

2023-24
Revisit Team Report
*for Accreditation in Journalism
and Mass Communications*

Name of Accredited Unit: School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Name of Institution: San José State University

Name of Unit Administrator: Phylis West Johnson


Date of Original Site Visit: Feb. 6-9, 2022

Revisit Date: Feb. 5-6, 2024

Revisit Team Chair: Kristin Gilger, Professor Emerita, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University



Revisit Team Member: Timothy E. Bajkiewicz, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Broadcast Journalism, Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture, Virginia Commonwealth University



Revisit Team's Recommendation: RE-ACCREDITATION

Background: The 2015 ACEJMC site team found two standards in noncompliance – Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction, and Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes. Standard 2 was out of compliance for a systemic problem with the 20-student cap for skills classes, and the School subsequently received provisional re-accreditation. Within one semester of the 2015 visit, the class size issue had been addressed and largely eliminated. The unit was re-accredited in 2017 after a site team revisit determined that the Standard 2 deficiency had been corrected.

Standard 9 was found out of compliance in both 2015 and in the 2017 revisit. The 2015 site team reported that the unit lacked an assessment plan, strategy or system. Assessment measures were deemed to inadequately reflect the ACEJMC values and competencies or measure learning across the curriculum. The report concluded that the School “needs to design and implement an assessment plan that uses direct and indirect measures for the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies.”

In the 2017 revisit, the site team observed that “while there has been much effort around both direct and indirect measures, there is still no overarching plan and confusion remains about what qualifies as assessment versus regular educational activities, like instructor-implemented and evaluated exams. There is no shortage of activity, but the implementation has been fragmented and lacks strategy and close-the-loop follow-through. The School will need to be more intentional and consistent to build an effective assessment program.”

The 2022 site team found that the unit had made progress since the 2017 revisit. The report said direct and indirect measures had been established and data were being collected that reflect, for the most part, the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies (the exception being internship evaluations). However, the site team found no evidence that the data were being analyzed and used for decision-making purposes and found the unit non-compliant on the assessment standard. The team found the unit in compliance on all other standards and recommended re-accreditation. The Accrediting Committee subsequently agreed with that recommendation; however, the Accrediting Council overturned the decision, opting instead for provisional re-accreditation.

The unit then appealed the decision, citing an “arbitrary and capricious process not supported by substantial evidence.” In September 2022, the Council notified the university that the appeal had been denied. In a letter, the Council said, “Several Council members commented that the program was out of compliance on Standard 9 (Assessment of Learning Outcomes) in 2015, 2017 and again in 2022, and therefore a vote for full re-accreditation now would mean the program would continue to be out of compliance on assessment until the next full visit in 2028. Council members noted that it appeared the program was making progress toward compliance on the assessment standard, and they expressed confidence that the two-year provisional period is adequate time to show evidence of compliance.”

(Note: Although the Council's decennial standards update now labels the assessment standard as Standard 3, for consistency it is labeled as Standard 9 in this report. Additionally, this report refers to 12 ACEJMC values and competencies as the unit is being evaluated based on the criteria in place during the last site team visit.)

1. List each standard found in noncompliance and the reasons as cited in the original team report. (Add additional pages as necessary.)

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Reasons cited:

The 2022 site team report said, "The School's record on Standard 9 during the accreditation period under review is a mixture of progress in building a better structure for assessment, tempered by inconsistencies in documenting analysis, implementation of data-driven decisions and follow-up assessment. The unit collects data. It often summarizes results and touts hard-earned successes, such as high levels of satisfaction by supervisors rating interns. But it does not provide proof of sufficiently using ACEJMC expectations to mine data-driven curriculum and instructional decisions. Despite clearly earnest efforts and some degree of improvement, efforts fell short of expected standards across the review period."

The report continued, "The unit already is adjusting its assessment plans to match its status as a stand-alone accredited program within the School. The pre-test, post-test is under revision, in anticipation of a re-launch in fall 2022. Resumption of more internships, affected by pandemic restrictions, presents opportunities to review how well current evaluation forms reflect ACEJMC values and competencies. The portfolio review, the measure deemed most valuable by the School, stands to benefit from its new platform offering efficient review of students' work. And a revival of an advisory board that did not gain traction on the first try will provide more input from alumni and professionals."

Additionally, the site team identified the following problems or deficiencies that must be corrected: "The unit must anchor its assessment plan and practices in clear, consistent and documented processes. Steps must include not just collecting information, but also rigorous evaluation of results, analysis of opportunities for improving upon ongoing efforts, engagement across the School in identifying the best options for change, implementation of change, and then fresh rounds of assessment to track outcomes of new initiatives. Previous site teams found that the program's assessment lacked written plans and direct and indirect measures. The unit significantly addressed those concerns. The next challenge requires demonstrating command across the full range of ACEJMC's expectations: Assess student learning, identify weaknesses, take action, evaluate results."

2. For each standard that had been in noncompliance, provide a summary of the revisit team's findings regarding corrections. Provide an evaluation of compliance or noncompliance. (Present a separate narrative response for each standard in noncompliance. Add additional pages as necessary.)

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Summary of findings: As noted above, the biggest weakness in the unit's assessment plan was not using data to drive decision-making. The unit had adequate assessment measures in place and collected data; however, it failed to closely analyze the data, use it to make decisions, and then measure whether changes implemented were effective.

Since being found out of compliance on the assessment standard, the unit has made a concerted effort to pay attention to the data it collects and has implemented changes based on its analysis. For example, in large part based on assessment findings, beginning this fall a basic research course will be required of all students in the journalism major and an introductory multimedia course will be required of students in all four journalism specializations.

More information on how the unit's direct and indirect measures are implemented and how they have led to curricular and other changes is provided in a separate document (San Jose State Revisit Addendum).

During the probationary period, the unit took several steps to improve its assessment process. The survey instrument used by internship supervisors to evaluate their interns was updated to include all ACEJMC values and competencies (previously it included just a handful). The School also introduced a new platform for review of student e-portfolios and revised a pre-test and post-test that is given to students to measure their learning in key areas.

To gain more qualitative input, the School reconstituted its alumni advisory board, which failed to gain traction on the first try. The new board is made up of a half-a-dozen journalism professionals who graduated within the past four or five years. The new board is more engaged and more current than the previous board, according to School leadership. The School also hosts open student forums to get informal feedback from students.

The revisit team found the faculty to be fully engaged in assessment. While there is an assessment committee that carries on the bulk of the work, journalism faculty meeting minutes indicate that assessment is a topic at virtually every meeting.

Some challenges remain as the unit continues to refine its assessment processes. In some cases, longitudinal data are lacking, either because of changes in the instruments being used or because of lapses in carrying out the assessment. In other cases,

response rates have been too low to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. Additionally, the unit tends to analyze each new batch of results as they become available without making reference to previous years' data. The School has outlined a series of steps it plans to take to address these issues. Following this plan should, over time, make it possible to better evaluate trends and identify whether changes made as a result of assessment have been successful or not, and respond accordingly.

Finally, the unit's assessment plan was recently updated and is posted on its website at <https://www.sjsu.edu/jmc/docs/Journalism%20Assessment%20Plan-2.pdf>.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

3. Describe any other significant weaknesses cited by the site team in its report and/or any additional concerns cited by the Council in its letter to the unit regarding provisional status.

In addition to assessment practices, the 2022 site team cited several other weaknesses. They were: a faculty that is less diverse than the student body it serves; the need for a coherent enrollment management/recruitment plan to address declining enrollment; and the lack of mandated student advising. Additionally, the site team noted that the faculty lacked a Latino faculty member, although the largest proportion of students identified as Latino.

4. For the other significant weaknesses cited by the site team or concerns cited by the Council, provide a summary of the revisit team's findings regarding corrections.

Diversity: Faculty diversity has improved since the last visit. In 2022, the journalism faculty consisted of seven full-time members – one Black (14%), one from India (14%) and five white (71%). It now consists of eight full-time faculty members – one Black (12.5%), one from India (12.5%), five white, (62.5%) and one Latino (12.5%). The latter is an assistant professor for Spanish Language Media, a Hispanic male hired in 2023 to lead a relatively new Spanish-language Journalism specialization.

Enrollment management/recruitment: Enrollment in the Journalism degree program continues to decline. In 2015, there were 145 student journalism majors. In fall 2021, the number was 119, a drop of 18%. Enrollment in fall 2023 was 103, representing a decline of almost 30% since 2015.

Following the last site team visit, the unit began working more intentionally with college leadership and the university Student Outreach and Recruitment office to attract more students, with a particular focus on community college transfers. The unit provided an impressive list of recruitment activities. These consist of participation in on-campus university recruitment events as well as community college recruitment conferences in the Bay Area. Several journalism

faculty members also have visited targeted high schools. The School indicates that it also has stepped up its social media outreach. The dean of the college indicated that the university has hired a high-level administrator to develop a university-wide strategy for enrollment management that may be useful to the unit.

Student advising: Students receive academic advising during the orientation process when they enter the university and are required to meet with their major advisor to clear them for graduation. They also get annual notices stating they are required to meet with a faculty adviser each year. Many students, however, do not schedule appointments, and there is no penalty for them not doing so or for failing to show up to appointments.

During the last site team visit, a number of upper division students said they had not met with an adviser since their first year and were unaware of the advising requirement. The unit has stepped up its efforts to ensure that students are aware of the benefits of advising so that they will follow through with appointments. It has done so by reinforcing the need for advising during open student forums and through email messaging at the beginning of each semester. The unit also opened an advising office in the building that is staffed by a part-time graduate student. A second part-time graduate student is being added this year; both positions are funded by the department. The goal is to make advising services more visible and more convenient for students.

5. Summary conclusion and recommendation:

While improvements can and should continue to be made, it is clear that the unit now has in place an assessment process that includes gathering data, analyzing it with an eye toward opportunities for improvement, engaging across the School to identify options for change, and implementing changes with the goal of benefiting student learning.

The School has made progress on faculty diversity and has taken steps to raise the profile of student advising. It is working to arrest an ongoing decline in enrollment.

RECOMMENDATION: Re-accreditation