Report of ACEJMC Evaluation

Undergraduate program
2023–2024

Name of Institution: University of Mississippi

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer:

Name of Unit: School of Journalism and New Media

Name and Title of Administrator: Dr. Andrea Hickerson

Date of 2023-2024 Accrediting Visit: October 22 – 25, 2023

Date of the previous accrediting visit: October 30 – November 3, 2016

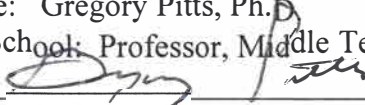Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2023-2024 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair
Name and Title: Gregory Pitts, Ph.D.
Organization/School: Professor, Middle Tennessee State University
Signature _____

Team Member
Name and Title: Janet Rose, Ph.D.
Organization/School: Professor, University of Kansas
Signature _____

Team Member
Name and Title: B. William Silcock, Ph.D.
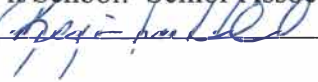Organization/School: Associate Professor Emeritus, Arizona State University
Signature _____

Team Member
Name and Title: Yong Volz, Ph.D.
Organization/School: Associate Professor, University of Missouri
Signature _____

Team Member
Name and Title: Regina Luttrell, Ph.D.
Organization/School: Senior Associate Dean, Syracuse University
Signature _____

PART I: General information

Name of Institution: University of Mississippi

Name of Unit: School of Journalism and New Media

Year of Visit: AY 2023-2024

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
_X_ Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on Colleges
___ Western Association of Schools and Colleges

If the unit seeking accreditation is located outside the United States, provide the name(s) of the appropriate recognition or accreditation entities:

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

___ Private
_X_ 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 of Mississippi was chartered by the Legislature on Feb. 20, 1844, and admitted students in 1848. It first received SACS accreditation on July 1, 1900.

4. Has the journalism/mass communications unit been evaluated previously by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications?

_X_ 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:

Oct. 30-Nov. 2, 2016.

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

1975

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

The mission of the School of Journalism and New Media is to lead and excel in the education of a diverse body of students in journalism and integrated marketing communications. Grounded in truth, freedom of expression, responsibility and integrity, the faculty and staff will:

1.   Prepare students to succeed in an ever-changing, integrated and global media landscape.

2.   Encourage research and creative work to add to the body of knowledge and to serve the journalism and communication professions.

This revised mission was adopted by the SJNM faculty in 2018 and affirmed via survey again in fall 2022.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Number of weeks in a semester: **14**

Number of weeks in summer sessions: **4-8**

Number of weeks in intersessions: **2**

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

_X_Bachelor's degree
_X_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 Arts in Journalism (BAJ)
Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications (BSIMC)

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

Both degrees requite 124 semester hours.

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

Three (3) semester hours.

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge

Degree Programs

B.S. Integrated Marketing Communications	Jason Cain
B.A. Journalism (includes five areas of emphasis)	Mike Tonos

Specializations

Degree program coordinators also manage eight specializations available to students from both degree programs.

Fashion Promotion and Media	Cain/Tonos
Sports Communication and Promotion	Cain/Tonos
Social Media	Cain/Tonos
Public Relations	Cain/Tonos
Visual Design	Cain/Tonos
Media Sales and Management	Cain/Tonos
Health Communication	Cain/Tonos
Magazine Publishing and Management	Cain/Tonos

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

Fall 2022 Data
UM total: 19,869 (undergraduate and graduate students on the Oxford and regional campuses)
UM undergraduates: 17,712

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. Add lines as needed.

Fall 2022 Data

Sequence or Specialty	Semester/AY Undergraduate

Degree Programs

B.S. Integrated Marketing Communications	Fall 2022	1,278
B.A.J. Journalism	Fall 2022	255
Total	Fall 2022	**1,533**

Specializations
(Specializations are not required but students must be enrolled in one of our two degree programs to earn a specialization. These numbers are included in the totals above.)

	Fall 2022
Sports Communication and Promotion	92
Social Media	71
Fashion Promotion and Media	67
Public Relations	61

Visual Design	26
Media Sales and Management	12
Health Communication	7
Magazine Publishing and Management	5

15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.).

The SJNM is diligent when it comes to ensuring all skills courses adhere to ACEJMC standards. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when normal operations were disrupted, the School did seek assurance from ACEJMC that we could exceed limits when absolutely necessary to ensure student progress toward graduation. That is the only time during the cycle in which higher enrollment caps were permitted.

View skills course enrollments – in-person and online – for Spring and Fall 2023.

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

SJNM Estimates for 2023-2024:

Full-time faculty salaries: ~$1,504,749
Staff salaries: ~$441,130
Adjunct salaries: ~$300,000
Total Payroll: $3,099,313 (this is the teaching, staff and adjunct salaries + 38% fringe)

Non Payroll: ~$540,000

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:

~$1,504,749

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.

Full-Time Faculty

<u>**Professors**</u>	
Joe Atkins*	
Dr. Graham Bodie	
Dr. Andrea Hickerson	
Dr. Debora Wenger	
Dr. Kathleen Wickham	
<u>**Associate Professors**</u>	**Instructional Associate Professors**
Dr. Zenebe Beyene	Dr. R.J. Morgan
Dr. Jason Cain**	Emily Bowen-Moore
Dr. Mark K. Dolan	Chris Sparks
Vanessa Gregory	Michael Tonos

Cynthia Joyce Dr. Robert Magee Charles D. Mitchell, J.D. Darren Sanefski Dr. Marquita Smith Alysia Steele Dr. Kristen A. Swain	Debbie Woodrick Hall Dr. John Baker** Evangeline Ivy ** Patricia Overstreet-Miller**
Assistant Professors Dr. Amanda Bradshaw Vanessa Charlot Dr. Chang-Won Choi Michael Fagans Dr. Iveta Imre Dr. Itzhak Mashiah*** Dr. Bitt Moon***	**Instructional Assistant Professors** Dr. Ike Brunner Brad Conaway Bobby D. Steele Jr. Dr. Summer Anne Hill-Vinson

*Retired August 2023
**Rank reflects promotion effective August 2023
***Visiting Professor

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.)

Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty

Spring 2023	Fall 2023
Bramlett, Robert Brady	Bautista, Loidha
Buchanan, Edgar Paris	Bramlett, Robert Brady
Burchfield, Thomas Randall	Brown, Brittanee
Day, William Robert	Day, William Robert
Dowd, James	Dowd, James
Estes, Elizabeth Allison	Frostenson, Roy
Frostenson, Roy	Ginn, Micha
Goodwiller, Stefanie	Goodwiller, Stefanie
Hick, Claire Nelson	Hick, Claire Nelson
Irwin, Dennis	Irwin, Dennis
Ivy, Timothy Allen	Ivy, Timothy Allen
Johnson, Lynette	Johnson, Lynette
Katz, Michael Lawrence	Kellum, Ellen Leslie
Kellum, David W	Kirkland, Logan
Kellum, Ellen Leslie	Knight, Mary
Lewis, Claude Webb	Lewis, Claude Webb
McCoy, Joshua	Magness, Shannon
McGlone, Samuel J.	McCoy, Joshua
Meacham, Ellen	McGlone, Samuel J.
Moore, Dennis	Meacham, Ellen

Newman, Kate Brumbaugh	Pinion, Kelley
Rodgers, Jeffrey Q	Roberts, Larz G.
Rubbert, Janice	Rubbert, Janice
Rucker, Lareeca	Rucker, LaReeca
Russell, Cole	Russell, Cole
Seddon, Kevin John	Senseman, Jared
Senseman, Jared	Smith, Matthew
Street, Robin	Street, Robin
Stude, Tyrone Lee	Stude, Tyrone
West, Rachel Malone	Steube, Christina
White, Yolanda Yvette	

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

2022-23 academic year: **347**

2021-22 academic year: **366**

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

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 School of Journalism and New Media was founded in 2009, continuing a journalism tradition at the university that dates to 1947. When students, faculty or visitors enter Farley Hall, they are immediately greeted with a presentation of the mission statement on the stairway wall.

The mission of the School of Journalism and New Media is to lead and excel in the education of a diverse body of students in journalism and integrated marketing communications. Grounded in truth, freedom of expression, responsibility and integrity, the faculty and staff will:
1.   Prepare students to succeed in an ever-changing, integrated and global media landscape.
2.   Encourage research and creative work to add to the body of knowledge and to serve the journalism and communication professions.

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

Available under School Facts, the mission is prominently displayed.
https://jnm.olemiss.edu/about/school-facts/

The Strategic Plan is located near the bottom of the School Facts page; it is listed as updated in 2018. Reporting measures have been updated.

VISION: The School of Journalism and New Media at the University of Mississippi is a global community of truth seekers and storytellers, dedicated to instilling standards of professional excellence and guiding students in pursuit of meaningful careers.

OUR MISSION: As an academic unit of the University of Mississippi, the School of Journalism and New Media will lead and excel by engaging minds, transforming lives, serving others and encouraging intellectual curiosity grounded in critical thinking.

OUR PRIORITIES
•Attract top talent – both students and faculty, who represent diverse viewpoints and groups;
•Inspire and engage students and the larger communications audience, either in the classroom or with the creative and scholarly work we produce; and
•Cultivate lifelong relationships with graduates and professionals.

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 School indicates it has taken steps to strengthen its strategic planning process with extensive input of faculty. In 2018, the School's strategic plan was updated. A new approach to track progress toward

achieving goals was launched through a Google Docs shared spreadsheet. The plan indicates deadlines are met by responsible parties through submission of reports. The plan identified the three priorities and then objectives, tactics and metrics for assessment. There is evidence in the Strategic Plan Tracker of the challenges the unit faced during COVID-19, where some strategic plan activities could not be accomplished. The Plan Tracker lists multiple examples of actions completed in support of the Strategic Plan and its priorities. The previous site team complimented the strategic plan. Under the current site team, the plan goals were viewed as nebulous. The new dean reports that plans are underway to draft a new strategic plan. Given the timing of her arrival, a series of embarrassing and troubling events, and COVID-19, it is reasonable that the plan has not been updated and appropriate for the new dean to lead faculty in the development of the strategic plan.

The School's strategic plan revision is taking place during the 2023-24 academic year. The University is in the process of building a new strategic plan, "Empower Now: Accelerating Discovery, Growth and Success." In June 2023, School leadership began meeting with University team members assigned to help create the framework for a revised SJNM plan that will, once again, align with the University's efforts. The School plans a series of discussions with stakeholders (alumni, industry leaders, current students) as part of the strategic planning process with a goal of adopting a newly revised plan in Spring 2024. The individual departments will then work on their own strategic plans to match the School's.

(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.
Faculty are highly complimentary of the new dean, including phrases like, "She is a breath of fresh air." "She is transparent in her thoughts and actions." "She engages us in shared governance and is not top down in her thinking." "The new dean has given a clearly defined vision and there's a fair amount of steel in the new dean."

Prior to the dean's arrival, an interim dean served as School administrator for two years following the resignation of the founding dean of the School. The period leading up to the resignation was marked by public disclosures of damaging information and assertions about the School and specific faculty members, most often facilitated by an anonymous group calling itself "Ole Miss Information." and reported on by some media outlets. These anonymous assertions damaged the trust and collegiality relationships among faculty. One faculty member called it an action that betrayed the standards of journalistic practice. COVID-19 meant an end to personal interactions and further challenged the School's recovery.

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 dean of the School of Journalism and New Media reports to the University provost and executive vice chancellor, who reports to the chancellor. The chancellor, who is the institution's chief executive officer, reports to the Board of Trustees of Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. Trustees are appointed to staggered terms by the state's elected governors. The provost and executive vice chancellor is Noel Wilkin. The chancellor is Glenn Boyce.

Summary of administrative duties in the unit:

Andrea Hickerson, dean
The dean was selected through an open and competitive national search, aided by a search firm. She is responsible for overall School administration, financial and personnel management and allocation of resources; liaising with industry and other colleges and universities. The dean works with higher administration; enforces applicable university rules; oversees alumni and other constituent relations; appoints committee members in the School (if not specified in bylaws); appoints faculty and staff to University committees (other than those elected by faculty or appointed by the chancellor); and chairs faculty meetings. The dean holds a faculty appointment as professor.

Debora Wenger, associate dean for academic affairs
The associate dean for academic affairs has primary responsibility for the oversight of curriculum including assessment, accreditation and curricular innovation within and across departments. The AD serves as a primary advocate for diversity measures, is ex officio on the curriculum committee, coordinates faculty and adjunct professional development and onboarding, and provides leadership and tracking of engaged learning activities. The associate dean holds a faculty appointment as professor.

Marquita Smith, associate dean for research and graduate programs
The associate dean of graduate programs and research has primary responsibility for the oversight and daily operations of the graduate program and for promoting and supporting research and creative activity in the School. This AD represents SJNM on the Graduate Council. She holds a faculty appointment as associate professor.

Kareem Russell, assistant dean for student services
The assistant dean for student services is responsible for the overall administration of student advising, degree progress reports and certification and student records; internship management; scholarship administration; recruiting and orientation. This is a staff position.

Department chairs
In spring 2023 the School created a department structure with chairs representing their faculty colleagues to the administration and the administration to their faculty. A national search was underway at the time of the visit to select permanent chairs who will speak for the department (or area) to the school and university community, serving as a channel of communication on program, personnel and budget matters. Chairs are to provide crucial leadership in the pursuit of the University's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Interim chairs are:
Jason Cain, Integrated Marketing Communications
Mike Tonos, Journalism
Graham Bodie, Media and Communication

Staff
The School has 14 full-time staff members (with one open position) to support the programs, faculty and students. Several students also are employed part time in support positions.

Significant accomplishments directly attributable to the new dean include clearer hiring practices and approaches to fill open faculty positions. A more diverse staff is in the dean's suite. Greater community engagement and communication among faculty members has increased. Through discussion initiated by the dean, faculty adopted the book *Trust* by Katherine Hawley as a voluntary School reading for faculty and staff to prompt discussions among employees and to bring the discussion of trust into classroom examples to address the crisis of trust. Some Faculty of Color note the dean and dean's office have

provided strong support of their intellectual freedom. The dean has taken steps to reconnect with alumni and media professionals. The dean is driving the School forward through a new department structure to empower faculty to be accountable to their departments. Not every faculty member is prepared for this change, but a substantial majority of faculty view this as the correct action. Across the University of Mississippi campus, other unit administrators speak highly of the dean and the previous interim dean, who is now the associate dean. Faculty note that healing time from the past events is not uniform. The dean is viewed as moving the program in the right direction but regaining trust among all faculty may never take place.

(c) The unit annually updates its data on the ACEJMC searchable database website (https://lookup.acejmc.org).
The searchable database is up-to-date, including information from 2023.
https://lookup.acejmc.org/overview/?unit=23&comparing=[23]

(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.
The self-study and additional conversations with administrators, chairs, faculty and students suggests the School is regularly analyzing enrollment data. Website data was up-to-date. The website contained information sufficient to answer most student, parent or site team member questions about the program.

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

Bylaws of the School stipulate and describe its mission, purpose and operational structure. The bylaws were last updated in 2021, and the School's reorganization into a department structure requires the School to reconsider them and that work is beginning. The School bylaws suggest shared governance, but some faculty note a previous era of top-down administration. They are supportive of a new era of transparency and openness in communication and decision-making.

Administratively, the School has an executive committee consisting of the dean, any associate or assistant deans, program head(s), the head(s) of the graduate committee(s), the director of the Student Media Center and up to four faculty members – two representing IMC and two representing journalism. When no associate dean or assistant dean is appointed, an additional faculty member will be elected to serve.

The School provides for staff and student involvement in governance by allowing staff and student membership on some committees where they serve as ex officio members. The School has an active Student Ambassadors program that the dean and other School leaders engage regularly for student input on School plans and activities.

(f) The institution and/or the unit defines and uses a process for selecting and evaluating its administrators.
University policy outlines the process for selecting, appointing and evaluating unit administrators. After being appointed, each administrator completes documentation leading to review after four years. The reviews are conducted every fourth year thereafter.

(g) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.
The university website states that "Faculty or staff wishing to submit a complaint should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance or Human Resources." The School reports that informal consultation with an immediate supervisor, or, if the supervisor is implicated in the concern,

the supervisor's supervisor is welcomed and encouraged as a first step. The University also participates in a system-wide portal that facilitates anonymous filing of ethics complaints. Any person – a member of the public, faculty, staff or student – may use this portal. Each ethics complaint is read by a University auditor who is required to investigate and respond to the complaint.

The governance process works, at least partly. As a result of the anonymous attacks mentioned previously, seven people in the School filed a complaint in 2020 alleging a hostile environment created by "attacks against specific tenured and untenured faculty and unfounded claims that faculty governance is broken." This led to an investigation by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance (EORC). The EORC investigation could not identify the source of the harassment and thus identify remediation, however, School leaders used the complaint to develop strategies for improving the climate.

Students have the right to file complaints about the conduct or behavior performed on the part of the institution or by any of its agents. The UMatter: Student Support and Advocacy office maintains the process for review, response and attempted resolution concerning academic, non-academic or general complaints for students. The complaint process encourages the use of an informal resolution process to resolve complaints in addition to the formal resolution process and protocol that may be utilized by students when a complaint is not resolved through the informal process. Students have access to the University M Book, which explains the process for grade appeals. Program directors – now interim chairs – hear initial grade appeals that cannot be resolved at the student-professor level.

SUMMARY:
The School experienced governance, operational and trust failures during the previous seven years but now has a new dean—experiencing her first reaccreditation—who is supported by faculty for her transparency and efforts to re-engage the School's faculty in the educational and collegial mission. Dedicated leadership structure to assist the dean is present. Feelings of distrust remain but most faculty report an improved organizational climate.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

(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.

The School of Journalism and New Media offers two undergraduate degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism (BAJ) and a Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications (BSIMC). Purposefully, the School designed the IMC degree to be a Bachelor of Science because of its alignment with business and to distinguish it from the Bachelor of Arts Journalism degree.

During the site team visit, we learned a third-degree -- Media and Communication -- was being proposed to accompany the newly formed department of Media and Communication. Some faculty see the new degree as an effort to "right size" the school's reputation that we are "not just a skills-based professional school." The school offers a master's graduate program. While not being assessed, students use several 500-level courses to complete their bachelor's. Discussion of a future Ph.D. program is underway. However, only the two degrees active during the self-study period will be discussed.

Both degree programs – the BAJ and BSIMC - require 124 credit hours for graduation, and neither requires more than 36 hours of coursework in the School. The self-study noted that "structure and regular advising reviews" ensure their programs meet the university's liberal arts and sciences general education requirements. One student shared, "Being from Mississippi with such a small lens on certain topics from gender to religion," the available education courses opened their eyes to the world. Another observed, "Being able to have a humanities class doesn't force you to think differently but exposes you to other ways of thinking. IMC and journalism students need to have courses across the university. Humanities and liberal arts are very beneficial to us." A final student response prompted by a discussion about diversity and the curriculum noted, "Humanities courses help make sure all voices are heard."

The School requires students in both programs to complete a minor to ensure a depth of focus in an area outside their major coursework. IMC students are required to minor in business; for Journalism students, the minors vary, with English, history, or a foreign language being the most common minors.

The School offers Honors sections of required courses or electives designed to engage their students and those from other majors. One group of School faculty worked with Honors students from multiple majors to produce an award-winning website on climate change in Mississippi. Thus, the School believes in a broad-based liberal arts education, and its faculty helps contribute to teaching and learning outcomes across the campus.

(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.

Faculty and administrators believe the curriculum is designed to balance skills and conceptual courses effectively. The site team verified this, and students believe it is a hallmark of their experience. One student says, "The entire school is built around connecting IMC and journalism." Both degrees have a healthy balance of conceptual courses and skills-based instruction. The self-study noted, and the site team confirmed, ACEJMC's ten core values and competencies are addressed within the core of each program.

BSIMC Required Core Courses
1) Jour 101 News Media and Audience (3 hours)
2) IMC 104 Intro to IMC (3 hours)
3) IMC 205 Writing for IMC (3 hours)
4) Jour 273 Creative Visual Thinking (3 hours) 5) IMC 304 Account Planning (3 hours)
6) IMC 306 Digital Marketing (3 hours)
7) Jour 369 Media Law and Ethics (3 hours)
8) IMC 390 Advanced Writing for IMC (3 hours)
9) IMC 391 Public Relations (3 hours)
10) IMC 404 IMC Research (3 hours)
11) IMC 455 IMC Campaigns (3 hours)

Required elective hours that must be taken within the degree program. Students choose one course from the following:
1) Bus 271 Business Communication (3 hours)
2) Spch 102 Fundamentals of Public Speaking (3 hours)
3) Spch 105 Business and Professional Speech (3 hours)
4) Jour 330 Media Performance (3 hours)
Choose any 3-hour, 300+ level IMC, Jour, or Mktg elective (except Mktg 351)

Hours required outside of the accredited unit: 18 hours

1)Accy 201 Intro to Accounting Principles I or Accy 202 Intro to Accountng Principles II (3 hours)
2) Econ 202 Principles of Microeconomics or Econ 203 Principles of Macroeconomics (3 hours)
Choose four additional courses from the following:
1) GB 310 Information Technology in Business (3 hours)
2) GB 320 Essentials of Supply Chain Management (3 hours)
3) GB 330 Essentials of Finance (3 hours)
4) GB 350 Essentials of MarkeOng (3 hours)
5) GB 370 Entrepreneurship and Management (3 hours)

BAJ: Required Core Courses

1) Jour 101 News Media and Audience (3 hours)
2) Jour 101 Intro to Multimedia Writing (3 hours)
3) Jour 103 Visual Media Principles (3 hours)
4) Jour 270 Digital Story Production (3 hours)
5) Jour 271 Information Gathering (3 hours)
6) Jour 369 Media Law and Ethics (3 hours)

BAJ: Required Conceptual Courses
Number of hours/units required: 6
1) Jour 310 Social Media in Society* (3 hours)
2) Jour 301 History of Mass Media** (3 hours)
3) Jour 345 Digital Media Diversity (3 hours)
4) Jour 513 Press and the Changing South (3 hours)
5) Jour 575 Mass Media Ethics and Social Issues (3 hours)

BAJ majors may choose from five areas of emphasis. They include Political and Social Justice Reporting, Visual Journalism, TV and Video Storytelling, Multimedia Reporting, and Sports Media.

Each degree provides a selection of eight specializations (9 credit hours). They range from health communications and sports promotion to media sales and fashion.

As the new third department takes shape, a new schoolwide core is planned—faculty committees are already designing an introductory writing course to cover all intended majors. Adding a research course with a heavy data emphasis is the goal of more than one faculty member.

(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 believe their instruction is timely, topical, and current. One student observed, "Bringing in different perspectives, such as with DEI courses in the school, gives us a chance never to stop important conversations."

Through a highly engaged alum group, faculty tap into industry trends. The faculty remains highly concerned that "when you have taught for many years, you are still teaching what the industry wants." The site team confirmed the School listens to the industry. One graduate, an editor of U.S news content for Apple London, was asked, "What do we need to be teaching in the digital space?" The answer was to continue emphasizing the multimedia aspects of all storytelling.

Concerning teaching space, although the faculty may be well-prepared, site team members observed that in one frequently used large lecture hall, students frequently engage in various activities on their computers, such as messaging friends, browsing different websites, and watching videos. This is not uncommon elsewhere. The site team members recognize the challenges of some of the large lecture rooms' construction and design, but this situation affects student attentiveness and active participation. In smaller lab classrooms, faculty were observed finding various creative ways to keep the students focused and engaged.

(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.

Professional connections are embedded in the DNA of the faculty teaching at SJNM. Whether adjuncts working professionally or tenured senior faculty, there is a great sense of dedication to presenting students with a vibrant, fresh curriculum influenced by the professions. Hiring managers from top firms such as Gray Television, Nexstar Media Group, and other news outlets, as well as FedEx, BBDO, and other IMC firms, are featured at career fairs. Yet, not only the students benefit. Time is made available for faculty to interact with the cross array of professionals to discuss trends and tweak lectures.

BAJ (Bachelor of Journalism)

Grappling with contemporary journalism issues, the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics located in the School provides faculty with a first-hand opportunity to see what news professionals face. Recent programs included a panel of Black female newspaper editors discussing diversity and a Pro Publica reporter reviewing digital threats to democracy.

BSIMC (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications)

The School launched IMC Connect! in 2022, bringing campus communications officers from Home Depot, Carnival Cruise Lines, and Chick-fil-A. They repeated the two-day opportunity for students and their faculty in 2023 featuring Amazon, Boeing and UPS and will again in 2024.

Both students and campus colleagues have consistently emphasized the vital significance of the IMC program. Their shared recognition underscores the program's valuable role within the academic

community. During the student listening session, all students unanimously praised the exceptional commitment of the faculty. They remarked on the faculty's unwavering dedication to providing top-tier educational experiences, surpassing their initial expectations. One student said, "There is no way I could have the opportunities I have without my faculty."

Several students said that a notable aspect of the IMC program is the "Area of Focus Fridays," where professionals visit every Friday to discuss valuable career insights and opportunities.

(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 on online, should not exceed 20-1.

All skills classes met the expectations of 20 students or fewer.

(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.

An alumnus who has been "out of the program as long as she was in it" contacted by email spoke of the benefit of her internship. "My real-life experience with the Student Media Center and my internship, coupled with my classes, prepared me well. Without the internships and extra work that I did, the degree would have been less effective, though."

A robust internship program opens the doors to over 100 internship opportunities per year for students. They learn about these opportunities in a weekly email, which is available for either the BAJ or BSIMC. Students may earn three hours of credit. Dual internship supervision ensures students have "meaningful opportunities to do professional-level journalism or IMC-related work." One supervisor is an academic advisor who provides the experience that complements the curriculum. The professional supervisor at the internship completes an internship evaluation form. Oversight for the internship experience from enrollment to assessment is shared between an assistant dean for student services and an academic advisor.

An internship is not required to graduate. Some students sign up independent of credit to avoid having to complete a report if taken for credit. Alumni indicate the internship experience's true value and are often eager to help with intern placements.

SUMMARY:
A dynamic curriculum is ever-evolving at the school. The curriculum, courses and faculty make a great effort to ensure what is taught is timely, robust and relevant.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

(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 currently has two written assessment plans, one for the BAJ degree (BAJ2021-2023 Plan) and one for the BSIMC (IMC BS 2023-2025 Plan) degree. A new BAJ plan for the 2024-2026 cycle is due in February. The School has had assessment plans in place continuously for both degree programs since 2016, after the last ACEJMC site team report. Since the last site team visit, the School addressed the need articulated by the team to develop an IMC assessment plan including measurements of learning outcomes and inclusion of ACEJMC standards. The School developed an IMC assessment plan and has since revised it including for the current assessment cycle.

Both plans are in the process of revision based on data from earlier assessment plans. The School is diligent about revising assessment plans when needed since both the university and the School maintain a 2-year assessment cycle including incorporating revisions or changes to assessment plans. Plans are implemented on a staggered cycle; revisions are incorporated into this cycle.

The School has a proprietary set of 12 "Criterion of Excellence" relating to internships. One of the 12 standards specifically addresses the effective use of technology and software. This series of assessment questions is a component in BAJ and the BSIMC assessments. The School's emphasis on practical skills is reflected both in the curriculum and assessment. Its reliance on and use of multiple levels of teaching instructors including outside working professionals contributes to the relevancy of assessment and resulting curriculum input.

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

The School's assessment plans are accessible on its website.

(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.)

Assessment plans and direct and indirect assessment instruments incorporate and reflect ACEJMC Values and Competencies. The School participates in mandatory 2-year cycle university assessment incorporating coordinated ACEJMC Values and Competencies. University areas of assessment for the School's journalism program include ethical decision making, media law concepts, diversity principles and multimedia production. University areas of assessment for the School's IMC program include campaign elements, promotion copywriting, key concepts and professional preparation.

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

The School's two degree assessment plans use both direct and indirect measures of student learning.

Examples of direct measures for journalism include pre- and post-tests in law and ethics working from entry level to upper-level courses to assess progress across the curriculum. Direct measures include course rubrics and surveys measuring student learning and competencies within specific courses such as a multimedia project rubric. Indirect measures for journalism include competition submissions and

awards and external publications of student work, university graduating student surveys, and student comments on school surveys.

Direct IMC measures include pre- and post-tests of key concepts measuring established "MarCom matrix" areas and ACEJMC values and competencies areas. IMC direct measures include capstone campaign assignments to assess key concepts and professional preparation including a rubric for campaign evaluation. Direct measures for both degree programs include an internship evaluation of student performance and internship supervisor comments. Indirect measures for IMC include student comments on school surveys and university graduating senior surveys. Indirect measures for both programs include "Majors" surveys to explore student satisfaction and a COVID learning experience surveys.

(d) At least one direct and/or indirect measure should include journalism and mass communication professionals engaged in assessment data collection.
The School incorporates journalism and mass communication professionals in data collection for assessment. Internship supervisors, working professionals and alumni participate in assessment measures.

The School hopes to strengthen its use of professional review of IMC student work through formal portfolio reviews of student work. It is exploring adding professional reviews of journalism final projects such as inviting a news director to view final projects and complete an evaluation rubric.

(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" are evident.
There are multiple examples of "closing the loop" throughout the School's assessment data including in the areas of critical thinking, writing instruction, student research skills and numeracy. For example, recent assessment showed that journalism students did not meet criteria for understanding "news worthiness." Review of assessment data and consequent discussions led instructors to increase the amount of time spent on newsworthiness in classes and coursework. This led to the faculty developing more specific definitions of newsworthiness for both students and instructors to develop stronger, shared definitions of the concept.

Assessment data for IMC writing courses led to discussions regarding a lack of differentiation between lower- and upper-level writing class expectations and assignments. Assessment identified overlaps in courses and gaps, aiding in the exploration and identification of useful versus redundant repetition across courses with the goal of finding a balance between students feeling sufficiently practiced and not learning new skills or concepts across the coursework arc.

One key learning from the School's recent IMC assessments is that in spite of proscriptive assessment measures for diversity at both the School and university level, student multi-cultural competencies are low. As one faculty member said: "It would be possible to make one's way through the IMC program without getting a strong background in multi-cultural or diversity. We were one of the first schools in the country to require a diversity course, but options for diversity courses don't always focus on multi-cultural competencies." Reasons for this include multiple instructors and multiple levels of instructors not coordinating efforts to make sure "every student receives solid instruction in communicating with diverse audiences." The university approved additional revisions to the 2023-2025 IMC plan to assess multi-cultural communication competency.

[BAJ Assessment Plan](#)
[BSIMC Assessment Plan](#)

SUMMARY:

The School has comprehensive assessment plans for both the BAJ and the BSIMC degrees. Advances in IMC assessment have added necessary assessment focus and rigor to strengthen IMC assessment, an area previously identified as weaknesses by the previous ACEJMC site team. The School's creation of two departments associated with the existing degrees and now a third department and another potential degree, may lead to assessment planning and implementation changes. Expectations are for the new system to strengthen input regarding assessment measures and procedures.

It may be worth noting that the university mandates comprehensive and routine assessments. Not all of these assessments coordinate with ACEJMC assessment measures although the School has worked to add some measurements into university assessments. In general, both the university and the School may be saturated in data but challenged to produce deep, meaningful discovery.

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 School's current diversity plan, "Equity in Action Plan" (EAP), w as initially developed as part of the University's "Pathways to Equity" initiative, which began in 2019. It was adopted in 2021 and updated by the School's DEI Committee in Spring, 2023. The full plan is posted on the University's Diversity and Community Engagement website. It is linked on the School's "About Our School" webpage.

The plan is designed to guide the School's diversity and inclusion efforts, emphasizing "creating a supportive environment for a diverse faculty and student body" and it calls for diversity to be ingrained in teaching and learning. It serves as "a living document as our understanding of what it means to be inclusive, equitable, and diverse continues to evolve."

The definition of diversity is included in the introduction of the document, "Message from Dean," and is used as a statement in the course syllabi: "The School is committed to diversity in the classroom, in its publications, personnel and in its various organizations and components. Faculty and staff recognize that the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of their colleagues and students are best served through respect toward gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture and other personal characteristics. In addition, the School is committed to taking a leadership position that calls for promoting a commitment to diversity in and out of the classroom and in the practice of journalism and integrated marketing communications."

Aligning with the University of Mississippi's DEI Strategic plan and the key performance indicators specified in ACEJMC's Standard 4, five premises are identified in the school's EAP: 1) inclusive campus climate, 2) student recruitment and retention, 3) faculty and staff recruitment and retention, 4) curriculum, 5) research and scholarship. Specific strategies and actions are identified in the policy for areas that need to be improved. Multiple metrics are included in the school's plan that is evaluated and reported annually by the School's DEI Committee, which has made adjustments and additional recommendations. The plan is detailed, thoughtful, and overall clear. It includes inspirational quotes from Maya Angelou, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Susan Hockfield, Albert Einstein, Henry Rosevsky and Verna Myers.

The self-study provides a history of the development of the School's plan in response to a series of incidents and controversies in the last few years. For example, following a controversy that resulted in the renaming of the School, the School formed the Common Ground Committee, which made several key recommendations including to continue training and awareness efforts with administration, faculty and students where the training is centered on race, bias, diversity, equity and inclusion. The School's DEI Committee is charged with collecting and analyzing data to assess progress and make recommendations towards DEI goals on a yearly basis.

(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 School takes two different approaches to fulfill the commitment to DEI through curriculum. The first approach is to require all students to take a three-credit hour course that is dedicated to addressing various DEI issues to enhance students' cultural competency. This course is in addition to any courses used to fulfill the humanities requirements. Students may choose from courses offered through the School, including Jour 345 Digital Media Diversity and Jour 513 Press and the Changing South, or courses offered through other units including any African American Studies, Gender Studies, Religion, or Southern Studies courses as well as several designated courses in Anthropology and Sociology. Also allowed are three credit hours from an approved study aboard experience, which aims to encourage students to be exposed to global perspectives and learn about other cultures.

The second approach is to embed instruction about DEI content, perspectives, issues across curricula, including both required courses and selective courses. For example, students shared that Jour 353 Gender and Sexuality in the Media helped them understand the LGBTQ+ history and enable them to strengthen their critical analytical skills in discussing the role played by media in representing the community. Similarly, in Jour 375 Photojournalism, an instructor requires students to create an in-depth visual analysis of race, mental health, LGBTQIA+ and socio-economic issues. In IMC 404 Research Methods, a required course, students receive IRB training and learn about the importance of inclusive language on questionnaires and recruiting diverse cohorts.

Students told the accreditation team that diversity issues are regularly addressed and discussed through lectures, class discussions, and assignments. They are exposed to authors of diverse backgrounds and taught to be socially responsible, and to include diverse voices in their work. Interviews with faculty members demonstrate their commitments and intentional efforts to include diversity in their course design and classroom teaching, though their understanding and emphasis of diversity varies. A spot check of fall 2023 syllabi shows the inclusion of a university standard diversity statement, a university policy of accommodation for students with disability and a School-adopted diversity statement affirming its commitment to diversity. Some syllabi have additional language added by individual instructors. In addition, the School has made intentional efforts to bring guest speakers of various backgrounds to their classrooms and events (e.g., IMC Connect! Conference, events organized by the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics) in hopes of bringing diversity awareness, experiences and perspectives to the students.

(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 professional staff who are from demographics that are historically, domestically marginalized.

Since the last site team review, the school has made progress in recruiting and hiring full-time faculty from historically marginalized groups. In 2015-16, there were three Black faculty (11%). In Fall 2016, with additional hires, there were five Black faculty and one Asian faculty. The percentage was doubled to 24% in 2022-23, with six Black faculty, and 2 Asian faculty (including three non-US residents). One of the Black female faculty members was recently promoted to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. There are no Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians/Alaskan natives on the faculty. The percent of women faculty was decreased from 60% in 2015-16 to 51% in 2022-23, but still exceeds the university-wide figures of 47.2% female faculty.

Among the adjunct/part time faculty, there are only 3 Black faculty compared with 31 White faculty. Among the 14 full-time staff members, 50% are Black staff, including one newly hired Black male staff member serving as Assistant Dean for Student Services and one serving as the Director of the Student Media.

The School has made intentional and effective efforts to attract and recruit diverse faculty. For full-time faculty searches, committee members complete mandatory training offered through the university. Position postings include inclusive language and confirmation of DEI values and are widely advertised in diversity-related publications and websites. Based on the self-study, all search committees include women and minorities. For recruiting adjunct/part time faculty, the School has developed several strategies as an effort to increase the percentage of minority and female professionals. The DEI committee recently recommended and included in the updated EAP that all incoming staff and faculty will be assigned a mentor as part of the onboarding process and to ensure that they are supported.

The School has made an effort to enhance faculty members' commitment and understanding of DEI objectives by organizing webinars and encouraging faculty to participate in professional development opportunities on DEI topics. In 2021-2022, the School partnered with Prototype Entities for equity education instruction through four diversity and inclusion training sessions. In faculty interviews, some faculty of color acknowledged a sense of positivity to see their colleagues participate in campus-wide training and discussion sessions and to make intentional efforts to embed diversity in their courses and events.

(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.
Based on the self-study report, of the undergraduate student population, 75.6% is female (compared with the university figure of 58%). On race and ethnicity, 15.3% are minority students (compared with 21.7% at the university level). To break down by program, 24.4% of the students in the journalism program are minority while only 13.2% of the students in IMC program are minority. Notably, Black students account for 7.1% in the School, compared with 12.5% at the university level.

The School is keenly aware of the lack of Black and other minority students. In the self-study, the School identifies this as one of the two overall weaknesses. The School's DEI Committee makes increasing enrollment of minority students one of the top priorities. The lack of diversity in the student body is noticed, identified and discussed during faculty interviews. Reasons provided during faculty interviews include the 5 competing HBCUs in Mississippi, community colleges and other public universities in Mississippi and nearby states, as well as how IMC has not been recognized as a viable career pathway for students from historically underserved communities.

The School has taken some steps to increase minority representation within the student population. This includes revising recruitment materials to communicate the School's commitment to diversity and inclusion, working with the university's admission team to identify minority-serving high schools in the states that serve as primary feeders for the School, maintaining and strengthening relationships with high school counselors, recruiting at JEA and NSPA joint conferences, among many other efforts. The Mississippi Scholastic Press Association provides the School with opportunities to connect with diverse students within the state.

The various efforts resulted in progress in the last three years in minority recruitment. Based on the data provided in the self-report, the minority student application and admission increased 24.7% from 2022 to 2023, and from 102 in Fall, 2019 to 187 in Fall 2023. Retention rates for minority students are higher than the average student population retention in both journalism and IMC programs.

Eight month ago, the School hired a Black professional as the new assistant dean for student services, who has connected the School to the TRIO programs. He also chairs the recruitment committee and is spearheading several new initiatives to address the challenges, such as creating a more coherent message in all the recruiting efforts, adding a tutoring program to help students who are at risk of failing to stay on track, and actively contacting and visiting targeted high schools.

(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.

During the site team tour, the team observed the physical design features and aesthetic decoration of the facilities (e.g., the student work gallery, the School's mission statement painted on the wall) align with and reinforce the School's commitment to DEI. Based on the self-study, the University of Mississippi campus is 100% compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The School has made improvement in making the entrance and exits in Farley Hall more accessible to people with mobility needs.

Students in the interviews did not express any concerns about the climate in the School. Many of them were not keenly aware of the series of events that occurred in 2018 and 2020 and how it might have impacted the School. For multiple faculty members the events leading to a betrayal of trust will not be overcome too soon, causing them to question the actions and climate in the School. The timeline for recovery will vary among faculty. During the faculty interviews when asked about the current climate at the School, some faculty members noted that the School has "come a long way," while others described it as "we haven't even started the journey." They expressed sentiment ranging from "we have moved on," "we are moving forward," to "we still have cleanup to do," "we are still healing from the wounds" and "it still hurts." Most faculty did acknowledge that they have seen a "cultural shift" toward healing and progress under the new leadership in the last year. Some faculty described the current culture as "tolerant" and felt "optimistic" about the future of the School in deepening the DEI commitment.

SUMMARY:

The school's leadership and faculty are highly invested in promoting DEI goals through their teaching and service. Students seem to value the importance of diversity in their work. Considering the series of events that occurred during the past three years and COVID-19 pushing faculty off campus and therefore unable to address the issues, the School has accomplished much but additional time is needed to address the trust issues among faculty. This absence of trust sentiment is acutely felt by faculty of color.

With Provost and campus support and the strong leadership exhibited in the new dean and her team, the School is on the trajectory to enhance its DEI goals.

COMPLIANCE

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

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

Academic year: 2022 – 2023 Full-time faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African-American	4	12	2	6
White	12	36	13	39
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0	0	0
Asian*	1	3	1	3
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

*A US non-resident.

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

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African-American	2	6	1	3
White	12	36	19	57
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.

Curricula/Oversight of Courses:

According to the self-study, "practitioner input informs curriculum revisions as well as course updates."

To maintain consistent learning objectives and instructional quality in courses that regularly have multiple sections, the School employs various strategies. For example, course coordinators have been designated for classes such as Jour 273 and IMC 455. Coordinators convene meetings with faculty teaching these courses and assist in onboarding new instructors. Standard practices involve implementing uniform assignments, classroom activities, final projects, assessment guidelines, and teaching methods. Whenever possible, learning objectives and syllabus content are standardized.

Interim department chairs (formerly program coordinators) act as course leads who oversee the implementation of a course, assess syllabi for multi-section courses, and assist new instructors when just beginning to teach. Program leaders periodically examine grade distributions and student evaluations of teaching to identify any unusual trends among multi-section offerings.

Research/Creative/Service:

Faculty members at the professorial rank are hired through national searches and are initially assigned a 3-3 teaching load, with 10 hours out of a 40-hour week allocated for research, creative work, and service. This teaching load is often reduced to a 3-2 load to accommodate research and creative work. Newly hired, tenure-track faculty usually start with a 2-2 load in their first year. Promotion to associate professor and tenure are typically granted after five years in rank, with a dossier reviewed by the Promotion and Tenure Committee. External reviewers and various approvals are involved in the process. The University has a "distinguished professor" designation, and faculty members have ongoing points of contact throughout the tenure-track period.

Faculty members in professor ranks are expected to excel in teaching, research or creative work, and service, with proportions determined annually. The School's Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure allow flexibility in requirements, with teaching, research/creative work, and service categories organized as such:
• Teaching: 30-50%
• Research or creative and professional activity: 30-50%
• Service: 10-20%

The self-study reports this model attempts to provide flexibility while guaranteeing that all tenured and tenure-track faculty actively participate in each category.

(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.
Faculty members have two main avenues for obtaining funding for professional development, including travel expenses. Within the School, they can request $3,000 annually for travel and professional development purposes, which has been used for conference participation, joining professional organizations, multimedia training, and creative and scholarly work. The University's Office of Research

and Sponsored Programs offers travel grants of up to $700 (domestic) or $1,200 (international) to tenure-track faculty to support research, scholarship, and creative achievement-related trips.

The School informs faculty about other University-sponsored grant funding opportunities, such as the Diversity Incentive Grant for DEI work and Faculty SEED Grants for writing and teaching projects. During the recent reaccreditation cycle, one Black female faculty member received grants from both programs. In the same period, nine women in the School achieved promotions, including three to associate professor, one to professor, and five from instructional assistant professor to instructional associate professor. Since the last review period, one Black male faculty member was promoted and tenured to associate professor. Furthermore, one white female and one Black female were both promoted to the roles of associate dean from their previous positions as assistant dean.

(c) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity. Expectations for promotion and tenure are clear.
Within the School, there are two primary categories of full-time faculty: Professorial (comprising tenured/tenure-track positions) and Instructional faculty. Additionally, the School maintains a group of Adjunct faculty members.

All faculty are required to submit an Annual Faculty Activity Report.

Professorial (regular faculty): In tenurable ranks, the standard procedure begins with an appointment as an assistant professor. Typically, upon receiving tenure, there is often a promotion, although not mandatory, to the rank of associate professor. Advancement to the rank of professor is usually the final stage, but the University may selectively confer titles such as distinguished professor and professor emeritus. Deviations from the usual processes, like a shortened tenure period, are infrequent but can be considered under special circumstances. To achieve promotion from associate professor to professor, a five-year period in rank is typically required. For tenure and the initial promotion to associate professor, a comprehensive dossier is prepared and submitted to the School's Committee on Promotion and Tenure. This dossier includes assessments from four external reviewers, with two chosen by the candidate and two by the dean. The School committee reviews the dossier and external evaluations, providing a recommendation to the dean. Further approvals are necessary from the dean of the Graduate School, the University's provost, and the chancellor. Until 2022, the Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning also granted approval, but they have since delegated this authority to each university's chief administrator. Further, the areas of research and creative achievements, teaching, and service are outlined in the University's Tenure and Policy Guidelines for tenure track and non-tenured faculty.

Instructional (full-time support faculty): Instructional faculty members at this institution hold positions acquired through searches and typically manage a 4-4 teaching load. There are three ranks within this category: Instructional Assistant Professor, Instructional Associate Professor, and Instructional Professor. These faculty members have their classes observed annually by external specialists, who provide written evaluations and engage in discussions. Annual Faculty Activity Reports are mandatory for instructional faculty, with previous reviews conducted by program administrators and the dean. Instructor promotions adhere to clear guidelines, necessitating at least five years (10 full semesters) of service before becoming eligible. The promotion dossier resembles a tenure dossier but omits research, creative, and professional components (though they can be added if desired), and it undergoes evaluation by higher-ranking instructional faculty and tenured professors, who then submit their recommendations to the dean. During the 2022-2023 academic year, the School's Committee on Promotion and Tenure supervised the review process, involving various faculty members at higher ranks.

Adjuncts (part time support faculty): Adjunct faculty are required to submit annual Faculty Activity Reports. In the past, adjunct faculty have submitted these reports inconsistently, but now the Associate

Dean for Academic Affairs has been assigned the responsibility of ensuring greater consistency in this process. Program administrators also review these reports and provide feedback before they are finalized. There is no obligation or anticipation for research, creative endeavors, or professional service for adjunct faculty.

(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.
To document their teaching, scholarly or professional endeavors, and service activities from the previous calendar year, faculty members use a template provided by the University every January which outlines past successes and their goals for the coming year.

It's clear that over the past six years research, creative, and professional activity has been a priority. For example, since the last review, external grants increased from 3 to 29 almost a 1,000% increase. Faculty members won 58 awards and honors, wrote 7 scholarly books, 6 textbooks, edited a total of 5 books, authored 24 book chapters, 95 refereed journal papers, 63 refereed conference papers, 81 non-refereed publications and 43 non-juried creative works.

One faculty member attributes this growth to the support of the Dean and a general culture shift with regard to the School's commitment to research and scholarly endeavors as well as helping maintain the University's R1 status. The School initiated a research committee, offering seed grants, startup packages, educational resources concerning grant acquisition, and other similar support.

(e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship, the quality of education and the scholarly contributions the unit provides.
The faculty and School are highly regarded on campus for their strong commitment to University citizenship. They are recognized for actively participating in university activities and for their dedication to maintaining a culture of academic excellence and innovation. Their commitment to University citizenship serves as a role model for others and contributes to a thriving academic environment.

With that being said, according to some faculty as well as students, there has been a prevailing perception across campus that the School and the IMC program are often regarded as "easy" or less academically rigorous compared to other departments. It's important to address this image issue as it doesn't accurately reflect the true caliber of education and the demanding coursework that students in the program undergo. Faculty noted that the creation of the three departments may assist with this perception.

In terms of scholarly contributions, although the university primarily focuses on teaching, the School has established a noteworthy record of scholarly output. Over the past few years, the School has placed a strong emphasis on research and scholarly productivity, earning recognition for its increasing contributions to the academic community.

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				Totals
		Full Professors (5)	Associate Professors (10)	Assistant Professors (6)	Other Faculty** (12)	(33)
Awards and Honors	58	11	22	12	3	58
Grants Received Internal	14		12	2		14
Grants Received External	29	12	8	2	7	29
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	6	5	1		1	7
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	4	1	3	1	1	6
Books Edited	5	3	2			5
Book Chapters	24	9	10	2	3	24
Monographs	2		2			2
Articles in Refereed Journals	89	40	30	17	8	95
Refereed Conference Papers	55	16	16	26	5	63
Invited Academic Papers			10	5		15
Encyclopedia Entries	6	4	2			6
Book Reviews	2		2			2
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	81	26	35		20	81
Juried Creative Works						
Non-juried Creative Works	43	3	7	32	1	43
Other (please specify)						

SUMMARY:

Representatives of several schools, departments, and offices of the university spoke highly of the school's students and its dean. A substantial majority of faculty and staff have noted the change in the School climate since Dean Hickerson has arrived. The dean's leadership was recognized as a driving force behind the positive changes within the School. They praised her commitment to fostering an inclusive and innovative learning environment, as well as her efforts to strengthen academic programs and foster collaboration between different departments and various faculty across the School.

Faculty across the School noted the School's challenges but reported that the school was on an upward trajectory. While acknowledging the hurdles faced by the school in recent years, these representatives expressed optimism and a shared vision for the future. They cited ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing research opportunities, improving infrastructure, and expanding partnerships with local industries. The testimonies of various university stakeholders underscored the School's resilience and potential for growth.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study
Since the last site visit, the School has identified Student Services as one of the School's key areas of focus for growth to elevate the School's mission for student services. The School hired a new assistant dean of student services to lead and grow the School's services to students. The assistant dean and the School are now in the process of developing a comprehensive student services plan to include both career services and advising.

The School has 49 scholarship endowment accounts held at the University of Mississippi Foundation. It awarded 49 scholarships in 2020-2021 and awarded 58 scholarships in 2021-2022.

(b) Professional advisers, and faculty where appropriate, provide students with academic and career advice.
The School hired a full-time professional advising staff in 2021 for the first time. Turnover in advising staff created a situation where advisors worked with 600 or more students in a semester. (New hires in late October brought the advising staff back to three.)

(c) The unit keeps students informed about its policies, activities and requirements.
At the time of this team's site visit, faculty were assisting in advising. Students are aware of advising needs and voiced their concerns about advising during site team student meetings. Currently, with faculty serving in the role of advisors, students meet with faculty for both coursework progress toward their degrees and for career advice. Students may review individual degree audits through their "myOleMiss" portal to assist with what some term "self-advising" and pathways to degree completion.

(d) The unit and institution provide extra-curricular activities and opportunities relevant to the curriculum and that help develop the students' professional and intellectual abilities and interests.
The primary hub of student extracurricular activities is the S. Gale Denley Student Media Center (SMC). The center houses *The Daily Mississippian*, "NewsWatch," a daily news broadcast, Rebel Radio, one of the few commercially licensed stations operating from a college campus, and the "Ole Miss Yearbook," and plans to introduce a podcast studio. The SMC hub houses support staff for student media production including advertising and social media teams.

The SMC is not exclusive to the School. Students throughout the university may apply for positions and volunteer for involvement in the SMC's media services. The SMC has accountability to the School, but content selection and distribution is determined by the students.

While the self-study mentions "Hotty Toddy News" as an immersion laboratory in new media, at the time of the team's site visit, the School was in the process of transitioning the site back to the creator.

The School has active student chapters in the American Advertising Federation/Ole Miss Ad Club, the National Student Advertising Competition, the American Marketing Association, the Society of News Design, the Public Relations Association of Mississippi, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the Public Relations Student Society of America. Each of the organizations has a faculty advisor. The organizations meet with guest speakers, encourage peer sharing, participate in competitions and travel to regional and national events.

The School's Ambassadors Program is a student organization composed of journalism and IMC students who represent the School through recruitment, promotion, events and engagement. In addition, the School's Talbert Fellows program provides financial and professional benefits for a select group of students who receive financial assistance in addition to scholarships.

Other extra-curricular activities include the "Lens Collective," a multimedia storytelling workshop, "Square Magazine," a student-run fashion magazine, study abroad experiences and faculty-led enrichment such as immersive educational experiences in the Mississippi Delta.

(e) The unit uses retention and graduation data to improve student services, such as advising, and to reduce barriers to student success.
The School currently is combining advising and student services assessment into one annual student services assessment. The School collects and responds to feedback from formal and informal measurements to increase the reach and effectiveness of student services. The School uses retention and graduation data to inform decisions regarding student services. This data led to the current student services restructuring and enhancements now in progress.

SUMMARY:

The School's commitment to students is evident in its newly invigorated focus and investment in students services. Though overstretched at the time of this writing, the School's faculty also are an important, strong and student-centered pillar of the School's overall strength.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

(a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.

The annual budget for 2009-2010 (the first fiscal year of the last ACEJMC review period) was $2,211,287. It was $5,967,027 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Budget Item	2020- 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023
Administrative salaries	363,095	121,569	419,789
Teaching salaries (full-time)	3,252,285	3,013,462	3,372,472
Teaching salaries (part time/adjunct)	540,153	648,235	560,689
Teaching assistants/Grad students	176,333	170,535	162,109
Staff salaries	780,836	600,144	831,918
Student workers	80,752	139,067	165,817
Equipment	10,419	148,823	130,595
Equipment maintenance	15,687	9,393	17,204
Supplies	11,076	26,756	31,501
Library resources	0	0	0
Databases, online information services	619	6,066	7,956
Travel	5,488	67,605	162,521
Communication and utilities	37,243	36,038	31,501
Printing and copying	73,144	82,56	172,954
Total Annual Budget	**5,347,134**	**5,070,258**	**5,967,027**

The School previously existed as a named unit. When the donor's name and accompanying endowment was removed, the provost reported to the site team that the provost's office provided unit funding to replace the lost endowment funds.

(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.

Resources from the institution suggest the School is funded fairly and can accomplish its mission. The self-study reports the University of Mississippi underfunds all academic areas, when compared with the Southeastern University Group (a collection of peer institutions). But the School's funding per student credit hour has grown steadily and while it trails the SUG group, for 2020-2021 year (the most recent year for which data are available), the average trails by only -$6/credit hour.

The self-study concludes this may be pandemic-related but is not indicative of a trend about which the School has been made aware.

For units at the University of Mississippi, the differentials for the 2020-2021 year were:

		2020-2021 SUG	**2020-2021 University of Mississippi**
-$62	Accountancy	$269	$207
-$176	Applied Sciences	$380	$204
-$70	Business	$257	$187
-$29	Education	$394	$365
-$7	Engineering	$456	$449
-$3	Liberal Arts	$286	$283
-$6	Journalism	$207	$201

Budget preparations involve conferences between the dean and the provost about new or specific program needs or changes. Faculty are invited to advise the dean as to needs, which the dean considers in the planning process. Separately, the School develops another budget in consultation with directors and staff of the University of Mississippi Foundation and based on their revenue projections, calculated from a floating average return on endowment investment. Although sometimes expended for general operational expenses, the endowment funds are purposed to special projects, special programs and non-routine expenses.

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

The home of the School is Farley Hall, built in 1929 and home to the journalism program since 1975. The building has had expansions and remodeling. The three-level building houses administrators and staff, most faculty, multiple classrooms and labs and an auditorium. The Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics is an annex to Farley. Farley Hall includes classrooms in the basement and upper floors but the School has outgrown the space. A small number of faculty share offices in Farley. Some faculty offices are in another campus building; some faculty feel isolated but this condition of satellite offices for faculty appears to be common at the university. These offices are a 15-minute walk from Farley Hall. Some classes are taught in other buildings. The Student Media Center is on the main level of Bishop Hall. The remoteness of Student Media from Farley was cited as less than desirable in the last reaccreditation report, but no alternative has been found. Student Media is a separate unit from the School (also a 15-minute walk) but there are efforts to coordinate content production in classes with student media publications or broadcast opportunities.

Campus building completions for other units may address some office and teaching needs. The provost expects some office and teaching help within 2 – 3 years and potentially a building space increase within 8 – 10 years.

(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.

The University of Mississippi uses the software Cheqroom to enable student access to equipment for students taking SJNM courses. The system identifies 849 items that are available; these include 47 content creation kits that include an HD camera, tripod, digital microphone, light source and protective cases. Both students and faculty note there are no problems getting gear to support projects. There are multiple computer labs with Farley Hall for class use and computer stations in the building for outside of class use.

SUMMARY:

Rapid growth in the Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications degree program has changed the direction of the School and moderated past enrollment drops but means that Farley Hall is stretched to teaching capacity and faculty use. It is an exceptional space and is complemented by the Overby Center. The School maintains a range of digital technology items that can be checked out to support student projects.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

Hiring a full-time communications specialist and a full-time development officer demonstrates the School's commitment to alumni engagement and the university's commitment to the school. Their efforts will supplement an already robust engagement program, which includes social media, a successful monthly e-newsletter, an annual magazine, and tapping into alumni for events like the IMC Connect! and the yearly Mississippi Broadcasters campus visit. Football weekends are a vital engagement opportunity that opens doors for alumni to mingle with current students and faculty. The self-study notes, "a large tent outside Farley Hall serves as a gathering spot for students, faculty, alumni, and other friends of the program."

Alumni feel the school has struck the right balance. "They keep alumni engaged without overwhelming us." Faculty and administrators spoke of wanting to become even more strategic and purpose-driven with alumni engagement. "It happens more organically than it should."

In the past, two of the dean's advisory groups - an Alumni Board and a Board of Visitors – have helped that office ensure relevance and formal connections to the industry. These models are being revised with a new dean and a new development officer dedicated to the School.

(b) The unit <u>provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice</u> through such activities as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance, and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.

Students, faculty, and the public benefit tremendously from the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics being located at the School. To the visitor, it joins seamlessly to Farley Hall. This part of the School's physical building includes a state-of-the-art auditorium that seats 200, with offices for the Overby Fellows and space that the School utilizes for board meetings and events. Displays that once were in the Newseum in Washington, DC, showcasing journalism history grace the walls and inspire students. The Overby Center has become a showcase to discuss best practices in worldwide journalism and media communications – a place to address various issues of public consequence and concern. Its mission and activities provide a sense of pride to the students, faculty, and central administration.

(c) The unit contributes to its communities through unit-based service projects and events, service learning of its students, and civic engagement of its faculty.

The faculty is highly involved in various campus and community activities. One student volunteered to help co-design a new mural in a central stairwell in the building. Another volunteered as the PR chair of the local Vietnamese-American Association.

(d) The unit supports scholastic journalism.

The School is home to the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association (MSPA), one of the largest in the country, with more than 40 member high schools. More than 800 students attend their fall and spring conventions. One first-generation student said the MSPA helped her realize my college dream. "It made it possible for me to be here."

SUMMARY:

The School has a rich professional and public service history, including the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics and the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association. Faculty are at the forefront of various service activities for academic and professional organizations and their local community. Faculty exhibit exceptional servant leadership models to their current students.

COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

STRENGTHS

Leadership Excellence: The School benefits from the dynamic presence of a new dean known for her energy and unwavering commitment to transparency and process. She has garnered respect for her support of shared governance and faculty input, forward looking vision, backing from University leadership, and clear decision-making skills.

Faculty and Students: Faculty have experienced events that zapped morale but they have maintained their commitment to teach and mentor students. Similarly, students offer high praise for their teachers.

Quality Facilities: Despite the crowding, Farley Hall and the Overby Center stand out as exceptional teaching spaces. Their facilities provide an inspiring environment for both faculty and students, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Enrollment Growth: The IMC program has experienced remarkable growth in student enrollment. This expansion not only reflects the program's popularity but also secures the School's reputation within the campus academic community. The increasing number of students supports an array of courses and opportunities, particularly benefitting journalism students who can engage with a broader network of peers and resources.

WEAKNESSES

Trust and Reputational Concerns: Lingering issues of trust persist among both legacy and new faculty members, stemming from a prior series of damaging and public actions and decisions. If left unresolved these issues can impede collaboration and mutual support, affecting the overall cohesion within the School. This is a sentiment acutely felt by the Black faculty.

Lack of a Unifying Space: The absence of a central building that serves as a unifying home for the School's faculty is a notable drawback. The lack of a dedicated space for faculty members can hinder spontaneous interactions, collaboration, and a sense of community within the School.

Advising: During meetings with students, a majority indicated challenges getting advised. The School has experienced advisor turnover but new advisors have been hired since the site visit. In the meantime, students voiced strong support for faculty who fill this role.

Reputation Management: A number of faculty have expressed concerns about the absence of research courses within the School's IMC curriculum. The School is embarking on curricular revisions. Both students and faculty note the challenge faced with defending the rigor of the degree.

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

The School is in compliance on all standards.

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.

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A

6) If the unit was previously accredited, summarize *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.

The School has hired additional faculty and adjunct faculty. No building expansion has been achieved; a series of events has derailed the possibility of building expansion and damaged trust among faculty. Assessment across the School includes multiple measures. IMC assessment has been strengthened and faculty are taking additional steps to close the loop by means of assessment results.

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 provided a comprehensive account of the School's advancements with regard to each ACEJMC standard over the preceding seven years including perspective on the School's achievements and areas of improvement, yet it failed to fully contextualize past crises. As we spoke with faculty during the site visit, it appeared that some faculty had not read the self-study.

A few technical issues arose. One notable concern was the presence of dead links scattered throughout the report, making it difficult to access vital supplementary information. The team believes this was the result of digital corruption of file links when the document was transferred to the team. The report's formatting presented challenges with its search function, hindering the ability to efficiently locate specific content or information.