

Department of Journalism and Digital Communication Faculty Meeting  
Friday, March 26, 2021

Casey Frechette  
Casey Peterson  
Tony Silvia  
Vanya Iliev  
Elliott Wiser  
Joan Eldridge  
Christopher Campbell  
Deni Elliott  
Monica Ancu  
Mark Walters  
Solitaire Kelly

CF: Good morning, everyone. Just came from CAS Campus Leadership meeting. Let's start with Joan and advising.

JE: Many people have been coming in and everyone wants classes. I think we will see electives closing quickly. I am promoting Advanced Reporting to everyone who can get into it. Will touch base with Frechette and Peterson re: overrides and wait list. Registration begins March 29. Those who have MMC 2100 already who have nothing else to do, electives we are allowing are Food Writing, Data Viz, and maybe Social Media if those are full, yes?

CF: Yes. Any sense of what students are hoping for in terms of online/in classroom in fall?

JE: Some people were unpleasantly surprised, some were excited about the number of in person classes. I tell them the sequence of the core courses and warn them not to get into a position where they have nothing else to take. Because Multimedia Reporting is online, I think it'll fill immediately and people will need to get in to graduate. Something you may need to think about.

CC: Any sense from university if hybrid approach will continue in fall or strictly online/face to face?

JE: My understanding is they will run as advertised. The expectation will be that we return to campus the week after fall begins.

CC: Good, I'd much rather be fully online or face to face. The dual online/classroom approach is no good.

CF: I think Joan is right in terms of offering courses as advertised, but the definition of a "face to face" class may vary in terms of percentage offered in the classroom. We need to be clear with students as to what they should expect.

JE: Also, who knows about the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Will we be able to come back?

MW: When would you anticipate going back to regular caps? Spring 2022? I'm surprised at the difference between 18 and 25 students. Wasn't 25 in multimedia reporting an exception due to COVID?

JE: I expect it was a result of all the closed section overrides we granted for students who need to graduate. We are doing our best to advise students who \*can\* wait to do so.

MW: I imagine the accreditors are giving us a pass due to the pandemic.

JE: Maybe you should cap classes at 15, knowing that students in a pinch will come forward.

CF: The problem won't go away as we seek to expand our enrollment.

MA: We will constantly have between 20-25 students in multimedia, right?

JE: Yes, and I only bring students to the department for closed section overrides if they need it to graduate.

MA: What's the minimum number of students in a section? Can we split Advanced or Multimedia at lower caps?

JE: That's between you and the college.

CP: It's dependent on budget and who's teaching the courses.

CF: Point remains we have an accreditation issue at the heart of this.

JE: For the electives, we had to give the majority of transfer students take everything except things in the department. We could have easily filled another elective.

CF: When do transfers begin to register?

JE: Around April 16 up until classes begin. Folks coming in in August are desperate for electives.

MA: Maybe the solution is to just increase the caps on electives. It's not good for students coming into the program to take classes in everything except courses in the program.

JE: Most transfers aren't looking for core classes since they don't come with MMC 2100, but electives are full when they get here. For electives that don't require extensive feedback, we should increase caps – especially online.

CF: That's a good workaround. We did that this semester and may need to continue to do so.

MA: We increased elective requirements from 15 to 18 credits, so we need another elective.

CF: Yes, particularly something online we can get Tampa students into is a reasonable idea.

CC: Students have expressed interests in particular software electives (Premiere, Photoshop, etc.).

CF: We will be talking this morning about new programming with regard to new hires and points of focus going forward.

CF: Updates from CAS Campus Leadership Team meeting: Full approval to move forward with a full time instructor, assistant professor and the NNB associate professor positions! There's one other hire on campus approved for fall – a mathematics professor. We are in a privileged position among our colleagues, able to do this because our budgets remain separate. St. Pete is in a strong position budget-wise because so many faculty lines are on recurring bases. It's harrowing because August is so soon, so we will need to move forward very efficiently. We have made progress on getting these searches up and running. Thanks to Deni and Mark for heading the search committees. Monica will be serving on both committees. We have extra requirements for the assistant professor line, including needing an outside person on the committee (we are checking with marine science). The assistant professor position will be one of the first post consolidation.

CF: The department will be bringing in faculty at higher salaries given the post consolidation R-1. One thing that came out of the leadership meeting is how this shakes out long term in terms of equity. Existing faculty won't be getting pay raises or bonuses. There have been vague commitments to bump up existing faculty. Some conversations about increasing adjunct pay. All of these details are murky and nebulous in the short term. All things considered, this is a good new challenge we have to deal with in that we will have resources to work with as we recruit people.

TS: Congrats on three positions. Did not see that coming. I'm looking at the job descriptions you sent and the instructor position seems to be heavy on NNB. Is that now part of the instructor position instead of the associate professor position?

CF: We have setback on the targeted hire front. Pepperdine gave Satchel a hard deadline to let them know if she'd be back or not. We did not meet that deadline. She can't start in the fall. Hope is we can bring her on in January or in fall 2022. Her hire has been approved as targeted, Tadlock and Eisenberg on board with tenure on appointment. Now with the Provost. One reason you're seeing an elevated focus on NNB in the instructor position is because that is an urgent need short term. Another reason is based on our conversations with Vaughan is that the hire could be the beginning of a team for NNB. Someone to fulfill a supporting role and build community connections, at least in the short term.

DE: I know you've had conversations with Dwayne Smith. Have those gone well?

CF: It's been more emails but he's been very positive. Another advocate is Elizabeth Freeman who has been in contact with President and Provost over the months. Another higher up has been positive. Good feedback within Provost's orbit.

DE: If we have the instructor assuming administrative tasks with NNB and social justice / Food Writing, the professor could teach law and ethics and not be pigeonholed into NNB. Can we have a timeline in terms of what you want with the search committees? We have a lot of coordinated scheduling to do to pull off both of these searches.

CF: Short term we need to get the job descriptions to the college later this afternoon to be approved by Dean Michael. Hoping we can come away from this meeting with a consensus. I've already informed Jennifer Woroner about the composition of the committees. My hope would be that we have posts up within a week or two. One month duration for instructor search. Need to talk to Dean Michael about what is feasible. What feels right for the assistant professor search? Two months?

MA: Back to the instructor position. I share Tony's concerns. When I read it I was confused. I understand what Deni is saying to not pigeonhole the professor into NNB. I think the instructor description is asking too much. I want that person to cater to the incoming students. If we put things like administrative tasks and negotiating teaching loads and developing synergies between NNB and Food Writing and Science Writing, how could they focus on the students? I think we should simplify and focus it more.

CF: It's a lot. One of my thoughts would be that we certainly have an urgent teaching need. If we bring someone on board who teaches three classes each semester and uses other time for these efforts, does that cover that need? Or should we bring someone on as a four/four?

MA: My preference would be someone who just teaches, working with students to produce publishable work and a portfolio. I want to see someone who has worked as a journalist. We list a degree, but nowhere in the minimum qualifications does it list specific journalism experience.

EW: I agree with Monica. We need someone with practical experience. We have wonderful expertise in the department but we are missing real journalists.

DE: One of the terrific things about us doing these three hires at one time is that we don't have to put all of our eggs in a single basket. When I think about our basic courses, I don't see students walking out with publishable work; I think about them walking out of the classroom with a more general understanding of what journalism is. For the assistant and associate professor positions, I think we need someone with writing and publishing experience. I agree that the instructor for beginning students should be someone who can relate to them. But in my experience, hiring experienced journalists for the beginning classes has been unsuccessful. I disagree that it should be a minimum requirement for instructor but should be for professor.

MA: If we remember when we were having in person faculty meetings, we always noted that students in the higher classes lacked the skills they should have picked up in the lower classes.

We talk about what we should be teaching in MMC 2100, right? If we don't have someone qualified to teach them early, we are setting them up for hardship later on.

DE: I don't think we need to put professional journalism as a qualification for beginning classes. I think they can teach them without it.

MW: Is this an issue we need to push upstream? If we are a R-1 program now, we are expected to do research and scholarly publication. Is this a discussion better suited for Eric Eisenberg? This is a discussion about an academic vs. a professional program.

TS: I see Deni's point about professional journalists teaching. Sometimes people who are great players are terrible coaches and vice-versa. On the other hand, I've always found that undergrads couldn't care less about the research, books or publications of professors. They don't know or care – simply want to be taught. This is an unsolvable problem. I tend to fall on Monica's side because the stuff students need is the stuff we offer them in the beginning of the program. The first experience students have in any major determines whether they stay or go.

EW: The one thing that is woefully missing in early job applicants is the ability to write and report. Given the number of professionals that are leaving the business we should be able to find someone with a master's degree who can teach writing and reporting. We need to have one person who's done it. We need to concentrate on the basics.

MA: We are also the only journalism department left. That is what makes us different from multimedia in Tampa. We need to have strong professionals.

DE: One thing that has set our department aside is that the people who teach for us part time are people who bring professional experience (Rob and Elliott, for example). We need to get clear on who we're looking for in the instructor role: someone to teach four classes or someone to teach and who can take over administrative tasks for NNB and Food Writing so our assistant and associate professors have time to do research on top of their loads? One issue with past NNB hires is that that person has been pigeonholed into doing everything for that program. My understanding was that the instructor hire could take items off of Roslyn's plate. I don't think we can hire an instructor to do everything in the department, and that is why we have good professional part time folks.

MA: I would be hesitant to rely on adjuncts to cover beginning classes like MMC 2100 and JOU 2100. It seems the assistant professor coming in for the fall is for science writing. The instructor we are hiring is going to take MMC 2100 and JOU 2100 as well as take over Janet's food courses. I see this person as someone with teaching and mentorship experience, and with strong professional skills. The assistant professor shouldn't do administrative tasks, but why would the instructor do them?

DE: Until Janet came on board and convinced us we should look at MMC 2100 and JOU 2100 as two steps of the same class, we purposefully had them taught by different instructors. We have had adjuncts teaching them for years.

MA: But we lost students then.

DE: I'm not advocating for adjuncts teaching them, but I'm saying there is precedent for separate instructors.

MA: Given the skills of the people we have, then who will teach JOU 2100? I don't see the administration reacting well if we still need an adjunct to teach JOU 2100? Besides, I wouldn't like an adjunct teaching it. We need someone permanent who will teach these courses from semester to semester.

TS: What Monica is talking about is consistency. I also agree that the person doesn't have to teach both of them. Students should have exposure to different faculty. But the issue of consistency is a really important one. Adjuncts are best used in areas of specialization, in my opinion. I think that the instructor should be largely a teacher of the basic courses. Also, aren't we selling Roslyn largely as an asset for NNB? We should be careful not to take too much NNB away from the line.

DE: The point of disagreement is whether we list journalism experience as a minimum or preferred qualification for the instructor line. I'm arguing that it should be preferred. I think one can teach the basic classes well without having daily news organization experience. Secondly, Eric Vaughan has good reason to think he had something like a preliminary interview and I feel like it would be unethical to promote a job opening for something we doesn't qualify for. I'm not saying we should hire him, but we list it as a preferred vs a minimum qualification.

CF: My suggestion is that we hone the job description to detail journalism experience. We can calibrate the description to make the teaching focus more prominent over administrative tasks, but not abandon the latter in hopes that we get really good candidates. Janet was a great example of a journalist with professional experience who did other administrative and service tasks. I want to attract likeminded applicants.

MA: I can live with journalistic experience as a preferred qualification, but I suggest we edit the job summary to eliminate some mention of administrative tasks.

CF: To the extent we can emphasize the coaching/mentorship approach, we should. Another way to handle required vs. preferred – is there a way to request “related professional experience?”

DE: I hear Monica making a distinction between journalistic SKILLS vs. journalistic EXPERIENCE. That could be a way to compromise. Would you feel comfortable with Monica and me playing with this language today?

CF: Since we are almost done, we need to have a follow up conversation about the assistant professor position soon. Let me know if you have concerns about how it's currently framed. We need to have a final version set by early next week.

DE: Has FAIR been abandoned? We have to use Archivum for evaluations?

CF: Yes. Archivum now.

MA: I put my workload in FAIR thinking it would be transferred into Archivum. I can access it via myUSF but it wants me to confirm a generic assignment. It doesn't match what I put into FAIR.

DE: I also had issues. Archivum is annual, not semesterly. If it's wrong, you can send back to Frechette.

DE: Will we meet again to discuss the assistant professor?

CF: Yes, I'd like to do it early next week. I'll send a Doodle.

CF: Tomorrow is the last day to withdraw with a W. Check in with any struggling students.