

Department of Journalism and Digital Communications Faculty Meeting  
April 30, 2021

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CF: Welcome, everyone. Updates, Joan?

JE: Summer electives are a bit over full, which isn't too bad. But we haven't started with the transfer students. We are going to get hit with people who need fall electives to move forward. Students who haven't taken MMC 2100 will be taking Data Viz, which is full, and the two photo electives we didn't want people in until they've had VIC 3001. Only one or two seats left in photo and a handful of seats open in video. Rest of the electives are full. What recommendations do you have for transfer students who need electives to fill their schedule?

CF: There's the possibility of getting an additional elective on the schedule for the fall, especially if all current electives are full. We're still in an environment where schedules are tight and there's pressure to hit the caps on our sections.

JE: Many are overfull. We have 9 seats available in video.

CF: Can we fill video first?

JE: Even if they haven't had VIC 3001?

CC: Teaching video, please have it full. The way I teach it, VIC 3001 isn't really a requirement.

JE: Casey P, will you funnel them into video first?

CP: Sure.

JE: Some international students are concerned about the number of online classes because they can only take one online elective, but I recently learned that for the fall they can be as online as they want. Lastly, where do we stand with getting the 72 hours outside the major stipulation back into the catalog so DegreeWorks reflects it too?

CF: I have been working with Kelly Pierson on this. I'll check back in with her next week.

JE: Advising knows about the 72 hours but it's not in DegreeWorks, so it's important to get this updated. Not many students are affected but we need to be aware of this.

CF: From an accreditation standpoint, it's important to note we are tracking this and trying to get it changed. Not the end of the world if a student slips through the cracks, but it's necessary to note we are trying to fix this.

CF: On the F-1 visa situation, do you know if it's applicable to grads as well?

JE: I don't know. They'll post the PowerPoint on their website in the coming days.

CF: Regarding fall semester. We plan to be back on campus, reflected largely in our fall schedule. We will look for the movement out of phase 2 in terms of university reopening. That decision is being driven by the COVID task force's data in terms of cases. We will also want to monitor whether something different happens on the regional campuses vs. Tampa. In Hillsborough, the positivity rate is considerably higher than Pinellas and the state average – a key metric the task force is looking at when considering moving on to phase 3.

CC: When I talk to faculty, no one is under the assumption that fall will be just like it was pre-pandemic. Everyone is hoping for the best and preparing for the worst, probably having to provide an online option whether they want to or not.

CF: What I'm hearing is that there are technical/technology challenges which we have been able to overcome with the studio, but also instructional challenges with teaching in two realms at the same time. Once we get clarity of what the fall will look like, brainstorming around what works well will be really important.

CF: Moving on to our hires. We have three different searches in three different states of completion. First is our full time instructor, and the advertising period ends today. Search committee will convene soon (Deni chair, Mark and Monica members). They'll begin conversations with finalists third or fourth week in May.

CF: Second search is for assistant professor with focus in science communication (Mark is chair, some people from Marine Science as members), which is staggered by a week. Advertising ends May 7. This hire will depend on what happens with the "clusters" – which are contingent on state funding, which hasn't been guaranteed. Regardless, we need to move forward one way or another with this hire.

CF: Third search replacing our unsuccessful targeted hire. Approval to hire a faculty member via formal search remains. There's additional paperwork, etc. to change from targeted to formal. (Monica is chair, Mark and Monica serve on committee, as well as Aya Diab as a GA. Also seeking additional faculty committee member from outside the department with experience on R-1 search committees in the past.) Once we have the committee locked down we can begin search.

MA: So right now we aren't advertising the position?

CF: Not yet.

MA: Why can't we advertise the position while we are assembling the committee?

CF: Two reasons: (1) We are still waiting for signoffs to begin search and (2) HR protocols with regard to managing the search. Can't move forward without a finalized committee and job description. But you're right that there's a need for speed given this is a fall hire. I don't want to disqualify anyone who would be great but can't come in the fall. I think we need to build some flexibility into our timeline.

MA: I was worried we were already late but if we have that flexibility it's OK.

CF: We really want to find a good hire so I don't want us to be rushed to make this happen in the fall. Especially if we make an instructor hire it gives us some flexibility.

CC: Have you heard about what's going on in Tampa with Zimmerman?

CF: I don't know too much about what they're up to these days. We have an interesting parallel position in terms of what it means to be on the St. Pete campus and the Tampa campus. Tampa is much more in the throes of a strategic reimagining than we are on the St. Pete campus given our local legislators interested in investing in us. We also have our budgetary autonomy, which could change, but for the time being we're doing our own thing.

CF: On that note, let's discuss a vision for departmental infrastructure. I'd be interested to get your feedback on an idea for creating a "Digital Media Hub." I notice the investments happening in buildings across campus and see that our space in PRW is among the least developed. In terms of equipment for students, much of it is outdated. Most of the cameras students use were released in 2011. And equipment in the lab is outdated. We need new carpet, a projector that doesn't shake, sure. But I think we're at a moment where we can have a much more aspirational framing around what it is we need. What would it look like if we could obtain a really significant investment? Can we develop a working space to create collaborations between our faculty, students and community partners (like Poynter, TBT, etc.)? Some kind of intriguing mix of classroom space, studio space, lab space and meeting/collaboration space? The hub could also benefit NNB.

MW: We're trying to take the Earth out of the center of the universe by focusing on NNB and our collaborations revolve around the Hub.

EW: We should mention Poynter specifically in the proposal because an upgrade could make it easier to work with them.

CC: They could appreciate working with upgraded technology. I think theirs is much older.

VT: Yes, much older equipment.

CF: This is the kind of thing we want to accomplish with any investment – opening up as a valued partner for Poynter.

VT: Poynter is using a Tampa production studio for some of their bigger programs.

CF: If this space is attractive not just to Poynter but to community partners, it could unlock some partnership opportunities for them.

MA: Poynter collaboration is great but we can't even recruit students properly. We don't have anything to show them aside from 18 computers and a projector. We could frame this as a recruiting tool. We don't have the equipment/facilities to teach a lot of multimedia skills. We need parity with other schools.

CF: Yes, if you look at other journalism programs around the country, they use facilities as a recruitment tool to entice students. This is an urgent need – not a luxury. This is an essential request.

TS: When I came there in 2006, I had spent the majority of my career elsewhere teaching hands on classes. I was disappointed in terms of facilities/technology/equipment. I stopped teaching hands on courses because of it. Between 2006-2009, we had Program of Distinction discretionary money (\$135,000 per year). But that was the last time there was a major infusion from the university or the state. It may be useful to note that institutional funding hasn't happened for quite some time. Students don't care about accreditation – they care about equipment and facilities.

TS: I looked up my former employer at URI, and they have a digital media hub in their school of communication that has everything you're talking about in terms of "creative spaces." Might be useful as a model.

TS: Is this for institutional or state money? Or private?

CF: A little of both. This was spurred by a conversation Mark and I had with Advancement. They think there might be some foundations that are interested in making some kind of investment. We have two audiences for this vision: the private sphere and the institution itself. For USF, we need to make them aware of what other institutions are doing and talk about what we need to do to achieve parity with R-1 universities.

TS: The URI setup cost about \$7 million. And their journalism department was even more depleted than we are here. I suspect it was a state/private combination of funding.

MA: We could say that it will make our students more competitive at the regional and national level. Will strengthen their portfolios. We're missing a strong production component.

CF: We can back that up with compelling data points in terms of what schools are winning competitions and what equipment and facilities they have.

MA: If we have the hub, we can incorporate it into all of our classes.

CC: Coming from the Marketing and Communication meetings, they want to change the focus to being highly ranked in US News and World Report. Resources are a part of that. If USF wants to increase their rankings, they have to invest, right?

TS: Maybe part of a proposal is to note that schools that aren't the center of the media universe have made the investment. Look at what they're doing. If small schools are doing it, we have a mandate to do it.

CF: We have been able to do much with little, so we have to change the perspective that we don't actually need the investment. There's also a special element of timing given we are coming out of a period of extreme flexibility. Coming out of that mode, something has to give.

TS: Yes, in this field embracing the status quo is actually moving backward.

CF: Which is why I'm thinking of these large numbers - \$7 million, \$10 million, \$25 million. Why shouldn't the 12<sup>th</sup> largest media market in the country have a hub for creation like this?

TS: I have a contact at URI who I can ask about how it was funded.

CF: This will take time and won't immediately happen, but there are a lot of good reasons to prioritize this. What we can all do immediately is to vouch for this cause and spread the message about what we want to become.

CC: At URI, their equipment list is impressive. It's scary to compare what they're offering to what we're offering. The disparity is amazing.

CF: In the weeks ahead, we can document these types of things and put together the picture of what we're aspiring to.

TS: URI has about 40 journalism majors, who are the primary users of the hub. Think about the scale! Hypothetically, if a department gets a massive injection of money, odds are it will stick around. So there's an element of job security.

MW: Best way to validate what we're doing is to get an outside grant. But the flipside is that internal support is less likely if you get that. Just keep that in mind.

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CF: Undergrad program update. Some shifts are happening with ACEJMC. At a recent meeting they discussed how they treat the diversity standard, which units tended to fail the most. They wondered how units that fail this standard retain accreditation. So they made two tiers of accreditation standards: top tier consists of governance, curriculum, diversity and assessment. We need to treat this tier seriously. If we fail any of these, it would be a fatal blow. The fact that governance is a top tier standard is helpful to validate us as an independent unit. There's ongoing discussion about making the diversity standard non-negotiable. Bottom line: we need to be

mindful as we prepare for the next self study with special focus on these four standards, including assessment and diversity. Good news is that all of that jives well with our mission and our curricular priorities.

CF: I also get the sense that the finer points of accreditation (20 seat cap on skills) are a bit more flexible in light of the pandemic.

MW: No Faculty Senate meeting updates.

CP: Now, only an application and transcript are required for certificate applicants.

VT: Aya and I have been working on getting NNB student work published. A lot left to be done but I tried to give the website a fresher look. So far they've produced great pieces. Some collaborating, some working on their own. Some work made it to the Weekly Challenger and they're about to deliver their second stories.

CP: Fall 2020 adjuncts, send your CV to Bridget Nickens.

CF: Summer B textbook orders are due soon but we are in pretty good shape.

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CF: Good of the order. This will be Tony's last meeting as a full time faculty member. He hit his 15 year mark with the university. Thanks for everything. Your impact will continue on for so many years to come.

TS: I'm leaving this department in very capable hands. The last accreditation round, the site visit team called us the best program for its size in the country. And it only gets better.