

Report of ACEJMC Evaluation

Undergraduate program
2023-2024

Name of Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, President

Name of Unit: School of Journalism & Strategic Media

Name and Title of Administrator: Dr. Katherine Foss, Director

Date of 2023-24 Accrediting Visit: Jan. 28 – 31, 2024

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Nov. 13 – 16, 2016

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2023-24 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Ann M. Brill, Dean

Organization/School: University of Kansas, School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Signature  _____

Team Member

Name and Title: Vincent Duffy, News Director

Organization/School: Michigan Public

Signature  _____

Team Member

Name and Title: Barbara Hines, Professor Emerita

Organization/School: Howard University

Signature  _____

Team Member

Name and Title: Mark Russell, Vice President and South Regional Editor, Gannett

Organization/School: Executive Editor, The Commercial Appeal

Signature  _____

PART I: General Information

Name of Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

Name of Unit: School of Journalism & Strategic Media

Year of Visit: 2024

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

- Higher Learning Commission
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- New England Commission on Higher Education
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Southern Association of Colleges and School 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. 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 is empowered to provide an education beyond a secondary school by the Tennessee Legislature under law, specifically the *Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-7-101 and 49-8-101*.

History of the University

Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) opened in 1911 with a two-year program for training teachers and evolved into a four-year Teachers College in 1925. In 1965, the institution was advanced to University status. MTSU houses a wide variety of nationally recognized academic degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's, specialist, and doctoral levels. The University is composed of eight undergraduate colleges, 39 departments and schools and more than 180 degree programs. The College of Graduate Studies offers more than 100 degree programs.

Since 1911, MTSU has awarded more than 180,000 degrees. The University has grown from a campus of 100 acres (0.40 km²), 125 students, and a faculty of 19, to an academic city of over 500 acres (2.0 km²), Fall 2023 enrollment of 20,183 students, and a faculty of 970.

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 full accrediting visit. If there was a revisit, give the date of the last full visit and the date of the revisit: 2016

5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? 1988

6. Insert here the unit's mission statement. Statement should give date of adoption and/or last revision.

**Mission Statement
School of Journalism & Strategic Media
Middle Tennessee State University**

The mission of the School of Journalism & Strategic Media is to:

- Provide an undergraduate education combining contemporary media instruction with hands-on professional experience.
- Educate students about the role and responsibilities of a free press and media in a democratic and diverse society.
- Prepare students for careers in journalism, communication and strategic media in an ever-evolving media environment.
- Contribute to the body of knowledge in journalism, communication and strategic media through research, scholarship, creative and professional activity.
- Create an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity in its curriculum, organizations and community engagement through its students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Adopted October 20, 2015; Revised and approved June 21, 2023

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Number of weeks in a semester: 13 weeks

Number of weeks in a quarter:

Number of weeks in summer sessions: 3-12 weeks

Number of weeks in intersessions: 4 weeks

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

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Ph.D. degree

9. List the specific undergraduate degrees as well as the majors or sequences being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

Bachelor of Science in Journalism

Under the B.S. in Journalism, there are ten concentrations:

- Advertising
- Journalism
- Entertainment Journalism (approved in 2023)
- Environmental Journalism & Communication (approved in 2023)
- Social Justice Journalism (approved in 2023)
- Media Studies
- Public Relations – General
- Public Relations – Recording Industry
- Sports Media
- Visual Communication

Copies of the advising checklists for the concentrations under the Bachelor of Science in Journalism are provided in the Appendices for the introduction section.

The Master of Science in Media and Communication is housed in the School of Journalism & Strategic Media. It is not a professional degree and thus is not part of the unit reaccreditation.

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

120 semester credit hours of coursework

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

One semester credit hour of practicum or internship is required for the Bachelor of Science in Journalism. Students may complete up to three hours of practicum or internship semester credit hours.

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

Dr. Katie Foss, Director of the School of Journalism & Strategic Media

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge
Advertising	Dr. Tricia Farwell
Journalism	Dr. Sally Ann Cruikshank
Entertainment Journalism	Dr. Christine Eschenfelder
Environmental Journalism & Communication	Dr. Sanjay Asthana
Social Justice Journalism	Dr. Jennifer Woodard
Media Studies	Dr. Katie Foss

Public Relations—General and Recording Industry	Dr. Matt Taylor
Sports Media	Dr. Chris Bacon
Visual Communication	Prof. Phil Loubere & Prof. Leslie Haines

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

In Spring 2024, there were 13,884 full-time undergraduate students and 1,932 full-time graduate students.

There were 12,328 full-time enrolled undergraduate students and 1,352 full-time enrolled graduate students in Spring 2023. There were 13,950 full-time undergraduate students and 2,515 full-time graduate students in Fall 2023.

14. Number of undergraduate majors in the accredited unit, by sequence. (If the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total). Give the semester and academic year represented.

Spring 2024

Advertising	27
Journalism	52
Entertainment Journalism	10
Environmental Journalism & Communication	3
Social Justice Journalism	3
Media Studies	30
Public Relations	46
Public Relations – Recording Industry	9
Sports Media	103
Visual Communication	20
Total	306

(No pre-majors)

Fall 2023

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Undergraduate majors
Advertising	25
Journalism	58
Entertainment Journalism	10
Environmental Journalism & Communication	3
Social Justice Journalism	3
Media Studies	31
Public Relations	48
Public Relations – Recording Industry	10
Sports Media	99
Visual Communication	21
Total	308

(No pre-majors)

Spring 2023

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Undergraduate majors
Advertising	30
Journalism	69
Entertainment Journalism	New
Environmental Journalism & Communication	New
Social Justice Journalism	New
Media Studies	33
Public Relations	50
Public Relations—Recording Industry	5
Sports Media	68
Visual Communication	22
Total	277

(No pre-majors)

15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newsriting, 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 for the preceding term. Submit two semesters with the self-study and update the list as needed for spring 2024 visits. 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 2023 Skills Courses	
Advertising Copywriting and Creativity, ADV 3170-001	14
Interactive Advertising and Social Media, ADV 4250-001	20
Advertising Campaigns, ADV 4970-001/cross-listed with PR 4740, PR Campaigns	22
Video Journalism Practice, JOUR 2132-001	4
Video Journalism Practice, JOUR 2132-002	6
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-001	11
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-002	14
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-004	11
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-009	18
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-B03 (blended, accelerated term)	16
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-004	17
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-005	19
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-006	9
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-B01 (blended)	15
Introduction to Social Media Practice, JOUR 3070-001	18
Reporting, JOUR 3090-001	18
Reporting, JOUR 3090-002	20
Reporting, JOUR 3090-B01 (blended, accelerated term)	20
Radio News Reporting, JOUR 3430-002	19
Feature Writing, JOUR 3530-002	18

Podcasting in Journalism, JOUR 3560-001	13
Broadcast Announcing and Performance, JOUR 3570-001	9
Strategic Communication Research, JOUR 3660-001	20
News Producing, JOUR 3720-001	7
Advanced Reporting, JOUR 4440-003	14
Professional Development, JOUR 4880-003 (accelerated term)	20
Professional Development, JOUR 4880-008 (accelerated term)	20
Strategic Writing for Public Relations, PR 3360-001	20
Public Relations Publications, PR 3380-001	14
Sports Media Relations, SPM 3200-B01 (blended)	9
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-001	19
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-004	18
Visual Storytelling for Journalism, VCOM 3930-001	12
Information Design (VCOM 4010-001)	4
Senior Portfolio (VCOM 4180-001)	9
Online Skills Courses	
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-D01	18
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-D02	18
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-D01	18
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-D02	20
Mobile Storytelling, JOUR 3240-D01	18
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D01	19
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D02	17
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D03	15
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D04	15
Information Web Design, VCOM 3920-D01	12

Fall 2023 Skills Courses	
Advertising Design and Visuals, ADV 3160-002	15
Advertising Copywriting and Creativity, ADV 3170-001	10
Media Strategy and Buying, ADV 3480-001	16
Advertising Campaigns, ADV 4970-001/cross-listed with PR 4740, PR Campaigns	10
Video Journalism Practice, JOUR 2132-001	8
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-001	20
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-002	19
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-005	18
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-013	18
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-001	19
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-002	20
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-003	18
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-006	17

Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-008	16
Community Engagement Journalism, JOUR 3020-001	15
Reporting, JOUR 3090-002	20
Reporting, JOUR 3090-003	16
Radio News Reporting, JOUR 3430-002	19
Editing, JOUR 3450-001	20
Feature Writing, JOUR 3530-001	10
Entertainment and Lifestyle Reporting, JOUR 3640-001	20
Advanced Reporting, JOUR 4440-002	20
Professional Development, JOUR 4880-001 (accelerated term)	11
Professional Development, JOUR 4880-004 (accelerated term)	17
Professional Development, JOUR 4880-006 (accelerated term)	20
Public Relations Publications, PR 3380-002	7
Sports Media Relations, SPM 3200-001	20
Journalism and Media Topics: Producing, SPM 3800-001	17
Journalism and Media Topics: Sports and Social Media, SPM 3800-001	20
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-002	18
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-003	19
Information Web Design, VCOM 3920-001	13
Visual Storytelling for Journalism, VCOM 3930-001	6
Information Design (VCOM 4010-001)	5
Senior Portfolio (VCOM 4180-001)	3
Online Skills Courses	
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-D01	20
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-D02	20
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-D03	20
Media Writing, JOUR 2710-D05	20
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-D01	18
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-D02	17
Digital Media Skills, JOUR 2720-D03	15
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D01	20
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D02	20
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D03	20
Visual Communication Applications, VCOM 2950-D04	17

16. Total expenditures planned by the accredited unit for the 2023–2024 academic year:

The total received for fiscal year 2023-2024 is \$2,422,836.60, which includes all faculty salaries and benefits, as well as the operating and travel budgets. A full breakdown of each category can be found in the chart below.

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$1,605,724.60

Amount expected to be spent this year on travel expenses: \$13,000.00

Amount expected to be spent on office supplies, computer purchases, printing costs, television and telephone charges, office upgrades, and other miscellaneous expenses: \$35,000.00

The unit's operating funds received budget cuts of \$10,000 during fiscal years 2020, 2021 and 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Account Code	Account Title	FY23-24 Initial Budget
58715	Wellness Incentives	\$0.00
61210	Faculty Salaries	\$1,605,724.60
61220	Academic Longevity	\$20,220.00
61240	Faculty Adjuncts	\$12,500.00
61290	Academic Salaries Allowances	\$2,880.00
61310	Clerical and Support Salaries	\$81,604.00
61320	Clerical and Support Longevity	\$800.00
61410	Student Salaries and Wages	\$4,375.00
61430	Student Tutors	\$5,000.00
61618	Professional Extra Compensation	\$0.00
62000	Employee Benefits Budget Pool	\$641,377.00
62050	TCRS Hybrid Defer Compensation	\$0.00
62085	TCRS Hybrid Stabilization	\$0.00
62090	TCRS Hybrid Defined Benefit	\$0.00
62100	TCRS Legacy Contributions	\$0.00
62197	TCRS Legacy Plan Accruals	\$0.00
62200	ORP Retirement	\$0.00
62210	401K Match	\$0.00
62250	Contributory ORP Retirement	\$0.00
62300	FICA Employers Share	\$0.00
62397	FICA Employer Accruals	\$0.00
62400	Medicare FICA	\$0.00
62497	Medicare FICA Accruals	\$0.00
62500	Group Health Insurance	\$0.00
62510	Group Life Insurance	\$0.00
62710	Employee Fee Waiver	\$0.00
62720	Employee Dependent Discount	\$0.00
62975	Health Incentives	\$0.00
73000	Travel Budget Pool	\$12,000.00
73210	Individual Out of State	\$0.00
73250	Individual Out of Country	\$0.00
74000	Operating Expense Budget Pool	\$36,356.00
74130	Duplicating and Copy by Institution	\$0.00

74140	Duplicating and Copy Outside Instit	\$0.00
74160	Printing Publications by Instit	\$0.00
74190	Other Print Duplic and Film Process	\$0.00
74215	Allocated Telephone Local Charges	\$0.00
74225	Allocated Telephone Long Distance	\$0.00
74230	Postal Charges	\$0.00
74250	Cable Television	\$0.00
74260	Telephone Installation	\$0.00
74315	Facilities Work Orders	\$0.00
74480	Dues and Subscriptions	\$0.00
74490	Other Professional and Admin Srvs	\$0.00
74510	Supplies	\$0.00
74570	Purchasing Card Supplies	\$0.00
74596	Computer Purchases	\$0.00
74980	Miscellaneous Unclassified	\$0.00
75304	Lab Print Cost Alloc	\$0.00
75318	Print Management Charges	\$0.00
Report Total		\$2,422,836.60

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

PROFESSORS

Sanjay Asthana (Ph.D.)

Ken Blake (Ph.D.)

Larry Burriss (Ph.D.)

Katie Foss (Ph.D.), Director, School of Journalism & Strategic Media

Leslie Haines (M.F.A.)

Phil Loubere (M.F.A.)

Zeny Sarabia-Panol (Ph.D.), Associate Dean; not teaching, 100% administrative

Greg Pitts (Ph.D.), Research sabbatical Spring 2024

Jennifer Woodard (Ph.D.), Assistant Dean, 50% administrative

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

Leon Alligood (M.F.A.) retired in December 2023

Chris Bacon (Ph.D.)

Sally Ann Cruikshank (Ph.D.)

Christine Eschenfelder (Ph.D.)

Tricia Farwell (Ph.D.)

Jason Reineke (Ph.D.), Director of M.S. graduate program

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

Andrea Hall (Ph.D.)

Matt Taylor (Ph.D.)

Jun Zhang (Ph.D.)

NON-TENURE TRACK (Full-time Lecturers)

Daniel Eschenfelder (B.S.)
 Angie Boyd-Chambers (M.A.)
 Matthew Leimkuehler (M.S.)
 Mytecia Myles (M.S.)

AFFILIATED PROFESSIONAL

Deborah Fisher (B.A.) Director, Seigenthaler Chair and Executive Director of Tennessee Coalition for Open Government, March 2016 to present

The School of Journalism & Strategic Media will advertise for and anticipates filling a tenure-track assistant professor in journalism to replace Leon Allgood (retired in December 2023).

18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2023. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2023. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2024, also provide the spring 2024 adjunct list in the updated information.)

Spring 2024

Gabriel Clemons
 Megan Cole
 Karen Cronin
 Benjamin (Spencer) Elliott
 Jonathan Honig
 Kristi Jones
 Madeleine Luchsinger
 Leann McBride
 Nick Paranjape
 Andrew Oppmann
 Mike Osborne

Fall 2023

Gabriel Clemons
 Megan Cole
 Karen Cronin
 Bob Dowd
 Benjamin (Spencer) Elliott
 Jonathan Honig
 Kristi Jones
 Madeleine Luchsinger
 Leann McBride
 Andrew Oppmann
 Mike Osborne

Spring 2023

Marquavius Barnett
 Megan Cole
 Karen Cronin

Benjamin (Spencer) Elliott
Michelle Knezovic
Matthew Leimkuehler
Madeleine Luchsinger
Leann McBride
Andrew Oppmann
Mike Osborne

19. For each of the last two academic years, please give the total number of graduates from the unit.

2022-23 academic year:	42 graduates
2021-22 academic year:	39 graduates

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

Framing narrative: The School of Journalism & Strategic Media resides in the College of Media & Entertainment. Since 1970, the unit has offered coursework in journalism, advertising, public relations and media design. At the last reaccreditation visit, the unit offered additional courses in media studies. On this visit, the unit has added four concentrations and now offers 10 options for students, adding concentrations in entertainment journalism, environmental journalism & communication, social justice journalism, separated public relations into general public relations & recording industry public relations, and sports media. The unit's administrator became the director in January 2023. Its mission statement was adopted in 2008 and its latest strategic plan was adopted in August 2023. The unit has been accredited by ACEJMC since 1988. COVID-19 and a statewide initiative called Drive to 55, which had a goal of 55% of the population having a college degree by 2025, created challenges for the university. Both contributed to a drop of 5,000 students to current enrollment of 20,000. The unit also has experienced an enrollment decline, roughly 50% since the last site team visit, although unit numbers are higher than the previous academic year.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The unit posts its mission statement and strategic plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.

Describe in detail how the mission statement/strategic plan is implemented, plays into the daily life of the unit and its effectiveness in driving progress. Who has responsibility for keeping the plan updated? Is it revised regularly to deal with rapidly changing issues of instruction and technology?

The unit's written mission statement is posted on its website: <https://www.mtsu.edu/journalism/> in a prominent and easy-to-find location on its homepage. The mission statement addresses issues of experiential learning, the role of media in society, offering a professional and up-to-date curriculum, making and sharing discoveries, and creating an inclusive environment. The unit's strategic plan, adopted in August 2023, focuses on curriculum, diversity, experiences beyond the classroom, heightened visibility for the unit, and faculty enhancement.

https://w1.mtsu.edu/journalism/includes/SoJSM_Strategic_Plan_083023.pdf While the plan identifies important short-term measures, it does not identify resources. That is likely due to the unit having control only over its travel and operating expenses budget. It depends on the college for its faculty lines and other resources. Essentially, while titled a school, the unit functions as a department in terms of operation and accountability. The unit does have access to research, travel funds, equipment, and renovation funds through the college and university resources.

The unit has the responsibility for updating and effectively executing both the mission statement and the strategic plan. As noted, the plan was updated the semester before the site team visit. The unit's faculty participates in planning at the school level, the college, and the university. Its unit plan must align with the university's Academic Master Plan, which was revised and

affirmed in academic year 2022. <https://www.mtsu.edu/AMP/> The unit's faculty served on the planning committee for that document and it is monitored annually.

The recent changes to the curriculum are attributed to goals set out in the unit's strategic plan. While it may be too early to assess the effectiveness of the plan adopted in fall 2023, the previous plan addressed some of the same issues and resulted in the addition of more digital skills courses and changes to the concentrations.

(b) 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.

Characterize in depth the leadership of the unit as an agent for progress, advocate for the unit's fields of study within the university and aggressive connector with alumni. What significant achievements can be attributed to the leader? Has the leader built partnerships within the university? Is the leader seen as a strong advocate on matters of diversity, inclusion and equity? Is faculty and student diversity improving? Do scholars and professionals work collaboratively? Is creativity in curriculum, teaching and research sought and rewarded? Is the leader driving forward the curriculum (while respecting faculty governance and required process) to keep up with a rapidly changing media world?

The unit's administrator took on that role on Jan. 1, 2023, replacing the former director who served in that role for seven years. She reports to the dean of the College of Media & Entertainment. The director was an internal hire and serves as the concentration chair for Media Studies. According to the dean, the search was internal because any external search would have required a new faculty line, which was not feasible given the university's economic situation. The college has three units – the school and two departments. The leadership of all three units are relatively new in their role and all were internal hires.

The director clearly has the support of faculty, staff, and administration. She is characterized as energetic, caring, a role model, creative, and an excellent advocate for the unit. Campus administrators spoke of her high level of collaboration and the respect she engenders on campus. Faculty members and the dean spoke of the director's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity that extends beyond the unit to the college, university, and engagement with the community. Faculty members who teach DEI-related courses spoke of her support for their courses as well as her work to bring in speakers to help the unit's faculty, staff, and students be aware of the state statutes on "divisive concepts." She also is seen as a leader in the unit's curriculum changes while respecting the role of the various faculty committees and individual faculty who are working on curriculum changes. Since the last site visit, the number of curriculum changes and added concentrations signify a response to industry needs, students' interests, and the unique nature of the being part of the College of Media and Entertainment.

(c) The unit annually updates its data on the ACEJMC searchable database website (<https://lookup.acejmc.org>).

The most recent data updates for the unit are current: <https://lookup.acejmc.org/overview/?unit=24>

(d) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention and graduation data and posts them annually in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its websites.

A prominent link off the unit's homepage goes to this information on the provost's website.

On indicators (e), (f) and (g) the site team should make sure the unit operates within accepted academic norms and need only report in detail on extraordinary situations, cases or variances from policy.

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

The unit's policies and procedures for faculty governance are set at the college level. The documents spell out establishment of elected and appointed committees that work with the dean in areas of promotion and tenure, diversity, curriculum, and internationalization. Minutes of faculty meetings demonstrate faculty members are involved in the shared governance of the unit.

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

The university's process is used at the college and unit level. The process is outlined in the "Full-time Faculty Recruitment Guide," established by the provost. The director is evaluated annually, along with the faculty members.

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

Faculty and staff concerns are heard by the director. If unresolved, a formal grievance process can be initiated, as the university policy outlines. Student concerns also go to the director, and more formal steps are in the university's Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. Faculty said the unit's director is approachable and fair in dealing with their concerns.

SUMMARY:

The unit has a relatively new administrator and strategic plan. While it's difficult to evaluate either of those, the administrator has the support of faculty and university administration and the plan is supported by unit personnel. Data were difficult to find regarding enrollment, retention and graduation rates. Information in the ACEJMC data base also was not recent. This is a unit making a lot of transitions and working together to be successful and grow enrollment through its recent curriculum changes. Those changes also reflect the unit's alignment with the college and university as a place that serves its regional geographical area in both student and industry interests.

Overall evaluation compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

Discussions of indicators b, c and f should describe and evaluate individual academic sequences in the unit.

(a) Students in the unit complete academic requirements for a baccalaureate degree that meet the liberal arts and sciences/general education requirements of the institution. Programs may identify classes within the unit that contribute to a liberal arts and social sciences perspective for graduates from the unit.

Since the last accreditation visit, the faculty have been laser-focused on continuing to update an already strong curriculum. In addition to renaming the school (from Journalism to Journalism & Strategic Media), they were methodic in creating four new concentrations (Sports Media, Entertainment Journalism, Environmental Journalism & Communication, and Social Justice and Journalism), developing 19 new courses, updating course titles, revising course descriptions and prerequisites across concentrations, and conducting curriculum evaluation leading to changes currently underway.

The school offers 10 concentrations for the B.S. in Journalism, which requires 120 hours. A 15-credit core includes Introduction to Media & Entertainment, Media Writing, Digital Media Skills, Careers in Journalism and Media, Professional Development, Mass Media Law, and Practicum or Internship, all focusing on ACEJMC core competencies and values. Introduction to Media & Entertainment is now part of the MTSU True Blue Core, a multi-year initiative to revise general education at the university. Honors sections are offered.

In addition to the core, the concentrations require between 48-55 hours. Concentrations include: Advertising (48 hours), Journalism (48 hours), Entertainment Journalism (53 hours), Environmental Journalism & Communication (51 hours), Social Justice Journalism (51 hours), Media Studies (48 hours), Public Relations (48 hours), Public Relations-Recording Industry (55 hours – including RIM-prefixed courses outside of unit), Sports Media (48 hours), and Visual Communication (51 hours – including Art, Animation, Digital Photography outside of unit).

A minimum of 41 hours of liberal arts/social sciences courses are required by the university; the school added nine credits beyond general education (total 50). At least six of those nine credits must be at or above the 3000-level. Students are encouraged to complete a liberal arts/social sciences minor. Credits in liberal arts range from 56-59, with 50 as the minimum threshold.

(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 values and competencies listed by the Council.

The school core includes six hours of conceptual/theoretical coursework, six hours of professional coursework, and three hours of internship/career development coursework.

Objectives of the conceptual courses include recognition of legal, ethical, and moral dimensions of issues in journalism and other forms of media within historical contexts. The elimination of the 72-outside hours requirement has allowed the program to offer social sciences-oriented classes that encourage critical thinking. Those course topics include health communication; gender and diversity; media literacy; free expression; media, environment, and climate change; media's impact on children; national security; global news; journalism and media in the movies; and crisis communication.

Three concentrations have a senior capstone requirement; one has senior courses or courses outside of the accredited unit. Students are exposed to real-world practice including two career-focused courses: Careers in Journalism & Media and the senior-level course Professional Development. Since the last accreditation, the addition of a student course fee has made it possible to add digital cameras, video cameras, video fly packs with remote switchers, audio recorders and podcasting gear, portable lights and wireless microphones, and professional software packages ENPS and Brandwatch to further enhance the curriculum.

In their courses, students venture into the community for experiences like The Road Trip, the unit's Middle Tennessee News (MTN) newsroom, producing Division I, Conference USA coverage of the MTSU men's and women's tennis teams, and study abroad programs, to name a few. Advertising and Public Relations students earn professional certifications Fundamentals of Social Media and Fundamentals of Media Relations through Muckrack Academy. They have also competed in the National Student Advertising Competition. The digital skills and visual communications courses offer students a global perspective on their major.

From the initial development of courses, ACEJMC's core competencies and values are considered in the course objectives and teaching. Every concentration provides a curriculum that builds on those core competencies and values, and faculty are encouraged to incorporate them into their syllabi. Each semester, the unit coordinator and director review syllabi to determine the extent to which the professional competencies and values are taught to students across concentrations.

The concentrations require 15 core credits plus:

Advertising: Students take 33 concentration-specific hours in writing and design (12 hours), conceptual requirements (9 hours), research requirements (6 hours), professional topics (3 hours) and senior capstone (3 hours). A minor is required of 15-18 credits. There are 27 students in advertising.

Journalism: Students take 33 concentration-specific hours in journalism (12), conceptual requirements (9 hours), professional topics (12 hours). A minor is required of 15-18 hours. There are 52 students in journalism.

Entertainment Journalism: Students take 36 concentration-specific hours in writing/reporting/editing/performance (18 hours), conceptual requirements (9 hours), professional topics (9 hours). A minor is required of 15-18 credits. A new concentration, there are 10 students in EJ.

Environmental Journalism & Communication: Students take 36 concentration-specific hours in environmental journalism and communication (12 hours), conceptual requirements (12 hours),

professional topics (12 hours). A minor is required of 15-18 credits. New in Fall 2003, there are three students in EJC.

Social Justice Journalism: Students take 36 concentration-specific hours in social justice core (12 hours), conceptual requirements (9 hours), professional topics (15 hours). A minor is required (15-18 hours) in sociology (social justice minor) or political science. A new concentration, with three students in SJJ.

Media Studies: Students take 33 concentration-specific hours in writing/research/design/professional topics (12-15 hours), conceptual requirements (18-21 hours). A minor is required of 15-18 credits. There are 30 students in media studies.

Public Relations: The unit has two concentrations in public relations – ***Public Relations*** and ***Public Relations – Recording Industry:*** Public relations (general) students take 33 additional hours. Public Relations – Recording Industry take 40 hours beyond the core.

Public Relations (general) is the third most popular concentration with 46 students. PR-Recording Industry has 9 majors. Faculty who teach in this concentration lauded the many options for students in these concentrations. Students, however, expressed some frustrations about some of these specialty optional courses not being available, either because of faculty needing to teach required courses or low enrollment.

Sports Media: Students take 33 concentration-specific hours in sports media concentration (15 hours), conceptual requirements (9 hours), professional topics (9 hours). A minor is required of 15-18 credits. Sports media has the largest enrollment: 103.

Visual Communication: Students take 36 concentration-specific hours in writing/design (9 hours), conceptual requirements (9 hours), professional topics (9 hours), senior courses (6 hours), required outside of the accredited unit (auxiliary major requirements) (9 hours). A minor is required of 15-18 hours. There are 20 students in VisComm.

(c) Instruction, whether on-site or online, synchronous or asynchronous, is demanding and current, and is responsive to professional expectations of digital and technological media competencies.

Students report their courses are demanding and rigorous. Most courses are taught in person, in conventional synchronous fashion. However, faculty have restructured their courses to better respond to Generation Z, who expect a different type of educational experience.

Student class attendance is factored into grades and faculty are using more interactive assignments, making better use of class discussions, project-focused assignments, and small group assignments. Assessment of student writing in the Media Writing classes has identified writing challenges (grammar, punctuation, structure) and routine quizzes now engage students in understanding writing fundamentals. The need for more digital skills added Digital Media Skills to the core. Other courses, like Data Skills for Media Professionals, introduce digital skills in different but highly relevant approaches.

Advertising: A well-designed concentration with courses on interactive advertising and social media and a new course, Student Run Agency, is creating a Student Run Agency Foundation. Strong research requirement and course options for careers in media buying, agency work, or advertising writing and design. Students feel they are being well-prepared for the work force but

wish there were more advertising-specific faculty.

Journalism: The development of Mobile Storytelling and Podcasting updated choices for students. A wide variety of classes from Free Expression, Media and the American Public to Race, Gender, and Class in Media; Video Reporting and Editing to Reviewing and Criticism are offered. Students cited opportunities to work for *Sidelines* beginning in their freshman year and later radio, television, and digital opportunities.

Entertainment Journalism: Just 30 minutes from Nashville and with alumni in entertainment work globally, this concentration appropriately serves its community. The concentration does not vary significantly from the journalism concentration but requires 5 additional hours that can include entertainment related courses such as Entertainment and Lifestyle Storytelling and Mobile Storytelling anchor the requirements.

Environmental Journalism & Communication: Looking to fill the need for people who can communicate effectively about the environment, this program includes courses like Principles of Health Communication, Media, Environment, and Climate Change, and Scientific Approaches to Media.

Social Justice Journalism: Just one-year old, this concentration offers courses including Community Engagement, Crime, Gender, and Media, Mass Media and National Security and Mobile Storytelling.

Media Studies: A popular concentration, students expressed their support in having a broad selection of courses across the concentrations. This is being developed as a future online degree program. Students appreciated the different aspects of their curriculum, especially those who did not want to major in a specific area that the other concentrations offered. Course listings show that media studies majors have many options to fulfill their requirements with this flexible major.

Public Relations: Students complete two online certifications in their Principles class: Fundamentals of Social Media and Fundamentals of Media Relations. In the capstone class (merged with advertising campaigns) students form an agency, interview for positions, and are assigned a business and create a campaign for that business. Course options reflect those required and recommended by the Public Relations Society of America.

Public Relations-Recording Industry: While many public relation courses are required or offered for both concentrations, students in the Recording Industry Concentration take additional hours in the Recording Industry curriculum. Students are required to take History of the Recording Industry, Survey of the Recording Industry, and Entertainment Intellectual Property I. They also choose among electives offered by the Recording Industry department.

Sports Media: This is the fastest-growing concentration in the school. Its students are a mixture of people interested in being sportscasters, behind-the-scenes players, digital strategists, and PR people. The sports media chair is a former news reporter who has worked in PR and is currently PR chief for the group seeking to bring Major League Baseball to Nashville. The students are planning internships and other opportunities for hands-on work in the field they have chosen. Significantly, five current students work with the Nashville MLB pursuit team.

Visual Communication: The Visual Communication concentration is significantly different from the journalism concentrations with courses focused on art, photography, web design and information design that are not prominent in the traditional journalism sequences. It blends conceptual and skills classes, with the goal of students understanding both histories and theories of design and their application in creative projects. Lecture/lab courses provide opportunities to gain competency in industry-standard software and tools used in digital and print media

production, from print publication design to web, app and digital interface prototyping and coding. All students in Senior Portfolio are required to have an online, responsive, design portfolio website, a limited print portfolio, a LinkedIn page, and a designed and printed resume in order to pass the class. As one student said, “With those requirements, why wouldn’t I be hired?”

(d) The unit demonstrates efforts to connect faculty and administrators to the professions they represent, with a specific understanding of the changing skills needed to be successful in the workplace.

Faculty are encouraged to stay connected with the professions they represent and to keep current. Some have spent the summer working with professional media organizations through faculty fellowships like the National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE), the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters (TAB), and Music City Baseball. Faculty have attended Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and Advertising Federation meetings locally and nationally. Some limited funding is available for professional meetings in Nashville, but additional College support provides funds for travel to academic and professional conferences including AEJMC, BEA, ICA, and NAB.

Students were vocal about their appreciation of a faculty with extensive, timely, professional experience, media credentials, and contacts in industry.

During the six years being reviewed, both the previous director and the current director have actively worked with media organizations to develop partnerships to benefit students and faculty. At a meeting with local media executives and alumni, there was high praise for the work being done by faculty to ensure students a job ready.

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

All skills and laboratory sections adhere to the 20-1 student-faculty classroom ratio.

(f) 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. Units 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 hours).

When students take courses for internship credit at appropriate professional organizations, the unit must show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit’s faculty and professionals.

Students may take up to nine semester credits (or their equivalent) at professional media

outlets 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.

Internships play an important role in a student's curriculum. Both in Murfreesboro and with its proximity to Nashville, there are extensive opportunities across all concentrations for students to take their classroom learning to the workplace. Students are required to complete at least one internship (JOUR 4000) or practicum (JOUR 4880) as part of the unit core; however, they can earn up to 3 credits based on the number of hours they work:

1 credit hour = a minimum of 75 hours in the semester but not more than 149.

2 credit hours = a minimum of 150 hours in the semester but not more than 224.

÷3 credit hours = a minimum of 225 work hours but not more than 300.

The internship coordinator and instructor of record is an adjunct faculty member and is the unit academic adviser in the College Advising Center. Both faculty and the unit director share potential internship opportunities with the coordinator. The coordinator uses student and intern supervisor feedback to assess the quality of an experience to make recommendations for future students. Faculty serve as mentors and career advisers and assist students as they locate their internship. Students (across concentrations) value the breadth of the internship program and said that because practicum could be completed with on-campus media organizations, it helped with their school, family, and job challenges.

Students are evaluated based on assignments submitted through D2L, the online content management system. Assignments include a job expectations memo, a progress report, a midterm report (by both the student and the site supervisor), an experience summary and an updated resume. Grading is on a pass-fail basis by the faculty supervisor.

The site supervisor provides feedback (but not a grade) using three broad areas: Technical Skills, Abstract Skills, and Communication Skills. Each broad area includes three personal qualities to review with a rubric (poor, fair, good, and excellent). The supervisor is encouraged to make additional comments about the student's performance that will help in advising in the unit.

Students voiced excitement about internship opportunities offered through the unit. While some relied on information from the advising office, others felt confident seeking their own internship.

SUMMARY:

With a new degree, a common core of classes for majors, 19 new courses and four new concentrations, the unit offers a distinct curriculum. Students gain hands-on skills using top-rated equipment to prepare them for the 21st century, while an engaged faculty makes it work.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The Accrediting Committee and Council seek site-team reports on assessment that are appropriately detailed for a judgment on compliance that is informed, fair and consistent from one team to another.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit has a written assessment plan that has been implemented, is up to date and addresses contemporary curricular issues, including instruction related to the rapidly changing digital media world.

The school continues to strengthen its undergraduate program based on its 2009 written assessment plan, revised in 2015 and 2017. COVID caused many challenges with the loss of unit faculty. However, during that time, the university initiated a new assessment software procedure in conjunction with its SACSOC accreditation. The use of this program provided time to regroup to address ACEJMC's accreditation. The unit adjusted learning outcomes in its plan to reflect ACEJMC's 10 values and competencies.

Prior to its last accreditation, a revised core was fundamental to its assessment strategy. Since that visit, four new concentrations were developed to recognize the university's location and aggressiveness in reacting to changes in society: Sports Media, Environmental Journalism & Communication, Entertainment Journalism, and Social Justice Journalism.

Among the new courses are Community Engagement Journalism, Mobile Storytelling, Children and Media, Podcasting in Journalism, Broadcast Announcing and Performance, Entertainment and Lifestyle Reporting, Digital Analytics and Certifications, Data Skills for Media Professionals, Media, Environment, and Climate Change, all designed to prepare students for tomorrow's media world.

The unit posts its assessment plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.

The unit's Assessment Plan appears on the unit's homepage:

https://w1.mtsu.edu/journalism/includes/SoJSM_Updated_Assessment_Plan.pdf

(b) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the professional Values and Competencies" of the Council. (See Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction.)

The school expects its students to meet the value and competencies identified by ACEJMC and posts them prominently in the Bragg building. It documents that expectation with a grid of core courses showing the intersection of the values and competencies. Learning outcomes are consistent across all concentrations.

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

Following the audit of core courses, **direct measures** of student learning objectives include conceptual knowledge assessments (major field test mandated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission), grammar, spelling, data skills, and writing assessment in JOUR 2710 Media Writing, internship evaluation, and student resumes and cover letters in JOUR 4880 Professional Development.

Indirect measures include syllabus audits in conjunction with feedback from practitioners on course structure, student awards, and student and alumni surveys. The university uses the National Survey of Student Engagement and conducts an alumni survey of students who graduated two years prior to the field survey. The unit has identified some limitations with both surveys and is seeking information that will be more rigorous and appropriate for their assessment. The university also conducts a survey of graduating seniors at the end of each semester, which has allowed the school to organize selected survey questions by ACEJMC's learning outcomes goals and to compare the responses. That data has been aggregated from 2019-2023. Also, in 2022-2023, the university began a campus-wide student survey of the academic advising center in each college and for each department and school with data released in 2023 (further information in Standard 6). With multiple survey results, the unit has a more definitive picture of how its students are performing.

(d) At least one direct and/or indirect measure should include journalism and mass communication professionals engaged in assessment data collection.

While there were some limitations during COVID, the unit has become more strategic in its use of professionals, particularly in the JOUR 2710 Media Writing, JOUR 4000 Internship, and JOUR 4880 Professional Development. In the writing course, judges (recent alumni and one new assistant professor) performed 114 blind, independent evaluations of 59 briefs to assess “publishable work.”

Students are required to complete an internship and the site supervisor completes an evaluation of the intern's technical skills, abstract skills, and communication skills with three categories under each variable. As those are compiled, they are provided for faculty review.

Media professionals and alumni also work with students participating in local and national competitions like Hearst Journalism Awards, Tennessee Association of Broadcasters, the American Advertising Federation, and the Public Relations Society of America. Three recent hires are instructors with extensive professional experience, and they regularly evaluate student work in the classes they teach and help students get internships and jobs.

(e) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction. There is substantial, concrete evidence of “closing the loop,” generally and specifically. Multiple examples of “closing the loop,” generally and specifically, are evident.

There are many examples of faculty “closing the loop” when weaknesses are identified. Based on an audit of syllabi, feedback from practitioners on course structure and the evaluation of writing assignments, the faculty approved the addition of a series of grammar quizzes for all

sections of JOUR 2710 Media Writing. The text *Working with Words* was adopted as a standardized textbook and faculty-developed writing assignments and teaching materials designed for sharing with instructors were organized into a common repository. The online *AP Stylebook* is provided free for all students in any of the unit's classes. Work is being done to ensure continuity in teaching across all sections of Media Writing.

JOUR 4880 Professional Development was overhauled: class assignments and the course instructor changed. A new course, JOUR 2880 Careers in Journalism and Media was added to the core to introduce students earlier to media career options and to better prepare them for resume writing and job searches.

As organizations recover from the impact of COVID, faculty report alumni and professionals are more willing to engage students in internships and entry level hiring has resumed. A program is being developed with *The Tennessean's* new Journalism Academy. More alumni are responding to the unit's expanded social media presence.

The unit has re-classified a staff position to a newly defined position that incorporates a stronger social media presence. It has helped increase the social media profile of the unit, resulting in more alumni and media professional contact.

SUMMARY:

Assessment is conducted strategically and valued. The unit has used assessment to continue to enhance its curriculum based on multiple measures used to evaluate student performance. Both indirect and direct measures are being used to compile data to guide faculty as it works to ensure its program meets the needs of its many publics.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 4: Diversity and Inclusiveness

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit has a written diversity plan that has been implemented and discussed annually, for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse, culturally proficient faculty, staff 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, identify under-represented groups and articulate key performance indicators upon which the unit intends to focus and improve.

The unit posts its diversity plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.

The unit posts its [diversity plan](#) on the website of the School of Journalism and Strategic Media as well as on the wall outside the office of the unit’s director and other offices. The plan is discussed regularly with the faculty and it’s championed by the dean and other members of her leadership team. The plan focuses on domestic minority groups, women, international students, and LGBTQ students.

(b) The unit’s curriculum creates culturally proficient communicators capable of learning with, working on and advancing the value of diverse teams. The unit’s curriculum includes instruction on issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society.

The unit takes diversity and inclusion seriously. This direction, from the dean on down, is widely embraced by faculty.

The school has defined diversity as the incorporation of an array of perspectives and people that go beyond tolerance to promote awareness and acceptance or viewpoint.

The unit’s leaders have also shaped programs to comply with [Tennessee’s Divisive Concepts Act](#), which prohibits the indoctrination of a particular ideology or political viewpoint. The law also prohibits mandatory training that includes one or more of the defined divisive concepts.

The unit has also added what it calls structured electives that specifically address diversity. They include such classes as Women in Media, Diversity in Sports Media, Issues in Advertising: Sexuality and Gender; Television Culture and History, Race, Gender and Media and Crime, Gender and Media.

(c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to enhance all faculty members’ understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and ability to develop culturally proficient communicators capable of learning with, working on and advancing the value of diverse teams. The unit also demonstrates intentional efforts to recruit and retain faculty and staff who are from demographics that are historically, domestically marginalized.

The unit has a novel mentoring and advocacy program designed to help diverse faculty members navigate the academy as they seek to become tenured. As a member of the dean’s leadership team tells us, the unit wants people to feel “supported and visible.”

(d) In alignment with the institution’s mission, the unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit, retain and graduate a student population reflecting the diversity of the population the institution aims to serve.

The unit has long done this and its student population diversity outpaces the diversity in Murfreesboro and the Greater Nashville area. Significantly, the diversity of the faculty lags far behind student diversity.

The departure of five faculty members (two full professors and three tenure-track faculty), two instructors and staff members impacted the unit over the last few years. Three tenure-track faculty members departed in 2021 and 2022 (two for other universities and one for family overseas). The unit’s leaders report these departed faculty members were productive scholars and excellent teachers. They were also diverse, including an Asian female, Caucasian female, and an African American male, who later left to teach at Syracuse University. In the 2022-2023 school year, the unit was not granted permission to replace vacancies. In Summer 2023, the unit received approval to hire two full-time lecturers – one of whom is a public relations professional and the other a woman of color.

The dean is strongly committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive climate. She notes that she completed a DEI course through Penn State and continues to focus on DEI efforts at MTSU. Notably, the three-person leadership team in the Dean’s office consists of three women, two who are members of domestic minority groups.

(e) The unit demonstrates that it has an inclusive climate, free of harassment and all forms of 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.

Accreditation site visit teams will apply this standard in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as the laws of the countries in which non-U.S. institutions are located.

The unit fosters a welcoming atmosphere for all. It values diversity and highlights it, and embraces diversity in all of its forms in the unit’s course offerings and in the speakers it invites.

SUMMARY:

The unit has worked hard to embrace both diversity and inclusivity as a core principle of its curriculum. Its student body is more diverse than the city of Murfreesboro and the Greater Nashville area, but faculty diversity lags behind, partly because of key departures in the last two years and the inability to make hires.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

Academic year: 2022 – 2023 Full-time faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African-American	1	4.8%	0	0%
White	7	33%	9	43%
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0%	0	0%
Asian	2	9.5%	1	4.8%
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%	0	0%

Academic year: 2022 – 2023 Part-time/adjunct faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African-American	0	0%	1	10%
White	5	50%	4	40%
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%	0	0%

PART II — Standard 5: Faculty

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for curricula, oversight of courses, research/creative activity, and service.

The unit's full-time faculty teach the majority of the courses. That ranges from 88% in advertising to 71% in journalism. The total for the unit is an average of 80%. Each of the concentration chairs are full-time faculty. The unit's curriculum committee works with faculty and the director to develop and vet courses. The unit adheres to the university standards for allocation of effort in teaching, research, and service. However, the director and the dean are able to work within the framework to adjust the "normal" teaching load of four classes a semester to account for research, service, and even teaching large classes. Faculty said they understand the expectations in each of these areas.

(b) The unit's faculty (full- and part-time) are highly qualified and keep their expertise current through professional development opportunities and maintain relationships with professional and scholarly associations.

Among the full-time faculty, nine are full professors, six associate professors, and three assistant professors. Two of the full professors serve in administrative roles, one as the director and the other as an assistant dean of the college.

Excellence in teaching is considered the utmost importance for the unit and the university. Faculty members generally have higher teaching loads than universities where research is the primary focus. MTSU policy notes that faculty automatically receive a course reassignment each term, reducing teaching from five to four classes. Further teaching reductions may be made according to the university's Workload Guide. Faculty members expressed both knowledge and appreciation of the focus on teaching, while noting that research is supported and expected. Faculty members in the unit regularly apply for and are granted approval to use reassigned time for research or creative work.

Faculty members participate and lead workshops on teaching and research, including the dean's monthly "Lunch and Learn" sessions. The university's Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center also promotes effective teaching.

Faculty members have extensive professional experience and work to retain expertise in their teaching areas. The unit's promotion and tenure documents outlines their appreciation of a balance of academic credentials, professional experience, teaching excellent, and commitment to sharing knowledge beyond the campus. The document on research and creative activity outlines expectations and encouragement in both or either area. As a primarily undergraduate, teaching focused unit, faculty members stressed the importance of their own professional backgrounds as well as staying connected to industries they serve, both for current knowledge and helping students get internships and jobs.

(c) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity. Expectations for promotion and tenure are clear.

All tenured faculty members in the unit are part of the Appointments, Promotion and Tenure Committee. Annual evaluations include classroom teaching, syllabi, teaching philosophy, research/creative work, and service. In lieu of research or creative work, faculty can request four classes per term. For pre-tenured faculty members, the college has a Mentoring and Advocacy Program. Assistant professors in the unit spoke highly of this program and the guidance and reassurance it offers as they progress through their probationary years.

At the time of the site team visit, the unit listed \$13,000 in its annual budget for faculty travel. The director explained that the college is often the source of additional funding and as long as someone is on a program, the unit is able to fund most conference travel, including international trips. The unit's written travel policy explains the request process and faculty members say they feel supported in their requests for travel and other funds for research and creative work.

Promotion and tenure policies in the unit align with the university's MTSU Policy 800 (General Personnel). The policy states that all full-time personnel are required to devote 37.5 hours per week to the university. The workload policy must add up to 15 workload units (WU) per term or 225 non-credit contact hours or equivalent per term. For example, tenure-track faculty engaged in an active research agenda usually teach nine WU per semester, or three, three-credit courses. The remaining WU consist of research/creative work, and service. Assistant professors said they rely on the director and their mentors to help them understand the workload policy and how to achieve the required 15 work units each semester.

Other promotion and tenure policies follow the university's policies and deadlines, and that manual is online.

(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.

Faculty members are encouraged and financed in presenting their work to other scholars, artists, educators, and professionals. A review of faculty curriculum vitae shows engagement in professional and academic conferences, workshops, and presentations. The director has served in leadership roles with AEJMC, and faculty regularly attend and present at the national convention and at the International Communication Association annual conventions.

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

Campus administrators spoke highly of the unit's faculty as engaged with campus committees, committed to their students, and respectful of their scholarship. During the lunch with campus administrators, they spoke of the unit's willingness to be involved in campus initiatives, their support for the honors college and teaching honors courses, and their willingness to serve as

media experts on issues and events in the news. For example, the campus vice president for marketing said the unit director's book on health communication came out about the time of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and he got a lot of requests from media to share her expertise.

Grid 5.1. Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				Totals (XX)
		Full Professor (9)	Associate Professors (6)	Assistant Professors (3)	Other Faculty** (4)	
Awards and Honors	39	24	11	4		39
Grants Received Internal	9	5	0	4		9
Grants Received External	7	2	5	0		7
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	5	4	4	1		5
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	4	2	2	0		4
Books Edited	3	3	0	0		3
Book Chapters	9	5	2	4		9
Monographs	0	0	0	0		0
Articles in Refereed Journals	47	23	12	15		47
Refereed Conference Papers	102	45	20	37		102
Conference Panels	77	34	25	18		77
Invited Academic Papers	9	9	0	0		9
Encyclopedia Entries	4	0	3	1		4
Book Reviews	6	3	0	3		6
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	13	13	0	0		13
Juried Creative Works	16	9	6	1		16
Non-juried Creative Works	6	5	0	1		6
Other (please specify)	167	14	148	5		167

*Co-authored work should be counted as a single publication in the unit totals. However, if, for example, two members of the faculty are co-authors on the same journal article, it would be reported as a publication for both authors. **Includes all full-time faculty who do not hold listed ranks, such as instructors and others on term appointments. Many faculty in this category may hold teaching appointments without significant scholarship, research or creative requirements.

SUMMARY:

The unit has engaged and hard-working faculty members who manage to do research and creative work in addition to their teaching load. Students spoke of their professors with respect for the professional experience they bring into the classroom and their dedication to teaching. Faculty members said the importance of teaching and making a difference for their students is why they chose MTSU and their enthusiasm for teaching was obvious. Current students and alumni said the faculty's ongoing professional connections helped them get internships and jobs, and faculty are well-known in the industries represented in the unit.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit supports students with services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study

Program requirements for the unit are initially explained when students attend orientation sessions, and are reinforced in visits with academic advisers and faculty mentors and through program advising documents.

MTSU makes a wide range of information available to help students successfully navigate their academic paths. Students have access to advising worksheets that outline both general education requirements and concentration requirements for graduation. Students also have online access to their transcripts, and Degree Works software where they can track their progress toward their degrees.

Students are asked to file their Intent to Graduate Form at the end of their junior year so any noted deficiencies or problems can be addressed in time for graduation.

(b) Professional advisers, and faculty where appropriate, provide students with academic and career advice.

MTSU has an Office of Student Advising with full-time advisers for each college and dedicated advisers for each academic unit with the college. These professional advisers for the unit are located in the same building as the unit and are easily accessible for students.

Through the CME Advising Center, every undergraduate student is assigned a college adviser. Two advisers and the advising manager are the primary advisers for the unit. Academic advising is required for all students, although one student athlete said she gets her advising through the athletic department. Advisers see their role as instrumental in helping units retain students.

Students can schedule appointments with their advisers either in person or online, or visit drop-in hours. The advising center offers regular events to connect with students, including open houses for specific concentrations.

Surveys of students suggest the advisers and CME Advising Center effectively inform students of the requirements unique to their degrees. In Spring 2023, an MTSU student survey on their advising experiences found that 94% approved of the advising process. When asked if their advisers were knowledgeable about degree requirements, 79% of students from the unit strongly agreed.

Students who spoke with the site team agreed that their advisers generally did a good job of helping them fulfill their graduation requirements, although there were some complaints that courses were sometimes recommended in a poor sequence.

In addition to offering registration guidance, advisers work with the unit director to help students resolve other issues that might impact success, including difficulty with a class, scheduling conflicts, or course substitutions.

Advisers do additional targeted communications to students who are on academic probation or are underperforming at midterms to check in for support and guidance.

This revamped advising center offers regular events to connect with students, including open houses for specific concentrations. The advising manager now attends faculty meetings across the College of Media & Entertainment and routinely works with department chairs and the unit director in improving communication and curriculum for students.

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

Faculty are readily available and accessible to students. Per MTSU policy, faculty are required to hold at least five office hours per week, communicating office hours to students through syllabi. Students report faculty are sometimes not present during posted office hours, but communicate quickly via email, are frequently found throughout the building, and are approachable and happy to help students outside of class.

The director sends out regular electronic newsletters to the faculty and students called the Director's Buzz with information about the department and upcoming activities. The School also maintains an active facebook page with announcements, information, and events and there are numerous bulletin boards throughout the Bragg building with information about speakers, student media and activities.

The unit also offers free tutoring to students. Tutoring is generally available for most journalism courses up to and including 3000-level classes. The unit employs two tutors and sessions are offered both in-person and online.

(d) The unit and institution provide extra-curricular activities and opportunities relevant to the curriculum and that help develop students' professional and intellectual abilities and interests.

The unit provides numerous student media activities across platforms. Alumni who spoke with the site team described their experiences with these student media as transformational in their education and instrumental in their career success. Some of the more popular opportunities include:

Middle Tennessee News (MTN) is a newsroom run by the faculty and students in the unit. The broadcast/cable newsroom is supported by student fees and produces biweekly, half-hour, streamed newscasts during the academic semesters covering campus news and news and events in Murfreesboro and the surrounding area. A small studio contains a professional news set and multiple cameras with teleprompters. An adjacent control room in what looks like a converted hallway is adequate and contains professional level equipment for the students. The newsroom is equipped with AP's Electronic News Producing Software. Students learn to shoot, write, edit and deliver stories. Students also produce live streaming sports coverage, including MTSU home tennis matches.

Sidelines is a digital media news source advised by unit faculty and focused on campus news, sports, entertainment, and narrative storytelling. Sidelines has an editorial staff of eight to 10 editors led by an editor-in-chief. The staff of Sidelines is a mixture of journalism majors and other majors. The online newspaper has won awards from the Southeast Journalism Conference, the Green Eyeshade Awards, and the SPJ Mark of Excellence Awards.

The Social Media Insights Lab provides students with training in consumer research and engagement through the Brandwatch platform. In addition to classroom instruction, students can complete training modules independently on topics including social media listening and advertising.

WMTS 88.3 FM is a 680-watt student-run radio station playing alternative music and hosting talk and music shows. It's a student-funded and operated outlet for students wanting radio experience.

Match Records is a student record label that manages signed artists. Taking advantage of MTSU's proximity to Nashville's music scene, Match Records involves students in all aspects of a traditional record label.

The unit supports numerous professional organizations for students including an Ad Club, the Public Relations Student Society of America and a recently created student Ad/PR lab.

(e) The unit uses retention and graduation data to improve student services, such as advising, and to reduce barriers to student success.

Two MTSU offices are charged with collecting and maintaining student enrollment, retention, and graduation data. Retention and graduation rates have steadily improved.

Many MTSU students come from socio-economic backgrounds that require them to work while attending school. As a result many students are non-traditional, attend part-time, take the occasional semester off to raise money, or transfer. This makes tracking progress and retention more difficult than on a traditional, residential campus.

Data for enrollment, retention and graduation within the unit are available through the unit's website.

SUMMARY:

The unit provides program and graduation requirements early and often, through multiple platforms. Professional advising is available to all students in the same building as their classes. The unit communicates with students through emails, newsletters, social media and bulletin board notices. There are multiple, popular student media options and organizations for students who wish to participate, with opportunities to use professional level equipment.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

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 unit's most recent strategic plan was adopted in August 2023 and is an ambitious five-year plan. The strategic plan includes curriculum initiatives, growing new concentrations, developing an advertising and public relations agency, elevating the advertising and public relations concentrations to a standalone degree, and numerous efforts to heighten the unit's visibility and internationalize the program.

The total unit budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024 is \$2,422,836. This is a lean budget that covers faculty salaries and benefits, and operating and travel budgets. Budgets at MTSU are mostly centralized, with funds allocated to the colleges by the university administration. Deans can submit requests, including requests for faculty lines, which are approved or denied by the provost. The Dean has discretion to adjust budgets within the college, based on available resources and needs.

Two-thirds of the unit budget (\$1,605,724) is allocated to full-time faculty salaries. Other areas of the budget seem small for a unit of this size. For example, the travel budget for this year is \$13,000.

The total budget under the unit's control is small and shown below:

Budget Item	Self-Study Year		
	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Teaching salaries (part time/adjunct)	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$50,400
Teaching assistants (tutors)	\$3,620	\$3,620	\$5,000
Operating: (includes equipment, maintenance, library resources, databases, online information services, supplies, research)	\$37,856 (budget cut of \$10k)	\$37,856 (budget cut of \$10k)	\$37,856
Travel	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Other: Student Fee Money	\$49,900.27	\$68,200.32	\$73,839.78
Student workers	\$4,375	\$4,375	\$4,375
TOTAL JOUR BUDGET UNDER UNIT CONTROL	\$167,751.27	\$186,051.32	\$183,470.78

But these numbers don't tell the complete story when it comes to unit resources or expenditures.

The dean recently received a pledge for a \$15 million dollar gift for naming rights for the college. The gift will be received as \$3 million dollars a year over five years, and the first \$6 million has been collected. This additional money allows the dean to address specific needs in the college outside the normal budget process, including research funds, student opportunity funds, equipment purchases, additional funds for travel requests, and building renovations.

Faculty members say the dean has been generous with these funds and "opens her pockets whenever we need something." However, access to these funds is not guaranteed and remains under the control of the dean.

The dean also plans to set aside a significant amount of the gift to generate interest that can be transferred annually to units in the college to spend however they see fit.

The dean also recently received approval to change the policy for the student technology fee. The "technology" designation was removed so the funds can be used for any need in the unit, and not just for technology. This change raises roughly \$270,000 annually will be distributed to each department based upon student credit hours and will make more discretionary funds available to the unit.

(b) Resources provided by the institution are adequate to achieve the unit's mission and are fair in relation to those provided to other units.

The unit is treated equitably compared to other programs on campus. At times, the unit receives special resources due to the visible nature of the work students and faculty do. The departmental budget, travel funds, and other items are distributed similarly to other units on campus.

One concern cited in the self-study is that there are limited funds to support student competition teams for learning opportunities such as the National Student Advertising Competition. There are also no dedicated funds to send students to field reporting enrichment opportunities, national academic conferences to present research, or to internship opportunities in other parts of the country.

The unit's primary plan to address these needs is in the form of fundraising specifically for student opportunities.

(c) The unit's facilities and information resources enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.

The School of Journalism & Strategic Media is located in the Bragg Media and Entertainment Building and shares office, administrative and classroom space with the College of Media & Entertainment (CME) Dean's office, the Media Arts Department, and the Department of Recording Industry.

The CME Advising Center, Center for Popular Music and Center for Innovation in Media (which houses the student run newspaper and public radio station) are also housed in the building. The majority of the faculty offices are housed in Bragg.

Parts of the Bragg Media and Entertainment Building have been recently updated with new lighting and floors, and there are plans for future renovations. The building includes audio editing and recording studios for the Recording Industry program, the largest unit in the College.

A large television production studio is used primarily by the Media Arts program, along with additional labs for animation and virtual reality technology. A smaller studio, with four high-definition robotic cameras, is used by the unit to operate Middle Tennessee News.

The lecture rooms in the building are smart classrooms. Many classrooms host Mac computers capable of operating PC platforms. The largest lecture room used by the unit seats 77 students. There are two conference rooms.

There are three computer labs dedicated to the unit. The computers are equipped with the Adobe Creative Cloud for audio or video or photo editing and InDesign for publication. Other computer labs in the Honors College and College of Business are also available to the unit.

The unit converted a small computer lab to a news lab for Middle Tennessee News in 2019. The lab includes a remote camera, lighting, a news desk, and the Associated Press news producing software ENPS.

The building is welcoming with numerous areas for students to gather in small group discussion or around larger tables. Students occupy the building well into the evening, with groups working on projects or just socializing.

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

Since the last reaccreditation, the addition of a student course fee has made it possible for the unit to add digital cameras, video cameras, video flypacks with a remote switcher, audio recorders and podcasting gear, portable lights and wireless microphones, and professional software packages ENPS and Brandwatch to the items available for student instruction. These resources support the curriculum through in-class and field reporting assignments.

Video and audio production equipment for the unit are housed in “the cage” and can be checked out for 48 hours to complete class assignments or faculty approved projects. A staff member supervises equipment checkout with the assistance of five students. Students can reserve equipment online through a software system named “connect2” which includes images of the equipment and links to operation manuals. The student workers run the equipment checkout room during the semester, giving fellow students access and coaching them on how to properly use the equipment.

Unit students utilize the Canon EOS 80D Camera kits the most. Students report they have not had any issues checking out gear, and that the gear is always available. Some students complained that the gear is only available for coursework and is course specific regarding who can check it out.

Available equipment includes:

- 44 Canon EOS 80D cameras with a 18-135 mm lens
- 39 Sony HXR-NX100 video camera kits
- 5 Sony NX-70 video camera kits
- 13 mobile journalism kits
- 52 Tascam digital audio recorders
- 2 Rodecaster Pro podcasting kits
- 4 DJI Mavic Mini drone kits
- 3 GoPro Hero 5 camera kits

SUMMARY:

The unit has an ambitious strategic plan that may not be entirely supported by its institutional budget. However private fundraising efforts by the dean, and a change in how student fees were allocated have made additional discretionary funds available.

The unit is almost entirely housed in a modern, welcoming building that is in the process of being renovated. The unit has ample equipment for the students to use in video and audio production.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit consults and communicates regularly with its alumni, and actively engages with them, other professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching current and to promote the exchange of ideas.

The unit has a close relationship with graduates, especially those working in Murfreesboro and the Greater Nashville community. Its advisory group is a strong vehicle to maintain this connection and engagement with alumni.

(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.

This area is of particular strength for the unit. Its Seigenthaler News Service matches student work with the needs of area media outlets. Under the mentorship of a faculty member, students receive hands-on, practical experience in newsgathering and reporting, from general news coverage to the music industry, emphasizing high professional standards throughout. For the students, the goal is improved professional practice and the probability of a published story submission in a major media outlet such as the Tennessean. Leaders note that student works gathered during The Road Trip, Tin Pan South (music festival) and Bonnaroo Music Festival have been distributed both statewide and nationally.

(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.

This is a core strength of the unit. Before the pandemic, “Innovation J-Camp” was held each July at the Center for Innovation in Media in MTSU’s College of Media & Entertainment. The weeklong workshop taught young journalists to become innovative digital storytellers, able to produce stories for multiple platforms, including video, web, mobile and print. Participants were drawn from ninth through 12th grades. By week’s end, they posted stories, complete with photos and videos, on a website they created to showcase their multimedia projects. Four faculty members served as instructors. Post-pandemic, the focus of the camp changed. Middle School students from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Murfreesboro are the focus of the camp. The camp teaches communications skills through audio, video, internet usage and media literacy to students in seventh through ninth grades. The program is now known as “Come to Voice”-- a reminder that these students – often diverse and from families of limited economic means – can gain confidence in their interpersonal and academic abilities. Two faculty members, along with help of other faculty members and student mentors, lead the new summer program, now in its fourth year. This is the signature program to support scholastic journalism across age groups. The unit is also sending six students to the Grammy Awards on Feb. 4 to cover the ceremony as entertainment journalists. Given that MTSU sits in the center of the entertainment mecca that is

Nashville, the Grammy trip will provide students with practical experience that should be relevant for local entertainment employers seeking interns and entry-level employees.

(e) The unit supports scholastic journalism.

The unit is an active participant and supporter of scholastic journalism in Rutherford County. In addition, The Seigenthaler News Service matches student work with the needs of area media outlets. (See section above on the Come to Voice program.

SUMMARY:

The unit affiliates with a range of professional media organizations that lead to opportunities for practitioners, students and faculty. Among these are the Tennessee Press Association, the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters, the Tennessee High School Press Association, American Advertising Federation – Nashville, Public Relations Society of America and Boys and Girls Clubs of Rutherford County. Adjunct instructors and visiting speakers provide further opportunities for engagement with media professionals.

A restructured administrative position has led to a dedicated social media assignment. A weekly e-newsletter from the college and annual glossy magazine showcase the work and accomplishments of students, faculty, and alumni across the units in the college. The unit's leaders say the vast majority of faculty members are eager to engage with the broader community as volunteers and speakers.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- Faculty who are devoted to teaching and still recognize the importance of research and creative work, and service.
- A director who has been in the position for about a year but has worked in the unit for more than 15 years and has the strong support of faculty.
- One of three units in the College of Media and Entertainment that the dean characterized as doing very well financially.
- A new concentration in Sports Media that is helping stabilize the unit's recent enrollment numbers
- Hard-working, sincere, motivated students who exhibit a lot of "grit" in seeking higher education.

Weaknesses:

- At the time of the site team visit, the unit offered concentrations in 10 areas with a student enrollment of 306 students. Concentrations in Environmental Journalism & Communication and Social Justice Journalism were new in fall 2023; each now lists three students as majors. Faculty and students expressed concern that the unit may be spreading itself too thin with 10 concentrations without additional faculty to cover the concentrations' requirements as well as the many new courses. While the unit's enrollment has experienced some recovery, overall enrollment in the unit fell from the reported 582 majors during the previous site team visit to the current 306 unit majors.
- Students say they have limited access to technology when they are no longer in certain classes or on-campus. They particularly cited access to Adobe software as something they need to use to maintain their portfolios.

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

NA

3) In the case of a recommendation for accreditation or reaccreditation, *with standard(s) not in compliance*, list the deficiencies that need to be addressed before the next site team evaluation.

NA

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

NA

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

NA

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

At the time of the previous site team visit, the following weaknesses were listed:

- *An assessment process that does not engage faculty members enough to meaningfully, consistently influence curriculum and instruction.* Since then, the unit has held workshops and engaged the faculty in its curriculum evaluation. This site team found faculty members aware and involved with the assessment process.
- *Faculty composition that falls short of serving a diverse student body.* This site team found an increase in the number of women, particularly regarding women in administration. The unit has had limited ability to hire in recent in years and seen three faculty members of color depart for higher paid positions. The unit has one tenure track search open this year.
- *An advising operation that has not engendered the confidence of students.* The university now has professional advisers assigned to each concentration and major. Students spoke highly of working with the professional advisers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Unevenness in the way media law and ethics are addressed in the curriculum.* Since the last site team visit, the faculty reviewed these courses and replaced the required Freedom of Expression course with an existing and now-required Media law class.

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 a good summary of the unit. The director and others were responsive and efficient in responding to team members' requests. One challenge for the site team was the high level of security obstacles that included classroom doors automatically locking 10 minutes into the class, university ban on the use of Wi-Fi printers, and the site team chair needing a key card that would open most any door on campus.