

# Report of ACEJMC Evaluation

## Professional master's/Undergraduate programs

### 2023-2024

Name of Institution: University of Southern California  
Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: President Carol Folt  
Name of Unit: School of Journalism, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism  
Name and Title of Administrator: Director Gordon Stables  
Date of 2023-2024 Accrediting Visit: Jan. 28-31, 2024

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Oct. 16-19, 2016  
Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation  
Undergraduate program: Reaccreditation  
Professional master's program: Reaccreditation  
Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation  
Undergraduate program: Reaccreditation  
Professional master's program: Reaccreditation

### Recommendation by 2023-2024 Visiting Team:

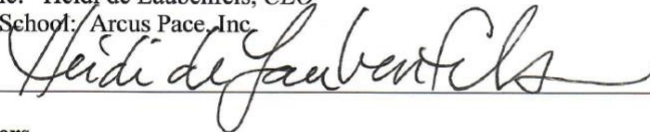
Undergraduate program recommendation: **Reaccreditation**  
Professional master's program recommendation: **Reaccreditation**

*Prepared and submitted by:*

#### Team Chair

Name and Title: Heidi de Laubenfels, CEO  
Organization/School: Arcus Pace, Inc.

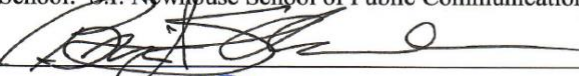
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#### Team Members

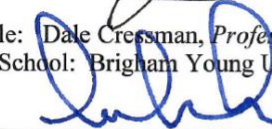
Name and Title: Brian Sheehan, Professor of Advertising  
Organization/School: S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

Signature



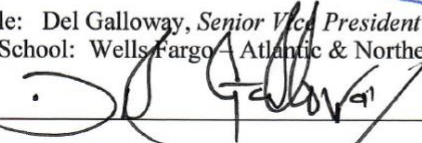
Name and Title: Dale Cressman, Professor Emeritus  
Organization/School: Brigham Young University School of Communications

Signature



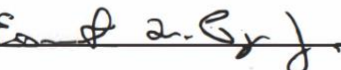
Name and Title: Del Galloway, Senior Vice President – Communications  
Organization/School: Wells Fargo Atlantic & Northeast Regions

Signature



Name and Title: Earnest Perry, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research  
Organization/School: Missouri School of Journalism

Signature



## PART I: General information

**Name of Institution:** University of Southern California

**Name of Unit:** USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism

**Year of Visit:** 2024

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

- Higher Learning Commission
- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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

- Private
- Public
- Other (specify)

**3. Provide assurance that the institution has legal authorization to provide education beyond the secondary level in your state. 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 [articles of incorporation](#) creating USC as a private nonprofit corporation were established in 1880. The [bylaws](#) were last updated in February 2023.

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

- Yes
- No

**If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit. If there was a revisit, give the date of the last full visit and the date of the revisit:** Oct. 16-19, 2016

**5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? 1948**

**6. Insert here the undergraduate mission statement and the separate mission statement for the graduate program. Statements should give the date of adoption and/or last revision.**

At the USC Annenberg School of Journalism, our mission is to lead the fields of journalism and public relations through groundbreaking scholarship, teaching and public service in a global multicultural environment. We consider this mission to be inseparable from our commitment to diversity. We cannot advance the fields of communication, journalism and public relations without full representation and participation across all manners of difference. (Updated 2019)

**7. What are the type and length of terms?**

USC is on a semester system.

Number of weeks in a semester: 15

Number of weeks in summer sessions: Varying sessions of 4, 5, 6, 10 and 12 weeks

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

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Ph.D. degree - in the School of Communications

**9. List the specific undergraduate and professional master's degrees as well as the majors or sequences being reviewed by ACEJMC. \*Indicate online degrees.**

BA, Journalism

BA, Public Relations and Advertising

MA, Public Relations and Advertising

All degrees are on-campus programs.

**10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree:** 128 semester units

**Credit hours required for a professional master's degree:** 40 semester units

**11. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience.**

Undergraduates: Maximum of 4 semester units

Graduates: Maximum of 2 semester units

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

**Sequence or Specialty**

BA/Journalism

BA/Public Relations and Advertising

MA/Public Relations and Advertising

**Faculty in Charge**

Rebecca Haggerty

Melanie Cherry

Jennifer Floto (until 2022)

Burghardt Tenderich

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

2022-2023

Undergraduates 21,000

Graduate/ professional 28,500

Total 49,500

**14. Number of undergraduate majors in the accredited unit, by sequence**

	Fall 2023
BA/Journalism	376
BA/Public Relations and Advertising	<u>315</u>
Total	691

**15. Number of graduate students enrolled on-site:**

Fall 2023

MA/Public Relations and Advertising 186

Number of master's students enrolled online: 0

**16. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and the preceding term. Submit two semesters with the self-study and update the list as needed for spring 2024 visits.**

**Include a separate list for online skills courses, which also must meet the 20-1 ratio. (The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)**

[Enrollment by section for in-person and online skills classes – Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024](#)

**Average enrollment in required skills courses**

	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024
BA/Journalism	14	14	15
BA/Public Relations and Advertising	14	15	16
MA/Public Relations and Advertising	15	14	14

**17. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2023–2024 academic year:**

\$14,655,983 (projected)

**Percentage increase or decrease in three years:** 25% increase from 2020-2021 (projected)

**Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:** \$7,504,868 (projected)

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

The School of Journalism has 47 full-time faculty. About 30 primarily teach journalism courses; 11 teach in the public relations and advertising degree programs. (Updated Spring 2024)

**Professors**

Willow Bay	Robert Kozinets
Geoffrey Cowan (on sabbatical Spring 2024)	Joe Saltzman
Afua Hirsch	Roberto Suro
Henry Jenkins (joint with Communication)	Sandy Tolan (on sabbatical Fall 2023)
Josh Kun (joint with Communication)	Diane Winston

**Associate Professors**

Mike Ananny (joint with Communication)	Mark Schoofs
Ben Carrington (on sabbatical Fall 2023)	Jian Wang
Su Jung Kim	Jonathan Kotler
Allissa Richardson	Aimei Yang

**Assistant Professor**

Eunjin Kim

**Professors of Professional Practice**

Amara Aguilar  
Christina Bellantoni  
Clarissa Beyah  
Daniel Birman  
Laura Castañeda  
Fred Cook  
Jeff Fellenzer  
Jennifer Floto  
Oscar Garza

Vince Gonzales  
Rebecca Haggerty  
Robert Hernandez  
Gabriel Kahn  
Matthew Le Veque  
Lisa Pecot-Hébert  
Stacy Scholder  
Gordon Stables (Communication)  
Burghardt Tenderich

**Associate Professors of Professional Practice**

Alan Abrahamson  
Peggy Bustamante  
Laura Davis

Alan Mittelstaedt  
Mary Murphy  
Miki Turner

**Assistant Professor of Professional Practice**

Keith Plocek

**Research Professor of Comm./Journalism**

Martin Kaplan

**Lecturers**

Melanie Cherry  
Dana Chinn

**19. 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.)**

In Spring 2023, Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 we had 147 adjunct faculty members, 84 in journalism and 63 in public relations and advertising.

[Link to list of adjunct journalism faculty](#)

[Link to list of adjunct public relations and advertising faculty](#)

**20. For each of the last two academic years, please give the total number of graduates.**

	2021–2022	2022–2023
<b>BA, Journalism</b>	93	100
<b>BA, Public Relations and Advertising</b>	78	80
<b>Total undergraduates</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>MA/Public Relations and Advertising</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>136</b>

Note: The variability in the numbers of MA/Public Relations and Advertising applicants, admitted students, enrolled students and graduates is addressed in [Standard 2. Curriculum and Instruction \(question 10\)](#)

## PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

### Background

The University of Southern California’s journalism journey started in 1891. After decades of evolution, USC’s Schools of Journalism and Communication together now comprise USC Annenberg, which is one of 23 schools and academic units at USC. The current Dean stepped into her role in 2017, then appointed the current director of the School of Journalism. The two “schools within a school” function as partners, with the Dean encouraging collaboration.

Since the Dean was appointed as USC Annenburg’s first-ever female dean, she has overseen an expansion of experiential learning, deepened partnerships with industry media and strengthened fundraising to support faculty growth, student success, diversity in journalism and conversations amplifying mental health. She also oversaw what the site team believes was a remarkably swift and successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the mandated 18 months of remote learning that followed.

The School of Journalism focuses on its role as a “professional school of public media in one of the media capitals of the world,” as described in the self-study. It strives to infuse students with current best practices, while also generating new knowledge and fostering professional community by bringing together industry practitioners.

The 2024 site team evaluated the School of Journalism’s undergraduate programs in journalism and public relations and its master’s program in public relations and advertising (PRA).

### 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 has a written, rolling five-year plan that aligns with a relatively new university planning process. The plan aligns with university priorities (called “Moonshots” in the plan) such as progressing sustainability, expansion of health sciences and interdisciplinary and cross-functional collaborations. It also reflects USC Annenberg’s strategic priorities -- for undergraduate and graduate programs -- through its description of anticipated fundraising and investments.

For example, the current plan describes artificial intelligence, strategic marketing communication, new communication technologies and data analytics, and public relations programmatic leadership as critical short-term needs in areas that are increasingly central to the field, and in some instances areas of weakness for the school that call for investment.

Unit leadership says having a five-year plan helped spur the creation of a long-range planning committee that ensures robust faculty participation. Leaders say the fact that the plan is updated annually gives the schools the ability to flex in response to student needs, funding opportunities and changes in industry practices.

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

The mission statement appears at the top of the School of Journalism's landing page:

*Our mission is to lead the fields of journalism and public relations through groundbreaking scholarship, teaching and public service in a global multicultural environment. We consider this mission to be inseparable from our commitment to diversity. We cannot advance the fields of journalism and public relations without full representation and participation across all manners of difference.*

**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?**

Faculty, staff and students consistently describe the school as nimble and responsive to the changing landscape. The Dean said, "We tweak, tinker and sometimes radically overhaul on a regular basis." The Dean and two school directors meet bi-weekly and are in constant conversation about needs.

The Dean reports that multiple sources of insight inform the school's strategy, with faculty inputs playing the biggest role. The school is in constant conversation with industry partners about what they need from students, she said. Research from USC Annenberg's many centers also provides inspiration, and the school routinely monitors course engagement for clues about what's interesting to students.

One faculty member noted that with an industry in such flux, it's important to maintain flexibility and perhaps not be locked into a rigid plan. Nevertheless, plans are updated annually by the Dean (with support from unit leadership) and reviewed each year by the Provost in meetings with the Dean.

Each spring, the Dean, school directors and finance and operations leadership meet to discuss strategic priorities and translate those into budget planning.

While the five-year plan doesn't specify measurements, the Dean publishes [an annual report](#) that details a range of metrics and describes the reach and impact of USC Annenberg's programs. The Dean meets annually with university leadership to discuss progress against the plan and is evaluated on the school's performance.

**(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.**

Industry and campus partners told the site team the Dean and the director of the School of Journalism are both highly respected. Faculty described the director as "amazing," "courageous," and "absolutely spectacular."

"I don't know how one person does it all," one professor said. Another commented that "he is always available. He makes time. Of all the directors we've had, he's as accessible as anyone. I think he's a really good director."

A data-science professor from the business school described a partnership with the director on course work to help journalism students improve their analytical skills, and other cross-campus collaborations involve sports, health sciences and more.

Numerous faculty members mentioned the swift drive toward policies and course work involving artificial intelligence, driven partly by leadership and in part by faculty who saw a need. Several commented that they have never been told they couldn't do something they wanted to do. One professor described the immense support he had to invigorate the investigative reporting program by hiring an instructor of open source intelligence (OSINT) reporting and recruiting an advisory board that's a "who's who of investigative journalism." Ultimately some grant funding came through to bolster the program, he said, "But it was Annenberg, turning on a dime, that said, 'Go make it happen.'"

Not every professor felt the same high level of collegiality among faculty, one citing factionalism and "big egos." Another cited an opportunity to improve connectivity among faculty and to strive harder to embrace respectful, difficult conversations. Some of those involve broad societal divisions on race, religion and politics that are plaguing the nation and world. These are not easy to navigate. Perhaps schools like this one, with rich expertise in communication, power dynamics, and influence, are the ideal place to model and generate successful approaches.

Regardless, with nearly 50 full-time faculty and a program still emerging from the disruption and distance spurred by the pandemic, fostering a broad sense of inclusion and belonging will require ongoing attention.

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

The unit's 2022 data is posted in the database.

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

A Public Accountability page on the USC Annenberg website lists retention and graduation rates, as well as departmental scholarships and graduate job placement percentages. The page isn't terribly easy to find without the specific link.

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

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

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

The school's documented policies include Faculty Council Bylaws that underscore the importance of faculty participation in the governance of the Annenberg School. The Faculty Council meets monthly to



discuss issues facing the school, proposals from the dean and/or the director, and any revisions or additions to the curriculum.

Twelve faculty committees within USC Annenberg cover numerous journalism curriculum, governance and strategy topics, as well as cross-school topics such as diversity and multidisciplinary programs. Faculty members consistently told site team members they felt involved in shaping the school's direction - in particular in driving curriculum changes. The director emphasized how critical it is to have robust faculty participation in strategic planning.

School faculty may contribute to university governance by serving the Faculty Assembly, the Academic Senate and/or USC Annenberg's faculty councils.

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

The director for the School of Journalism selects and appoints the program directors for all degree programs. The director, together with the faculty merit review committee, evaluates program directors as part of the school's annual review process.

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

Faculty members told the site team they typically start with the school's director when they have concerns, and that those are generally resolved quickly. They know they can go to the Dean, if necessary.

"We have an open dialogue," one professor said. "They're available for comments and constructive criticism. We are well-supported and taken seriously."

The university's faculty handbook clearly lays out reporting protocols. USC's Office of Professionalism and Ethics serves as a single, centralized resource for all complaint monitoring and investigations of violations of university policy. Faculty are directed to bring complaints of discrimination, harassment or retaliation to the Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX.

USC's student handbook lays out student rights and responsibilities, university policies and student grievance procedures. Most complaints regarding the School of Journalism go to academic advisors, who work with students and administrators to resolve them. The USC Office of Community Expectations outlines processes and provides preventative education regarding student behavior. USC's Office of Academic Integrity describes clear steps for complaints about grades.

**Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

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

A Public Relations Curriculum Council Report from September 2018 describes in detail the strategic-planning process the council underwent in response to the Dean's imperative that they "think big and bold" in shaping a master's program that would better meet the needs of current and future students.

That process resulted in a number of recommendations that led to the current MA in public relations and advertising and produced the current mission statement:

*To educate future leaders in public relations and other organizational communication disciplines (i.e. advertising, marcom) by offering a forward-looking, applied curriculum that is based on research, strategy, agility and channel agnosticism, and that addresses the profound disruption in the industry, the blurring of lines between disciplines (advertising, PR, marketing communication, etc.), the role of digital content and social media as disruptors of traditional or legacy media communication channels and cultivate opportunities for strategic storytelling, content creation and more.*

**(i)The unit has designated administrative oversight of the professional graduate program as well as policies and procedures that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum in the professional graduate program.**

The program director for the MA/Public Relations and Advertising program, a professor of professional practice, oversees curriculum development, faculty recruitment and training, and the faculty committees for curriculum, admissions, theses, and the comprehensive exam. The admissions committee makes admission decisions and interviews applicants for scholarships, which the director notes have grown under the current dean's leadership.

#### **SUMMARY:**

The school's undergraduate and graduate leadership and programming are highly regarded by students, faculty, peers and industry partners. It's clear this is a unit constantly striving for relevance in a rapidly changing world and, as the director of the master's program put it, "to prepare our students for the future, not for the job market of the 1990s." Diversity, equity and inclusion infuse the school's daily life, from the mission statement to curriculum to speaker choices to general discourse.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program) compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master's program) compliance/ noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

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

Undergraduate graduation requires 128 credit hours for both the Journalism and PRA majors. The credit hours are split with 44 credits earned in the major and 84 credits outside the major. Of the 84 credits, 60 credits are dedicated to general education courses covering the arts, humanities, social sciences, life sciences, quantitative reasoning, equity in a diverse world, etc. One course in the Journalism curriculum meets the general education requirement for equity in a diverse world (JOUR 200w). Many of the other courses in the Journalism major also contribute to liberal arts and social sciences education (e.g., JOUR 300 Journalism and Society).

**(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.**

Students majoring in journalism begin their program with foundational courses in media literacy and journalism history before moving into the core reporting, writing and visual journalism courses. Concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access are embedded into required and elective courses throughout the curriculum.

The PRA major is centered on the PESO model (Paid—Earned—Shared—Owned). This theoretical framework is used for teaching students how to conceive PR and advertising campaigns built on communications research, strategic insights, and critical thinking.

The opportunities for students to build their skills both inside and outside the classroom is truly outstanding at the school. There is an impressive array of courses being offered every semester including many cutting-edge topics.

The Annenberg Media Center is central to many classes in the curriculum. It includes the multi-platform Annenberg Media Newsroom. The student-led newsroom in the Media Center is open to all USC Annenberg students, and each area of the newsroom has expanded over the last six years. The mantra of the newsroom is: “It is a newsroom. It is a classroom. It is an incubator for new ideas.” It largely delivers on this mantra. Many groups are using the Media Center at the same time. It looks confusing to an outsider but provides a rich experience for students who want to go beyond the curriculum. However, according to several faculty, a lot of content being produced by students in the Media Center does not necessarily reflect many of the skills that are a part of the basic writing and reporting courses the students took as their foundation. They believe there is a need for more collaboration between instructors teaching basic writing and reporting courses and instructors/coaches working with students in the Media Center.

The school has strengthened the classroom component of the Media Center by creating JOUR 206 (Reporting and Writing Practicum). JOUR 206 preserves the student-led components of Annenberg media, but allows for faculty guidance. Students are paired with an experienced instructor and work under more-experienced student editors. Training is standardized across more than 25 undergraduate sections. Students in the Journalism major have access to building skills via Annenberg television news, documentary television, radio, podcasting, sports@Annenberg, and more.

Of note, the school has student opportunities in Hispanic media, African American media, Asia Pacific Islanders and South Asian media. Also noteworthy is the school's investigative reporting. One project, where students uncovered long-term patterns of racial profiling by campus police and looked beyond USC at issues facing the larger Los Angeles area, was hailed in the New York Times for teaching "skills that are hard to pick up in a lecture hall."

Opportunities in the PRA major are no less robust. They include student access to the USC Annenberg Agency, the Annenberg Media Center, and the Public Relations Student Society of America, among others. Of particular note, the school takes full advantage of its proximity to both Hollywood and big-market sports franchises to give PRA students the chance to get high-level, real-world experience. This included creating an official command center at Super Bowl LVI in LA, and working with NASCAR to execute on-campus college promotions.

**(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.**

The curriculum for both undergraduate majors is mapped, course by course, directly to the ACEJMC professional values and competencies. Coursework is both current and demanding. There is a curriculum committee that meets monthly to help keep the curriculum current and dynamic. Members of the committee felt it was effective in moving the curriculum forward in a timely manner. The Dean stated that speedy, faculty-driven curriculum input allows the school to be very nimble by introducing new and experimental courses (e.g., a recent course addition on AI).

One of the great benefits of being in the heart of Los Angeles is access to part-time faculty, adjuncts, and guest lecturers who are working at the cutting edge of both industries. Access to this expertise also helps regularly improve the curriculum.

The school has a "Digital Lounge" that provides workshops for key digital software (such as WordPress, Excel, Illustrator, Photoshop, and Google Analytics) and even web coding.

Students consistently stated that the curriculum gives them the skills they need to succeed in today's media environment. Students did have a number of concerns however. They felt the need for more advertising faculty and classes in the PRA stream. They wanted less mixing of graduates and undergraduates in the same classes. They were frustrated about their inability to get into key required courses and desired elective courses due to lack of available seats.

**(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.**

The School is deeply engaged with their professional communities of practice. It is woven deep into the school's operations, from ensuring that faculty generate and support collaboration with industry partners, to the school's constant engagement with industry partners on new trends that may inform curriculum development, including the ways in which the school serves as a convener for professional dialogues.

Individual faculty host professionals in their classrooms. They design assignments and projects with companies and brands across many of the school's courses and programs. The curriculum committee reviews programs and syllabi design with advisors from their industries or practices.

The school's Annenberg Insights tool allows administrators to have real-time access to industry trends and alumni working in the fields.

The school also engages with other schools on campus for curricular innovation, including a sports program in conjunction with the Marshall Business School.

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

All courses in the Spring and Fall of 2023 met this standard. Courses averaged 14-15 per class.

**(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 provides ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit's faculty and professionals.

Although internships are not required for graduation, USC Annenberg Career Development estimates that most journalism and PRA students complete, on average, about three internships before they graduate. Most of these internships are not for credit. In fact, the school encourages students to avoid paying for credit (or "pay for play") for internships.

The career development team works with students and companies to ensure both constituencies have a clear understanding of what is expected from internships, paid and unpaid. The team regularly updates its internship guidelines, and surveys students in the fall semester to find out where students would like to intern, and again in the spring semester to get feedback on the students' experiences. If needed, the team will intervene with companies on a student's behalf.

Professional alumni reported to us that interns they hire from the program are well prepared for the modern media landscape and need little hand holding.

**Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**(g) At least half of the required credit hours are in either professional skills courses or integrate theory and skills appropriate to professional communication careers.**

All of the courses in the MA/Public Relations and Advertising program are professional skills classes related to the profession.

**(h) Instruction and curricular requirements for professional graduate students are more advanced and rigorous than for undergraduate students, including courses open to both undergraduate and graduate students.**

Graduate-level courses are linked to a school-designed strategic integrated planning model that includes business and economic principles, audience segmentation and message development. The classes contain additional information on the global economy, politics and business administration that is more extensive than what is provided to undergraduates.

**SUMMARY:**

This is a leading program in the country. Its curriculum is both current and impressive.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program) compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master's program) compliance/ noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

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

The unit has written assessment plans that include each of their programs—BA programs in Journalism and PRA, as well as for the MA program—and cover all the Council’s values and competencies. Though still under development, the plan is extensive, robust, and authentic.

The unit has been on a lengthy journey regarding assessment. The unit had been found out of compliance in the last two accreditation cycles because of an over-reliance on indirect measures. Following the 2016 site visit, the school promptly developed an assessment plan with multiple direct measures that included the participation of outside professionals. However, faculty found the results to be less than useful and decided to revise their approach, instead relying on independent professionals who serve as part-time and adjunct instructors to review work from courses they don’t teach. This revision process was interrupted by the pandemic, which completely halted on-site teaching and learning for 18 months.

While assessment activity has taken place throughout the accreditation cycle (with the duration of the pandemic being the exception), the current assessment plans were developed more recently, yielding data from one academic year. It should be stressed, however, that the school has continuously worked to develop an authentic and “bottom-up” process that they believe yields more useful and current data. In other words, in addition to assessing student learning, the faculty has been heavily involved in “assessing their assessment” in order to develop a sustainable, faculty-driven routine that will help keep curricula current and improve student learning.

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

The plans are posted on each program’s respective web pages.

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

The learning outcomes for the BA are derivatives of ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies, and assessment covers all of them. The MA program has three program learning outcomes that were developed from earlier course-based assessments, which are based on the values and competencies.

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

The current assessment plans were developed with the assistance of the university’s Center for Excellence in Teaching, as well as consultation with colleagues from other accredited universities. They lean heavily into evaluating course-based assignments for program assessment, drawing student artifacts from the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) and using rubrics that will evaluate cohorts of students from practice to mastery over time.

The Journalism BA has 10 course-based direct assessments. The unit is aware that it is conducting more assessment than what its required by ACEJMC and the dean believes it could be streamlined. However,

it is intentionally doing more assessment than required with the Journalism BA in anticipation of major changes to the curriculum (after which it will revise the plan's schedule with direct assessments being staggered). Seven course-based direct assessments are conducted for the PRA BA and the MA, respectively. Indirect assessment includes end-of-semester course evaluations (which are tracked in aggregate by course and by program). Additionally, student awards and data from internships and job placements provide indirect evidence of student learning.

The school is considering contracting with an online portfolio vendor to assist with the assessment and public display of student work. However, these efforts are on hold, as the university is moving from Blackboard to Brightspace and the school must ensure that the new LMS has the proper LTI (Learning Tools Inoperability) to allow it to work with the portfolio platform. It will also need to establish a routine for mining artifacts from Brightspace.

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

USC Annenberg is located in a major media market, allowing the school to recruit a considerable number of experienced professionals as adjunct and part-time professors, some of whom are asked to assist in the assessment of student artifacts. Outside professionals have also been used during this cycle, although the faculty believe those assessments yielded less useful data than their current practice of using professionals employed by the school because they are independent of the classes being evaluated and have a greater understanding of the school's educational goals.

**(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.**

Faculty most interested in curriculum are most involved in assessment of student learning. A faculty member is assigned to coordinate these efforts. The director told the site team that the faculty member has provided a "wonderfully strong and consistent voice" that has helped the school understand how students were learning, while continuing to advocate for "a more ambitious plan."

Faculty serving on the curriculum committee interpret the assessment data to consider changes that will improve teaching and learning. There are multiple examples of how assessment data has concretely driven improvements in curriculum, assignments, and teaching methods. Most prominently, the MA comprehensive exam was revised based on assessment data. Meanwhile, data gathered on the BA Journalism program has led to curriculum revisions scheduled over the next two years.

**Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**The unit's professional master's program has a written assessment plan, posted to its website; collects and reports data from its assessment activities; and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction.**

The assessment plan is posted on the master's program's web page. The school collects and reports its assessment data and applies that data to improvements in teaching and curriculum to improve learning outcomes.



**SUMMARY:**

The school has vastly improved its assessment activity and is well on its way to developing an authentic and durable culture of assessment. The latest iteration of assessment plans were developed specifically to encourage faculty engagement. To a large extent this has been successful, as the faculty most interested in curriculum development don't think of assessment as an "extra" activity, but consider it part of the teaching and learning process. Both undergraduate and graduate programs have instances of "closing the loop." Notably, direct and indirect assessment has led to the revision of the MA comprehensive exam.

Looking to the future, the school needs to contend with the complication of the university switching LMS platforms. As it continues to develop and strengthen its assessment plans, the school says it will strive to streamline its assessment schedule so as to keep it sustainable. The school could consider adding portfolio reviews by professional third parties to further strengthen its direct measures.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program) compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master's program) compliance/ noncompliance: 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.**

USC Annenberg has a written diversity plan that was developed in 2017 and revised in 2019. A progress report released in 2022 indicated progress in embedding diversity principles in core areas of the school. A campus-wide climate study was conducted in 2019, the School of Communication and Journalism's participation rate was 57 percent, slightly above the 53 percent campus rate. Annenberg conducted a school-specific climate study. The results of the study were not available at the time of the study.

The diversity plan has four pillars: people, curriculum and scholarship, programming and outreach and organizational resources. Each pillar is connected to indicators that are measured in the progress report.

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

The diversity plan is in a prominent place on the school's website.

**(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 has worked to infuse diversity, equity, inclusion and access principles into its curriculum. The curriculum includes instruction on how to avoid biases, consider different perspectives and assess cultural communications proficiency. The required courses meet this standard. Faculty members have agreed and are currently working to infuse all courses with DEIA principles.

The school has also created and implemented DEIA learning modules as a requirement in its master's PRA program and student media operations. It has also developed student-run ethnic media operations based on the school's adopted principles. At the time of the site visit, the faculty was considering moving the required undergraduate diversity and inclusion to the first-year level to get baseline instruction to students earlier in the program.

USC Annenberg has elective courses that provide in-depth experiences with diverse domestic and global communities. The school also has study abroad opportunities that provide global experiences for 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.**

The school provides faculty members with instruction on various approaches to teaching DEIA and infusing it into courses. At the start of every academic year, adjunct faculty receive training on ways to incorporate DEIA speakers, articles and exercises into their course materials.

The school requires faculty search committee members to complete DEIA training before serving. Open positions are posted in outlets that are likely to reach diverse applicants. The school has also participated in the campus \$50 million initiative to retain and increase diverse faculty members.

The school conducted two searches for full-time faculty in the past three years, one for a professor of professional practice in public relations and advertising. The second search for a professor of professional practice in journalism and director of the MA journalism. Since the last accreditation site visit, nine of the 12 full-time faculty hires in journalism and public relations have been people of color, and seven have been women.

The school has done an effective job of recruiting and hiring adjunct/part-time faculty of color. From 2020-2023, there were four open positions in Reporting and Writing I-II. Two people of color were hired. Of the six open positions in Public Relations, four women were hired. Further efforts are needed to increase applications and hires of people of color in PRA. There were no finalists or offers made the past two years.

USC Annenberg has embedded its DEIA principles into its governance and infrastructure, which include culture, training, curriculum, professional practices, and public programming. Faculty compensation was at 100 percent parity for nearly all categories with tenured and tenure-track faculty of color being among the most highly compensated in their respective ranks on the tenure track. New guidelines for evaluating faculty based on rank have been created to address previous issues in that area.

The school worked to increase diversity retention among its part-time/adjunct faculty by providing a one-time, equity-based increase in compensation, and continuing to systematically raise adjunct faculty compensation. It also created a liaison position responsible for improving teaching support and access to resources. Adjunct faculty are asked to serve on school committees, attend events and engage at faculty meetings.

USC Annenberg is working to develop, track and improve its practices related to staff hiring process across the board including diversity. In an effort to retain staff, USC Annenberg held six staff professional development training sessions in 2020-2021 on creating a culture of inclusiveness and equity, which included DEIA training, dialogues, breakout discussions and one-on-one conversations.

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

The main USC Admission office, which is responsible for recruiting and selecting undergraduate students for admission, visits more than 2,000 high schools and partners with multiple college access

organizations and other national and community-based organizations. In Fall 2023, about one-third of new students were from ethnic groups that have been historically under-represented. One quarter were first-generation college students. The USC Annenberg Admissions team participates in events on-campus and throughout the U.S., and offers virtual information sessions and campus visit opportunities for community-based organizations.

USC Annenberg Admissions also recruits in major media cities (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York City, Atlanta and Miami), and is currently building pipelines to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions across the country. USC Annenberg Admissions also recruits at professional journalism and public relations conventions such as National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the Asian American Journalists Association, the Association of LGBTQ Journalists, the Online News Association, the Public Relations Student Society of America and other industry organizations.

USC Annenberg provides online resources that help connect incoming first generation and student of color with faculty, staff and alumni mentors each year. The unit also supports a program that pairs 30 upper-class student mentors with about 75 first year and new transfer students. USC Annenberg also designed a new mentorship program that pairs students from China with alumni who will act as mentors. The unit also has a mentorship program that matches students of color and first-generation students with media professionals.

USC Annenberg Cross-Cultural Student Association promotes cultural awareness through DEIA-themed events. The unit also has active student chapters of AAJA, NABJ, NAHJ and other affinity organizations. The school funds up to five students to the national conferences, and more if the conference is local. USC Annenberg also sponsors a women's leadership group that provides professional advancement in technology, media and entertainment.

**(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.**

USC Annenberg provides diverse perspectives in public programming and prioritizes inclusive approaches for teaching and student mentoring. The USC Office of Student Accessibility Services offers services for students with disabilities and works closely with faculty on accommodations for individual students.

**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.**

**Academic Year 2022-2023 School of Journalism - BA/Journalism Full-time faculty - Tenured, Tenure-track, RTPC (Research/Teaching/Practitioner/Clinical)**

	Female	Male	Nonbinary	Unknown	Declined to state	Total	Percent
<b>White or Caucasian</b>	8	14				22	61%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	2	4				6	17%
<b>Black or African American</b>	4	1				5	14%
<b>Asian and/or South Asian</b>	1					1	3%
<b>Unknown</b>		1		1		2	6%
<b>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b>						-	
<b>American Indian and/or Alaskan Native</b>						-	
<b>Middle Eastern or North African</b>						-	
<b>Two or more races</b>						-	
<b>Declined to state</b>						-	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percent of total full-time faculty	42%	56%	0%	3%	0%	100%	

**Academic Year 2022-2023 School of Journalism - BA/Journalism Part-time or adjunct faculty**

	Female	Male	Nonbinary	Unknown	Declined to state	Total	Percent
<b>White or Caucasian</b>	15	10				25	43%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	7	3				10	17%
<b>Unknown</b>	5	1		3		9	16%
<b>Black or African American</b>	2	4				6	10%
<b>Asian and/or South Asian</b>	3	1				4	7%
<b>Middle Eastern or North African</b>	1					1	2%
<b>Two or more races</b>	1					1	2%
<b>Declined to state</b>	1	1				2	3%
<b>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b>						-	0%
<b>American Indian and/or Alaskan Native</b>						-	0%
<b>Total part-time or adjunct faculty</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percent of total part-time/adjunct faculty	60%	34%	0%	5%	0%	100%	

**Academic Year 2022-2023 School of Journalism - Public Relations and Advertising  
Full-time faculty - Tenured, Tenure-track, RTPC (Research/Teaching/Practitioner/Clinical)**

	Female	Male	Nonbinary	Unknown	Declined to state	Total	Percent
White or Caucasian	1	4				5	45%
Asian and/or South Asian	1	1				2	18%
Unknown	2					2	18%
Black or African American	1					1	9%
Two or more races	1					1	9%
Hispanic or Latino						-	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander						-	0%
American Indian and/or Alaskan Native						-	0%
Middle Eastern or North African						-	0%
Declined to state						-	0%
<b>Total part-time or adjunct faculty</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percent of total full-time faculty	55%	45%	0%	0%	0%	100%	

**Academic Year 2022-2023 School of Journalism - Public Relations and Advertising  
Part-time or adjunct faculty**

	Female	Male	Nonbinary	Unknown	Declined to state	Total	Percent
White or Caucasian	14	14				28	57%
Asian and/or South Asian	3	3				6	12%
Two or more races	3	2				5	10%
Black or African American	3	1				4	8%
Unknown	1	2				2	4%
Hispanic or Latino	1	1				2	4%
Declined to state	1					1	2%
Middle Eastern or North African						-	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander						-	0%
American Indian and/or Alaskan Native						-	0%
<b>Total part-time or adjunct faculty</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percent of total part-time or adjunct faculty	53%	47%	0%	0%	0%	100%	

**Professional master’s program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**Provide a brief discussion of Indicators (a) through (d) as they apply to the professional master’s program.**

Students entering the MA/PRA program are required to take the Managing Complexity in Diverse Organizations program, which is designed to equip students with the skills to collaborate with, manage and lead across teams with diverse backgrounds and expertise. Participants also learn how to create and support inclusive environments and how to help advance equity and representation in global contexts. DEIA principles are infused in several graduate courses, including Business and Economic Foundations for Communicators and Persuasive Writing. They also are expected to demonstrate what they have learned in this area in their comprehensive exam.

USC Annenberg holds HBCU virtual recruitment fairs and is often a sponsor at the national conferences of AAJA, NABJ, NAHJ, the Indigenous Journalists Association, and other affinity organizations. The unit continues to work on articulation agreements with the nine colleges of the Los Angeles Community College District to enhance the number of diverse transfer students. The unit also received a \$500,000 gift to provide full tuition and support for diverse students of color to pursue a master’s degree in journalism; a \$1 million endowed gift from ViacomCBS to an HBCU alumni pursuing graduate journalism studies; the Aquarius Trust Endowed Scholarship (formerly Iger-Bay Scholarship) to provide funding for journalism students from underrepresented backgrounds at several institutions; and a \$1 million gift for the Paramount Latinx Diversity in Journalism scholarship to cover tuition for a Latinx journalism graduate student. The school worked with the Center for Public Relations Board of Advisors to create a new scholarship for a Black graduate student studying public relations and advertising.

USC Annenberg provides funding for graduate students to participate in study abroad during spring break, in between semesters and the summer.

**SUMMARY:**

The school has a strong DEIA policy and is effectively working to infuse inclusion and equity principles into curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The ethnic minority verticals connected to the school’s media operation is robust and provides experiential opportunities that connect with diverse audiences. The school has made significant improvement in hiring faculty of color since the previous accreditation, however, more needs to be done in adjunct/part time area, particularly in public relations and advertising. Although the school is not in control of the admissions process at the undergraduate level, it has strong participation in the recruiting at the local and national level. Student recruitment in the master’s program is strong and is reflected in the diversity seen within the program. Faculty members and students expressed concerns about equity issues due to the high cost of attendance, but credited USC Annenberg for providing resources to meet the challenge.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program) compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master’s program) compliance/ noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 5: Faculty

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The School continues to fall well short of having full-time faculty teaching the majority of classes. Full-time faculty have taught 30% or fewer of all undergraduate courses in the last three-year period. However, this is offset by high-level professionals in the Los Angeles area who constitute many of the school's part-time (some of whom are provided benefits) and adjunct faculty. Of note, many of the part-time instructors teach multiple courses. They are best described as "super adjuncts." In fact, many of them also carry – and are compensated for – service assignments within the department. So, part-time faculty are deeply integrated into departmental and curricular discussions.

The school maintains a series of policies to ensure significant full-time faculty participation in the design, implementation, and review of required courses. The director works with each program's leadership to ensure that all full-time faculty are involved in core class instruction each year, including both direct roles as instructors and also serving as the course lead instructors. Several core journalism courses are team-taught in order to maximize the expertise provided in each course. This design increases the number of required instructors, and also strengthens the learning environment.

The unit is planning to hire two new full-time faculty within the next year which will improve its percentage of classes taught by full-time faculty. Importantly, one of these new hires will be an advertising position, which will help improve the transition they have made from the pure PR major to a PRA major.

#### **(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.**

The School's full-time faculty are highly qualified. As a professional school in a major media market, its part-time faculty are some of the most qualified in the country. They maintain strong relationships with professional and scholarly associations.

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

Despite being a professional school, the scholarship expectations at Annenberg are high. The school places value and emphasis on work that: *meets societal needs; is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary; expands the international presence of the school; and promotes lifelong, learner-centered education.*

The School's faculty is highly productive in this regard. They show strong performance in the last six years, in terms of awards and honors, for their research, internal and external grants, books and book chapters, articles in refereed journals, etc. (See scholarship table below.) This is not just a numbers game. The quality of the scholarship is consistently outstanding.

Annenberg provides an annual \$1,000 baseline travel and research fund for all full-time faculty to support their scholarship and professional activities and development. As of 2022, part-time faculty are now eligible to submit for similar funding. In addition, faculty are encouraged to apply for a grant from the USC Annenberg Dean's Faculty Research Fund, which provides funding to start new projects or bring existing ones to completion. Faculty were consistent in reporting they felt well supported in this area.



The expectations for research as a factor in tenure, promotion and yearly merit reviews are clearly stipulated in the school's policies.

**(d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.**

Faculty members are active in communicating their scholarship via journal and book publishing, creative exhibitions, conference presentations and other publicly presented professional work.

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

The school maintains a very strong reputation on campus. It has a high degree of respect from other schools in the university. In fact, the school and its director were seen as a leader on campus in many areas of cross collaboration.

**Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**(f) Faculty members teaching in the graduate program meet the criteria for graduate instruction at that university.**

The graduate faculty are highly qualified. The master's program assigns graduate faculty by specific areas of expertise. The program directors, and Director Stables, review specific assignments to ensure the best possible fit.

**(g) Graduate faculty oversee the curricula and course quality for professional master's courses.**

Full-time faculty teach only about 35% of the graduate classes. However, full-time faculty serve as lead instructors for all sections of graduate courses they teach, meeting with other faculty who teach the classes, reviewing syllabi, etc., to ensure academic standards are consistently met. In this way, full-time faculty have a bigger hand in the courses than the percentages would indicate. The School further engages in careful review of all graduate instruction to ensure a high-quality teaching environment, regardless of the instructor's contract type.

**SUMMARY:**

The school has a very different model for faculty than most schools. Yet, its flexible combination of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and adjuncts is a distinct advantage given the expertise of its faculty overall. The faculty are productive in research and well supported.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program) compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master's program) compliance/ noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**School of Journalism**  
**Indicators of Faculty Productivity 2017-2023**

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				
		Full Professors (25)	Associate Professors (15)	Assistant Professors (2)	Lecturers (2)	Totals (44)
Awards and Honors	113	11	6	1		18
Grants Received Internal	28	7	4	1		12
Grants Received External	63	5	3	1	1	10
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	13	4	2			6
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	2	2				2
Books Edited	2	2				2
Book Chapters	46	8	4	1		13
Monographs	6	2				2
Articles in Refereed Journals	125	5	3	1		9
Refereed Conference Papers	85	5	2	1		8
Invited Academic Papers	5	1	1			2
Encyclopedia Entries	2	1	1			2
Book Reviews	15	4	2			6
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	137	7	3			10
Juried Creative Works	11	2				2
Non-juried Creative Works	7	1	1			2
Conference presentations	272	8	6	2	1	17
Other professional work	312	12	5	1	1	19

## PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

#### **(a) The unit and institution ensure that students are aware of graduation requirements.**

The Annenberg School of Journalism clearly and consistently communicates to students *what success looks like*; it defines learning outcomes that must be achieved – including ACEJMC’s Professional Values and Competencies. The unit has robust resources – human, financial and technological – and a deep commitment to ensure students are informed and understand the requirements for graduation. Its aptly-named STARS program – Student Academic Record System – provides students each semester with their official university audit of their academic progress.

A pattern of concern surfaced regarding the availability of academic advisors, which currently has a ratio of 300-to-1 student-to-advisor. This is due to recently vacated positions and robust enrollment growth – particularly in the public relations program. It’s anticipated that a recently introduced online student advising dashboard will address this issue (see below).

Last year, the unit introduced “Advise USC,” an online dashboard that tracks student progress toward graduation. It includes student-centric information such as desired electives, study-abroad opportunities, as well as personal information that helps advisors best meet and exceed the needs of students. Each dashboard is tailored to an individual student, and can be accessed by academic advisors, as well as university representatives.

The unit’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as described in Standard 4 is also embedded throughout Student Services.

The unit’s BA/Journalism and BA/PR and Adv retention and graduation rates are comparable to those of the university. Retention and graduation rates for both undergraduate and graduate programs are at or near 100%, and master’s program on-time graduation rates have improved considerably since the pandemic.

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

Each semester undergraduate students are required to meet with an academic advisor to review their progress toward degree completion. Graduate advising follows a three-step process: Initially, graduate students receive an email featuring all information necessary to meet graduate requirements. Step two is student-group advising opportunities (available online and in-person), followed by step three -- individual, one-on-one advising.

The unit’s Career Development services include career fairs, a professional speaker series, on-campus interviews and innovative “Maymester” and spring break immersion programs offering students career exploratory opportunities both domestically and internationally. Maymester is a valuable program offering four, two-week opportunities in New York City and Washington, DC, exposing 25-30 students to sports and economic media.

Professional advisors and faculty provide a wealth of advice for career options, which is strengthened through the unit’s extensive and exceptional adjunct community – particularly vibrant in Los Angeles.

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

Through multiple channels including the unit's web site, emails, listservs, student-run extra-curricular organizations and academic advisors, students are kept abreast of the unit's policies, activities and requirements. An exceptionally eye-catching multimedia wall display is at the heart of Wallis Annenberg Hall – a 11- foot-tall, six-foot-wide screen featuring real-time national and international news, as well as relevant social media posts and news of interest at Annenberg.

**(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 School of Journalism offers a rich, varied menu of extra-curricular activities that expose and engage students with a variety of professional possibilities.

- Spring Break programs in Washington, DC and Thailand offered 24 students (10 in DC and 14 in Thailand) opportunities to explore political careers – focused on social change.
- “Career Treks” were available in Sydney, Australia, and Hong Kong, and;
- Mentoring programs with alumni were hosted in London and Rome.
- Students traveled to the 2018 Winter Olympics in Seoul and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, at which they experienced hands-on opportunities to 12 students. The program in Tokyo was in partnership with NBC.
- Annually, students are supported to attend the conferences of various professional organizations – including the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the conference of Investigative Reporters and Editors, and the Public Relations Society of America.
- During the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the unit's Career Development department partnered with 75+ companies to offer students more than 60 virtual programs, including company information sessions and career fairs.
- In 2020, the unit partnered with *The Los Angeles Times* to provide students the opportunity to document and publish stories of individuals lost in the pandemic. The partnership continues with students researching demographic and other data to identify patterns that can influence healthcare policy.

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

Retention and graduation data are compiled university-wide by the USC Office of Institutional Research and are published on the school's Fast Facts page on its website. Annenberg captures and compiles its retention and graduation rates, which are available on the unit's Public Accountability page on its web site.

Retention and graduation data is integrated throughout the unit to influence curriculum design, student advising, and to consistently evaluate and improve student services. The unit's BA/Journalism and BA/PR and Adv retention and graduation rates are comparable to those of the university.

A common theme that surfaced in discussions with students and faculty is the gap between the increased enrollment of public relations students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and the resources to support these students. Resources include human, facilities and technology.

One student captured it succinctly: *“It’s as though the school has bitten off more than it can chew. Public relations enrollment continues to grow, but the growth of resources doesn’t follow.”*

**Professional master’s program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**(f) The unit has appropriate admissions and retention policies for the professional master’s program.**

The unit’s admissions and retention policies are appropriate for its professional master’s program, and its retention and graduation policies are the same for both the graduate and undergraduate programs. All appear on the school’s website.

**SUMMARY:**

The school’s Student Services are top-notch. Both its undergraduate and graduate services are deep and varied, and reflect a program committed to the development and future success of its students. To support and address students’ mental health – particularly following the pandemic – a full-time psychotherapist is available at the school. Its approach to student services – its guiding principles and infrastructure – create an environment for a positive student experience. The unit strategically capitalizes on its many assets – human, financial and geographic. Its location in the entertainment capital of the world offers invaluable partnership opportunities with best-in-class organizations and individuals – which USC Annenberg wisely leverages on behalf of students.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program), compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master’s program), compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

USC Annenberg has a distinct strategic-planning process in which the directors of the School of Journalism and School for Communication meet with the Dean and school finance and administration leaders each March to plan expenditures for the next school year, based on strategic priorities. This process results in a detailed annual budget, which was provided in the self-study.

School leadership reviews wish lists from faculty for new programs, capital equipment, student scholarships, or other initiatives. The Dean approves the budget, then submits it to the university. The budget has increased each year, with the 2022-2023 academic year budget totaling \$14.6 million. The self-study and the Dean describe the budgeting process as “transparent and inclusive.”

The school’s operating budget is about 60% of gross revenues from tuition and other sources after expenses shared with the university are deducted. The school uses an incremental budgeting method in which slight changes are made from the previous year’s expenditures. The budget is zero-based in order to avoid a culture of “spend it or lose it.”

In addition to tuition revenue, the school can draw from endowment income from the Annenberg Trust, as well as other gifts.

Faculty hiring is planned in five-year increments. The current plan calls for the school to hire for two new lines and replace two existing vacant faculty lines.

**(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.**

While the school benefits from ample resources, it also faces some budgetary challenges. For example, while tuition accounts for the bulk of the school’s gross revenue, the university limits its maximum student enrollment. Budgetary planning is further complicated by fluctuating enrollment in the MA program. Finally, the university continues to increase the amount it expects the school to shoulder for shared costs. In order to supplement its budget the school can draw from endowments, gift funds, and partnerships with industry.

During this accreditation cycle, the school has raised approximately \$108 million, including a \$3 million gift for health journalism and \$2 million for newsroom diversity.

By all accounts, Annenberg’s resources are comparable with similar academic units at USC.

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

The Annenberg School uses primarily two buildings: the Wallis Annenberg Hall, built in 2014; and the Annenberg School for Communication, built in 1979 (it also makes use of Kerckhoff Hall—a small building, erected in 1908 and located in the Annenberg Research Park—for research and faculty office space).

The building that creates the most buzz is Wallis Annenberg Hall, an 88,000 square foot building. Erected in 2014, it hosts 19 classrooms, 8 conference rooms, and 23 faculty offices, and can accommodate nearly 600 students at a time. Upon entering, one encounters the five-floor centerpiece of the building, the Forum—what the school calls a “village green.” With an adjacent cafe and patio, it is a welcoming space for students to congregate and collaborate. The space is also used for speaking engagements and other special events, accommodating up to 175 seated or up to 500 seated and standing. The main visual feature in the Forum is a two-story media wall, consisting of 132 LCD screens that together can display 15 different viewing options, including television newscasts, advertisements and notices. This feature, along with the cinema display in a 145-seat auditorium, and recent technical improvements to classrooms, amounted to a \$9 million investment.

Before construction was completed on the Wallis Annenberg Hall, the school was housed in the nearby Annenberg School building. With 65,000 square feet of useable space, the building continues to host students in 11 classrooms. Additionally, the building has faculty and staff offices, conference rooms, research space, and a large auditorium. The 45-year-old building is a Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument and is now poised for renovation. The school characterizes the renovation project as its most urgent need.

**(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.**

Each faculty member receives \$1,000 per year for travel, books or equipment. Additionally, some faculty have their own donor funds, or access money that was negotiated at the time of their hiring. Faculty computers are replaced every three to five years, depending on the need. However, computers can be replaced immediately if a need arises. One administrator said she couldn't remember an instance in which a faculty member's need was not met.

A main attraction to the Wallis Annenberg Hall is a 20,000 square-foot media center. One would be tempted to call it a newsroom, however all Annenberg students use it at some point in their academic careers. Small classes and lab sections—such as radio, social media, or public relations—are taught simultaneously throughout the newsroom. The centerpiece is a large, round assignment desk over which hovers a 360-degree “media halo,” displaying cable news and story assignments. A large video wall display keeps students on task with rosters of students and the progress of their assignments and projects.

The media center can accommodate 100 students at a time and hosts three adjacent studios:

- Studio A is small, innovative space in which any student can produce content on their own, using video and audio Tricaster automation. The studio desk is on a carousel, providing two different backgrounds (windows to the outside or windows to the Forum). This versatile space has been used for interviewing speakers, producing sports talk shows, or content for social media.

- Studio B is really two adjacent audio studios. Used for both radio newscasts and podcasts, faculty say this is the most used space in the media center, as any Annenberg student can access it.
- Studio C is a fully equipped, traditional television news studio, with three set options (news desk, interview couch, and weather green screen). In addition to three robotic cameras, there is a camera on a jib. Newscasts are powered by a control room equipped with Ross automation. The studio is used for a four day per week television newscast and for individual or student group projects. Each newscast features at least one remote live shot.

Individually or collectively, these studios would either equal or surpass the quality of commercial operations. These resources support both the curriculum or any Annenberg student wishing to produce material independently. Remarkably, when students work as “contributors” (students who volunteer, without being connected to a class) or on independent projects, they are supported by one or more of 120 students employed part-time each semester (some of whom work up to 20 hours per week and average 7 hours per week).

In addition to classrooms, conference rooms, faculty offices, and the dean’s suite, the building also features The Digital Lounge, described in Standard 2.

One floor below the media center, students can check out field equipment. In some cases, equipment is assigned to a student for the entire semester. In other cases, students can reserve field equipment for two days at a time (reservations can be extended with emailed requests). Camera checkout is filled with field equipment: 15 Canon mirrorless DSLRs; 15 Canon EOS 80D DSLRs; 20 Sony 4k cinema cameras; 40 Zoom audio recorders; 75 Canon CV cameras; 20 Canon DSLRs, and 5 iPhones. Camera kits come with tripods, lavalier mics, and other peripherals.

The school is supported by a technology and facility operations crew of 26 full-timers and 60 part-time students, with an annual budget of \$3 million, this crew also provides faculty with training and support on classroom technology, faculty computers, and student training.

## **SUMMARY:**

The Annenberg School has some of the best academic media facilities in the country. Both undergraduate and graduate students have the opportunity to work with facilities that may be higher quality than those of their future employers. Faculty are supported with equipment, travel money, and research support. The school’s most urgent need is to renovate its 45-year-old building.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program), compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master’s program), compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**



## PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The School of Journalism has successful relationships with alumni, industry leaders and other key stakeholders – cultivated through a variety of communication channels, programs and engagements. Its communication with these audiences is strengthened through a continuous feedback loop – feedback that influences and shapes future curriculum and programming.

The unit has an active worldwide alumni community of 22,000+. It is anchored by an Alumni Advisory Board, a group of 20 alumni with varied backgrounds, experience, expertise and education. This Advisory Board is complemented by the USC Annenberg Board of Counselors, which identifies industry trends and strategies, and consults with faculty and administrators to shape and adjust curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Its approximately 1,500 events and other annual campus activations – including those offered virtually – engage a mix of professionals across industries and provide students invaluable opportunities to network with industry leaders.

Alumni-relations programs successfully connect students with professionals. Programs include:

- Seeing ME in Media: a student-to-alumni mentoring program supporting students who identify as first-generation college students and/or students of color.
- Class of X Mentorship Program: Graduating students are partnered with alumni in targeted industries to assist students in the sensitive transition from student to professional.
- Pandemic Mentoring: In spite of disruptions as a result of the pandemic, engagement with alumni continued and grew through virtual programs, and included more than 250 alumni volunteers speaking with and mentoring students.

Its Los Angeles location offers USC Annenberg the unique opportunity to innovate, strategize and drive success with industry leaders and influencers who invest their talent and treasure in the program. The unit has some of the best and most valued part-time and adjunct faculty across industries at all levels and stages of the education continuum. These faculty are enthusiastically embedded throughout the school's operations, helping influence strategies, curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Examples include a broadcast journalist who graduated five years ago and who now is a reporter at the local ABC affiliate. She maintained interest in the school and relationships with faculty and administrators and was invited to become an adjunct instructor. Students value her perspective and experience, and particularly relate to her as she's not much older than them. A senior public relations executive with a respected international firm – and an Annenberg graduate – serves as an adjunct, and students rave about his courses, his impact and their exposure to such a valued industry leader. Each class he presents a topical exercise – "Here's what was on my desk today," engaging students in real-time, real-world situations.

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

Through its strong alumni network, its solid stable of part-time and adjunct faculty and a commitment to grow and innovate the school, the unit exposes students to high standards of professional practice through continuous learning – promoting ethics and addressing issues of value to the public. Programs include those listed above – Standard 8, a.

More than 50 years after the school and Walter Annenberg began their partnership, his vision continues to guide the program:

*Every human advancement or reversal can be understood through communication. The right to free communication carries with it the responsibility to respect the dignity of others, and this must be recognized as irreversible. Educating students to communicate this message effectively and to be of service to all people is the enduring mission of this school.*

**(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 school’s administrators, faculty and students are invested on campus and in the greater community in a variety service organizations and projects, including:

- The Los Angeles County Museum of Arts
- The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation
- Children’s Defense Fund
- Common Sense Media
- Rotary International
- AEJMC: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications

Through USC Annenberg’s research centers and programs, the unit is involved in a variety of service projects and events, which include:

- The Center for Health Journalism, which partners with newsrooms nationwide to promote, innovate and tell important health-related news and information.
- USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations, with a board of advisors who reflect academic and industry leaders
- The USC Center on Public Diplomacy, which partners with governments, corporations and NGOs to facilitate intercultural dialogue and understanding throughout the world.
- The Center for Climate Journalism and Communication, which partners with professionals locally and around the world to better understand and communicate the impact of climate change.
- Norman Lear Center – a research and innovation hub studying and influencing discourse in entertainment, news media, social media and other areas of public discourse.

**(d) The unit supports scholastic journalism.**

The school partners with corporations, governments and NGOs to add to journalism's scholarly body of knowledge. Projects include:

- Media Center, a classroom and working newsroom with state-of-the art capabilities that serves as an incubator for new means of storytelling
- Annenberg Agency, a program to virtually deploy students in a professional capacity to assist with organizations' communications needs.
- ANN x HBO Diverse Voices Forum: A year-long series designed to connect HBO's top talent and producers with USC Annenberg students and faculty to explore the vital role of diversity in the future of entertainment.

## **SUMMARY:**

The school's students are fortunate to belong to an academic community rich with resources – human, financial and technological. The unit successfully leverages its LA location and its relationships with leaders across industries to strengthen and advance opportunities for students.

In its self-study, the unit describes its alumni network as “... *unrivaled in media and communications.*” Its robust roster of industry leaders and people of influence who also are alumni – folks who invest their time, talent and treasure in the program – certainly support this claim, as is featured earlier in this report.

Looking forward to the 2028 Olympic Games to be held in Los Angeles, the Annenberg School of Journalism will partner with Olympic and broadcasting networks, offering invaluable experiences for students and faculty.

Important to note: Discussions with a cross-section of students from multiple disciplines revealed some were worried about safety. A journalism student shared concerns about her and other female students fulfilling requirements for reporting in the community, and in some communities, she feared for her safety. She proposes that such reporting assignments be conducted in pairs, as opposed to individually.

**Overall evaluation (undergraduate program), compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**Overall evaluation (professional master's program), compliance/noncompliance: COMPLIANCE**

**PART III: Summary by site visit team  
of the undergraduate program**

(A separate summary is required of the professional master's program)

**1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.**

Strengths

- Leadership that is forward-focused, innovative, nimble and responsive to students and faculty. The Dean and Director have created a productive, healthy culture that is open to criticism, influences all the school does, and supports its mission.
- Remarkable resilience and responsiveness from the beginning of the pandemic through 18 months of restrictions, resulting in high-quality remote course work and quick provision of technology support to students.
- Laudable work to not only address deficiencies in its assessment process, but to continuously and rigorously strive for “a more ambitious plan” that delivers useful and current data.
- Facilities and equipment that would be the envy of any school.

Weaknesses

- The school should streamline its assessment schedule to promote sustainability and consider adding portfolio reviews by professional third parties to further strengthen its direct measures.
- Advising is stretched very thin (300 to 1) and the students are taking notice, as are advisors.
- Despite improvements, increased enrollment in PRA has not yet been matched by full-time faculty hiring.

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

n/a

**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 that recommendation.**

n/a

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

- Assessment of learning outcomes: The unit was found out of compliance on what was then Standard 9 in 2016 (and also in the preceding evaluation). The site team noted that direct measures needed to be implemented on a regular basis, collected, analyzed and looped back into curriculum-making decisions.

Following the 2016 site visit, the school promptly developed an assessment plan with multiple direct measures and included the participation of outside professionals. However, faculty found the results to be less than useful and decided to revise their plans. This revision process was interrupted by the pandemic, which completely halted on-site teaching and learning for 18 months.

Consequently, the current assessment plans were developed more recently, yielding data from one academic year. It should be stressed, however, that the school has continuously worked to develop an authentic and “bottom-up” process that they believe yields more useful and current data. In other words, in addition to assessing student learning, the faculty has been heavily involved in “assessing their assessment” in order to develop a sustainable, faculty-driven routine that will help keep curricula current and improve student learning.

The Journalism BA has 10 course-based direct assessments. The unit is aware that it is conducting more assessment data than what is required by ACEJMC and the Dean believes it could be streamlined. However, it is intentionally doing more assessment than required with the Journalism BA in anticipation of major changes to the curriculum (after which it will revise the plan’s schedule with direct assessments being staggered). Seven course-based direct assessments are conducted for the PRA BA and the MA, respectively. Indirect assessment include end-of-semester course evaluations (which are tracked in aggregate by course and by program). Additionally, student awards and data from internships and job placements provide indirect evidence of student learning.

- The self-study in 2016 noted that additional full-time public relations faculty was a high-priority need, especially as the undergraduate PR population increased from just more than one-third in 2011 to nearly half.

In 2016-2017 the school had eight full-time PR faculty. Since then, it has increased the count to 11 full-time PR faculty by adding a tenured professor, a tenure-track professor and a professor of professional practice. The five-year plan calls for two additional hires in the next two years and includes robust descriptions of the desired areas of expertise. Those include Advertising and Public Relations Programmatic Leadership.

**7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting process, and often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the accrediting visit. Summarize the team members’ judgment of the self-study.**

The team appreciated the self-study’s incisiveness and clarity. If descriptions of some elements, such as assessment and the approach to strategic planning, had been more clear, that would have saved the site team and unit leaders time that had to be spent during the visit to explore and clarify. However, the school’s leadership, faculty, and staff were exceptionally responsive to team members’ requests for additional information.

### **PART III: Summary by site visit team of the professional master's program**

#### **1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.**

##### Strengths

- Leadership that is forward-focused, innovative, nimble and responsive to students and faculty. The Dean and Director have created a productive, healthy culture that is open to criticism, influences all the school does, and supports its mission.
- A vision and mission that recognize the increasing integration of various communications disciplines and the disruptive role of digital content and social media
- Policies and curriculum that embrace emerging technologies such as generative AI
- Thoughtfulness about the cost of the program relative to entry-level profession salaries, and a growing pool of scholarship funds to support students

##### Weaknesses

- Advising is stretched very thin (300 to 1) and the students are taking notice, as are advisors.
- Despite improvements, increased enrollment in PRA has not yet been matched by full-time faculty hiring.

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

n/a

#### **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 that recommendation.**

n/a

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

- Assessment of learning outcomes

Following the 2016 site visit, the school promptly developed an assessment plan with multiple direct measures and included the participation of outside professionals. However, faculty found the results to be less than useful and decided to revise their plans. This revision process was interrupted by the pandemic, which completely halted on-site teaching and learning for 18 months.

Consequently, the current assessment plans were developed more recently, yielding data from one academic year. It should be stressed, however, that the school has continuously worked to develop an authentic and “bottom-up” process that they believe yields more useful and current data. In other words, in addition to assessing student learning, the faculty has been heavily involved in “assessing their assessment” in order to develop a sustainable, faculty-driven routine that will help keep curricula current and improve student learning.

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