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SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS¹
ACCREDITATION REPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Action Requested: Receive the accreditation report for the Bachelor of Arts Program in Journalism and Mass Communication, Bachelor of Science Program in Journalism and Mass Communication, and Professional Master's Program at the University of Iowa.

Executive Summary: The Journalism and Mass Communication Programs (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards and criteria defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The undergraduate programs received provisional accreditation; the programs were found to be non-compliant with Standards 2 and 9 - problems/deficiencies were identified that must be corrected before the provisional status can be removed. Accreditation was denied for the professional master's program; the program was found to be non-compliant with Standards 2 and 9 - a list of deficiencies were identified that must be corrected. This accreditation report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide "educational excellence and impact."

Background:

◇ Description of Programs.

The *Bachelor of Arts Program in Journalism and Mass Communication* requires students to complete the journalism major requirements and fulfill the school's second area of concentration requirement by completing a full bachelor of arts major in another department or completing a 24 semester hour concentration of related courses in one or more departments that offer bachelor of arts degrees or complete a minor in business administration.

The *Bachelor of Science Program in Journalism and Mass Communication* requires students to complete the journalism major requirements and fulfill the school's second area of concentration requirement by completing a bachelor of science major in a natural, mathematical or social sciences discipline or by completing a 24 semester hour concentration of related courses in the social sciences and/or the natural and mathematical sciences; and completing all the special mathematics, research methods, statistics, computer science, and/or cognate science requirements necessary for the bachelor of science degree in the department in which the majority of the second area work is done.

The *professional master's program (referred to as MAP)* is a two-year program requiring 30-35 semester hours of course work and successful completion of a master's project. A thesis is not required. The program prepares students for professional work in media communication with curricular strengths in writing and journalism. Students build individual programs to learn and hone communication skills for a changing workplace. Students have the opportunity to focus exclusively on media communication or to develop a specialization in another discipline as a complement to their journalism studies.

◇ Purpose of Accreditation. An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met state and national standards for its development and evaluation.

¹ The Master of Arts Program with thesis and the doctoral program in mass communication were not part of the accreditation review.

- ◇ Accrediting Agency. The accrediting body is the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC).
- ◇ Review Process. The self-study prepared by the three programs contained the responses to the domains/standards required by the accrediting body – mission, governance and administration; curriculum and instruction; diversity and inclusiveness; full-time and part-time faculty; scholarship: research, creative and professional activity; student services; resources, facilities and equipment; professional and public service; and assessment of learning outcomes.
- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In October 2010, the visiting team determined that the undergraduate programs had problems/deficiencies that warranted provisional accreditation and that the professional master's program had deficiencies that warranted denial of accreditation.
- ◇ Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.
 - “Enhanced visibility of the School on and off campus by the new director.
 - Enthusiastic leadership of the new head of the graduate MAP program.
 - Faculty take seriously their commitment to student learning and make themselves available to students.
 - Faculty is well-equipped to offer students and faculty the tools for enhanced learning and research. Adler Building has had a positive impact on the students and faculty.
 - School is nationally recognized for being heavily involved in scholastic journalism programs (i.e., Quill and Scroll Honor Society, Iowa High School Press Association).
 - School has a strong tradition of education for print media, a reputation that is well deserved.
 - Diversity is valued and incorporated in all aspects of the curriculum.”
- ◇ Problems/Deficiencies Identified by the Visiting Team for the Undergraduate Programs.
 - “Inform students of the requirements of the 80-65 rule,² revise the advising forms to check and record students’ compliance, and systematically monitor their compliance.
 - Develop a credible assessment plan and program, systematically administer valid and reliable measures, gather and analyze information, identify the weaknesses of graduating classes in mastering the Iowa dozen,³ and take action to overcome those weaknesses.
 - Refine and sustain the program of internships for credit, including the maintenance of reliable records of student performance.”

² Students are required to take a minimum of 80 semester credit hours outside of the unit and a minimum of 65 semester credit hours in the liberal arts and sciences outside of the unit.

³ The 12 standards used to assess student learning.

- ◇ Problems/Deficiencies Identified by the Visiting Team for the Professional Master's Program.
 - “Provide a separate mission statement for the professional master’s degree.
 - Devise a separate graduate curriculum for the students.
 - Enroll a sufficient student cohort to meet the University’s requirement that all graduate courses enroll at least eight students.
 - Hire a sufficient number of new full-time and part-time faculty to staff the new graduate courses.
 - Embark on a serious assessment program, meaning the systematic collection of data about learning outcomes; the systematic analysis of that data; and the systematic application of the findings to curriculum development.”

- ◇ Accreditation Status. In May 2011, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication found the undergraduate programs to be non-compliant with Standard 2 – Curriculum and Instruction; and Standard 9 – Assessment of Learning Outcomes. The Council awarded provisional accreditation which is given when weaknesses have been identified that can be corrected within two years; the School anticipates a revisit to inspect the undergraduate programs in the two non-complaint categories by February 2013. The Council voted to deny accreditation to the professional master’s program which was found to be non-compliant in the same two standards. The School is not planning to appeal or request a revisit in one year. (Program plans to become compliant in the undergraduate programs are in italics.)
 - “Inform students of the requirements of the 80-65 rule, revise the advising forms to check and record students’ compliance and systematically monitor their compliance. Their compliance must be 95% by the time of the revisit. Students graduating this academic year will not be reviewed for the 80-65 rule in two years, but the graduating classes of AY 11-12 and AY 12-13 must be 95% in compliance.”

The School agreed with the recommendations and immediately instituted the following compliance plans in order to advise students about the rule and the expectation of 95% compliance. They developed a revised form, involved the faculty and front office, and appointed a new Undergraduate Director and a newly hired educational advisor. The School also will revise its website, send out email and paper mail reminders, and advise and remind students in the classroom. In addition, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) has approved a series of courses to be ‘CLAS compliant’ – that is, courses that are not with CLAS but whose content is compatible with CLAS and thus should not count against students for the purposes of accreditation.
 - “*The School must develop a credible assessment plan and program, systematically administer valid and reliable measures, gather and analyze information, identify the weaknesses of graduating classes in mastering the Iowa Dozen, and take action to overcome those weaknesses. They must also refine and sustain the program of internships for credit, including the maintenance of reliable records of student performance.*”

In order to be in full compliance with this standard, the School designed a timeline for the spring 2011 entering major class. It calls for a number of indirect and direct measures of assessment to be administered to each semester's entering class beginning in the spring 2011 for review in two years as a cohort.

For the School's professional master's program in journalism, the site team recommended denial of accreditation because the School had for many years not been offering enough graduate-only classes and had been attracting only a few students. The team did praise the high quality and high satisfaction of students in the program but basically felt it was too small and too diluted to warrant accreditation. The School agreed with these conclusions and did not contest the recommendation of denial of re-accreditation.

The School's response plan is two-fold. First, in fall 2011 they plan to propose a revised Master of Journalism based in Iowa City but also offered online, perhaps with a specialization, such as Political and Public Affairs Journalism. The number of classes restricted to graduate students would be increased, and recruitment efforts augmented. The goal would be to have a majority of students not on scholarship. Second, this fall the School will offer two prototype classes at the University of Iowa's facility in Des Moines. The plan is to propose a separate Master of Strategic Communication based in Des Moines but also offered online. It would, if approved, be an 'executive' or evening program designed to accommodate working professionals. The proposal for this program is still under design; a further option would be to propose a joint program with Iowa State University.