content of the 1997 report. In their words, "Because of these symptoms of indifference to ACEJMC's requirements and procedures, the team wondered whether the College and department had decided that the department's primary mission is to achieve an integrated unit and that seeking accreditation and meeting ACEJMC's standards are no longer of significance and concern." Of the twelve accreditation standards, the team found the department in non-compliance with six of them, and a seventh in compliance but with serious reservations. On the basis of the team's findings, the team members strongly recommended that the department withdraw its application for reaccreditation, and the faculty voted to do so.

Word of the department's failure to receive reaccreditation spread like wildfire and both of the local newspapers covered the story in depth. Criticism from the professional community was immediate and the University took a direct hit. Clearly, everyone connected with the department's evaluation appeared to have been caught off guard. Central administration pledged \$5.81 million to totally renovate the department's physical quarters and another \$200,000 for

new furnishings, facilities, and software, and an increase in full-time faculty lines. In return, the faculty pledged to recommit itself to regaining ACEJMC accreditation.

In 2005, the faculty voted to seek reaccreditation, and during the 2005-2006 academic year the faculty launched a systematic plan for addressing all of the shortcomings identified by the 2002 accreditation team. In 2006, in advance of the formal accreditation team visit, the Department invited the ACEJMC Executive Director (Susanne Shaw) and a member of the Accrediting Committee (Trevor Brown) to campus to provide feedback on a preliminary draft of the self-study document and the newly developed Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan. The feedback was positive and the modest suggestions were incorporated into the self-study and assessment plan. When the accreditation team visited campus in January 2007 they were extremely impressed with what they found. The Department had made a 180-degree turn from where things were in 2002, and that positive appraisal spanned the entire team report. The Department was not only in compliance with all ACEJMC standards but it was praised as being a model academic unit in terms of learning assessment, strategic planning, and effective leadership. The team found their observations highly consistent with the “Best Department” at the university award given the previous two years by the UNM Student Choice Awards. In May of 2008, the Accrediting Council voted to reaccredit the Department of Communication and Journalism. The next site team visit is scheduled for the 2013-2014 academic year and the faculty are already making preparations for an advance visit by Trevor Brown to review the Department’s continued progress and to insure a highly successful reaccreditation process.

We believe this historical perspective is directly relevant as the Department is now extremely well-positioned to build upon its regained reputation by creating a long-term development initiative that will not only prove invaluable to the Department but to the entire University. We were very impressed with the strong development instincts of the chair and associate chair (who is a member of the University Foundation’s Campaign Council) and the creative use of the Department’s Advisory Board as a means to enlist grassroots community support. The University is currently in the midst of a \$675 million capital campaign, titled “Changing Worlds: The Campaign for UMN,” that is scheduled to conclude during the University’s 125th anniversary in 2014, the very year the Department should be reaccredited. Hence, the timing could not be better for the Department to capitalize on its increased visibility.

Recommendations

The Department needs to work with the Foundation to draft a case statement that situates the Department’s development initiatives squarely within the University’s capital campaign. We believe that the historic newly renovated Communication and Journalism Building affords an excellent naming opportunity that should elevate the department to School status. This elevation should prove to be very attractive to prospective donors who could take credit for enabling the academic unit to move to the next level. Named Schools of Journalism/Communication at such institutions as University of Nevada, Northwestern University, Washington State University, University of Arizona, and Louisiana State University, to name but a few, have benefitted greatly from this fundraising tactic. It should be noted that we are not recommending a change in the reporting structure of the academic unit within the University, as this would appear unnecessary. Rather, we see this as being more cosmetic than structural and solely a fundraising opportunity.

What is extremely rare here is that a gift in the \$10 million range could be used exclusively for the creation of an endowment that would fund programmatic projects in perpetuity, rather than being expended on one-time bricks and mortar. While the Department and Foundation need to craft the case statement that will make this funding opportunity attractive to the right potential donor, we would merely suggest that the creative process of generating the case statement explore new and imaginative venues that enable the academic unit to expand programs and the new resources to fund them. For example, a new Communication Institute within the new School of Communication and Journalism might be established with an endowment of about \$3 million that would support an Institute Director and staff assistant. The Director could serve as a full-time development director who also could create entrepreneurial programs and activities that would not only be self-supporting but would generate new revenue streams for the unit. The major endowment gift might also be divided up to support much-needed Graduate Student Fellowships, Undergraduate Scholarships, and an Equipment Replacement Fund. But these ideas are merely suggestive based on our limited time on campus. The important point is that the time is right to move aggressively to position the Department of Communication and Journalism within the Foundation's top fundraising opportunities. One cannot imagine a more perfect scenario than a \$10 million gift to launch a named School of Communication and Journalism that pushes the University over its \$675 million campaign goal.

Conclusion

This Academic Program Review of the Department of Communication and Journalism reveals a healthy and energetic academic unit with a clear sense of mission and the effective leadership in place to insure that its goals and objectives are achieved. The faculty and staff are dedicated and hard-working and the students are appreciative of the positive and nurturing environment that has been created for them. The faculty has created a system of learning assessment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels that should serve as a model for other departments, both at the University of New Mexico and other institutions of higher education. Effective strategic planning has become central to the culture of the unit, and the long-term well-being of the unit appears to be in very capable hands. The infusion of new faculty hires will greatly enhance the Department's capacity to provide greater breadth and depth, but it will also create new challenges for integration within the community of scholars and teachers and will necessitate new inclusionary practices as suggested in the body of this report. The Department is at a most enviable moment in its evolution, and the faculty, staff and students appear poised to take full advantage of it. In short, the team envisions a bright future for the Department, marked by growing national recognition and enhanced resources.