

Department of Journalism and Digital Communication
Faculty Meeting
Friday, August 27, 2022

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Chris Campbell
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Natacha Yazbeck
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CF: Welcome back, everyone. Some updates and information later, but first – how was everyone's first week?

MA: I had trouble submitting first day attendance but it got sorted.

MW: Students have transitioned to post pandemic faster than us.

EW: This semester, only one student is wearing a mask.

CC: Students happy to be back and want to be back to normal. Campus is buzzing.

DE: Residence halls are full for first time ever.

JE: People are so hungry for these classes. You guys are full and over full. Sorry for the requests for closed course overrides. Students want to finish quicker than they thought they were going to. Some students are still clinging to getting as many online classes as they can, but I keep emphasizing that core classes are face-to-face.

CF: Many online electives, but core is face-to-face.

CC: None of the students ask for an online version of my class, which is nice.

JE: I've been very clear with them about the reality and the expectations.

DE: For the record, you can't change modality. No high-flex. Student can't just send a photo of a positive test; they need a doctor's note.

DS: This is the first time we've been together. Can we introduce ourselves?

<<Introductions>>

CF: Let's kick it to Joan to see if we have any updates from advising.

JE: We are going to be putting a major restriction on our courses for the spring to prevent overloading like we did this semester. If we can keep those classes open longer it will help our continuing and transfer students. We didn't quite fill both sections of Advanced Reporting. My understanding is next semester we will do two sections of Multimedia Reporting. At some point we might need two sections of NNB. Know that every student I email about has been thoroughly assessed and they literally have nothing left to take but classes in the major. Thanks for your willingness to help students.

MW: We will need to show the accreditors that this is a short term issue.

CF: Or that there is a long range plan for managing enrollment. One thing to think about as we work on our self-study is what our plans for growth in the major are. From Joan's vantage point, it seems like there's broad interest in the classes we are teaching.

JE: Yes, people are very interested. I even get students from Tampa. I've been working with a number of students who are physically over there, taking the intro classes offered at Zimmerman. I explain that there is a point that they need to come over here. The core courses – Multimedia, Advanced, NNB – are the ones that have been problematic.

MA: How about electives?

JE: They're wildly popular with Tampa students. That's why I discussed restricting our electives to our majors. The online electives are very attractive to those majors.

MA: Would it be beneficial for us to come up with additional online electives?

JE: If we restrict our online electives to our majors, it should solve the issue. What they do in Tampa is they wait until a certain point closer to the semester to open electives to the general population. This would open the floodgates to popular electives like Social Media.

MA: I was thinking the opposite. Could we use those popular courses to increase the visibility of the department?

JE: Sure, if you have the capability to offer a ton of these classes. But the immediate concern is if we don't protect our electives in any way.

JE: Question for all of you regarding internships. I've been talking to a lot of students and not many bit for fall, but they're thinking about it for spring or summer. Have they come to you, Mark?

MW: Only one has contacted me.

JE: Well, a whole bunch were interested.

MW: Do they have a straight line to follow to me?

JE: The website points it out beautifully. I show it to them in person or on Teams.

EW: Catherine Kozoil in CAS has offered to coordinate internships for us. She's willing to reach out to employers, etc.

MW: The main challenge is becoming more systematic. We don't have an online application that goes directly to me. We need to streamline the process. Is that something Edgardo could fold into the system? The other question is whether we want to make internships a requirement.

CF: Context for new folks: internships aren't required but highly encouraged. Students can take up to 6 credit hours. A small fraction of students complete internships. Long term, the possibility of requiring them is on the table. Short term, Catherine is coming back and we can have a meeting with her.

MW: We need a portal for people who are offering internships.

CP: The university has Handshake.

EW: But Handshake is difficult for places to use.

MW: For branding, we need our own.

DE: A note about class size. You're going to hear about this performance metric. St. Pete is in a better place than Tampa to have smaller classes. We get brownie points for classes with no more than 19 students, and we get dinged for classes with more than 49 students. When you talk about double sections, keep this in mind.

CF: Unlike the 20 cap that the accreditors stipulate that are tied to skills classes, this 19 number counts for all classes?

DE: Yes, but online classes don't count.

DE: You all have gotten emails from me re: Self Study. Thanks for filling out the first Google Doc, but there's another that asks for numbers of grants, books, etc. There's also an email I'd like a reply on by September 2 that gives us 10 great things you've done or are going to be doing.

DE: I have an opening for an undergrad research assistant to help me with the National Ethics Project. Please pass that along to your students.

DE: Please take part in an experiment re: DFWs – students with Ds, Fs or withdrawals. Please pay attention to (1) your syllabus and (2) your midterm grades. Midterm grades are important to make sure we know how students are doing during the semester. The syllabus should be transparent and specific enough so the student can calculate the number of points needed in order to raise their grade to an A or B, etc.

DE: We want all students to understand why they got the midterm grade they got. If they can't get their grade up mathematically, we want them to be able to withdraw from the class. This semester, reach out to the students with Cs or lower at midterms and strategize how they can improve their grade. If that's not possible, reach out to Advising to see what options the student has.

DE: Research shows that if a student feels like one person would miss them if they left, we retain them.

JE: About withdrawals. Some students see it as a wonderful option, but they have a limited number of withdrawals. Before 59 credit hours, they have three. After that, only two (those are usually transfer students). They can submit an ARC petition for more, but it takes a very specific excuse – medical or death in the family type thing. So frame withdrawal as a possibility, but not a guarantee.

DE: Would it be helpful for the instructor to reach out to Advising first?

JE: If the instructor thinks the student is going to need one, you can come ask me if they have any withdrawals left.

CF: Let's discuss camera gear for students. We have 20 brand new cameras, accessories and audio equipment. If you're teaching anything where you think students will benefit from access to this equipment, let me know. We are working out a check out system.

CC: Some people are taking both photo and video, so they need a camera every week. We still don't know how many people need cameras. We gave them by week 3 to let us know.

MA: I'd put a checklist in the bag with all the pieces.

CC: When students check it out, I go through piece by piece and provide a copy of the checklist so they know what they need to return. We also decided that students will check out entire kits rather than individual pieces.

EW: Have you thought about getting a better bag than that?

CC: Yes, but it's an issue of money.

NY: I use Ziplock bags, nothing fancy.

CC: That is a good idea.

EW: Can grad students have access for DJD final projects?

CF: Yes. This gear is replacing equipment we got 7-8 years ago.

MC: There should be a website that lists the gear and what it all does.

CF: Casey P, let's get something online.

CF: The computers in the lab are about 1-1.5 years out from being replaced.

CC: And they're running an older version of Creative Cloud.

CF: What are others' thoughts on maintaining 20 computers in the lab? Anecdotally, students tend to bring their own computers. It's rare to see all 20 lab machines in use at one time. Would it be a good idea to upgrade half of the computers but make them twice as powerful as editing machines? For basic writing classes, the existing computers will hold up a while longer.

CC: Good idea, since these computers only have 16 GB of RAM.

MW: Some universities require students to have laptops.

CF: Students are able to rent laptops from the library – MacBooks and Windows. If you have a student who needs access to a computer, that support is there.

CF: Please pencil in 5:30-7 p.m. on September 16 for an induction to Kappa Tau Alpha. Many students qualified during the pandemic. We have 16 students excited about receiving the honor. We will gather in the courtyard and then gather in PRW 107, with some students joining via Teams. Please let current students know about this so they can come meet faculty and alumni.

CF: Wanted to highlight the need for Crow's Nest engagement. This is a perennial challenge but it's particularly difficult this semester. They have cut to biweekly publication with only four staffers, and the current editor in chief is graduating in December. Please invite her to your classes so she can pitch working with the Crow's Nest. Also in general, we're all teaching classes where work is being done that could port over to the paper. They could get a paid staff position, or they could just contribute. Good for the CN, good for our students to get published clips. There's also a potential opportunity for the CN to shift toward a multimedia/digital philosophy. It's traditionally been print-oriented, but I know they're interested in doing more with their website, and with video.

EW: Are we required to publish an actual newspaper? Why wouldn't we go totally digital?

CF: There is no requirement. There's a sentimental attachment to print, but I don't know if they're tracking readership of the print product vs. online.

CP: The Oracle in Tampa ceased the print option this semester.

DS: But right now it's the best of both worlds. You don't need a smartphone walking around campus.

EW: But that's not what's happening in the real world. If we want our students to be successful they need to be digital first.

MW: But they need an app, not just a website.

MA: Seems we have a culture problem in the department that was created by the pandemic. A lot of our traditions were lost in the last two years. We lost the faculty who most promoted the CN in MMC 2100. Even with internships, we have low enrollment. I think we need to do something in the department to get people together. Or an orientation session. We lost the connections for two years.

MW: We need to show them the statistics about what jobs stem from internships.

MA: They need to hear about internships from us, not just Joan.

CC: I have an intern in VideoWorks. We're working on a video podcast show that's student-led, learning to use the equipment in the studio. I've had huge interest in my classes of people wanting to be involved.

CF: If we were more broadcast-focused, we'd have a weekly student-produced newscast. Since we are a digital-focused program, we should have a student-produced digital production. We got good at livestreaming in the pandemic. So, we're poised to get students involved in different ways.

EW: In senior seminar, the saddest thing is that students don't have internships and their chances of landing jobs is slim because they have no practical experiences.

MA: Do they have a portfolio?

EW: About a quarter of the students in senior seminar have no practical journalism experience.

MA: We have students doing major things, but we don't have a website to showcase the work done by our students. It would be a great recruiting tool, and it would set standards of expectations of work. Grad students approach me about a website where they can see examples of past projects. It also feels like we're competing with Zimmerman, and when it comes down to budgets and the like we will be evaluated on student visibility, achievement, etc. – and they're really good at showcasing their student work, posting nearly daily. We need to create a culture of recognizing students, and encouraging student achievement.

DS: The irony is that Wayne Garcia is one of ours and he's great at showcasing Tampa students' work.

MA: Some of Zimmerman's faculty are our alumni.

DS: Going back to the Crow's Nest, I think if there's not an app or an integration with USFSP's online presence, there needs to be something in print. But I want to emphasize strongly that the independent student medium needs to continue to exist – we don't want it to be under the control of the department. The current adviser is great because she was at channel 10 and did all of their digital work. I think the print product needs to continue until there is a well-established interactive digital presence.

NY: The Crow's Nest and internship issues are symptomatic of underlying things we need to think through. We need to think about how much we want to be involved in the management of the CN, since there's a history of the paper not wanting to be under departmental control. If they can't do digital, people won't want to hire them. Also, we need to be realistic – these students should be paid for internships. Unpaid internships are a turn off.

MW: As we move from print to digital, we need to find our center. Whether we like it or not, we have moved to a digital culture.

NY: Can we pay / do students get paid for internships?

CF: As far as internship payment goes, it's a mix. We certainly prefer sites that pay. I'd like to take a closer look at Handshake to see if that information is available there. Certainly, if internships aren't paid, some of our students won't be able to do it.

EW: The difficulty is that there's no money in the media world.

NY: The onus is on us when we think about where we place students from internships.

EW: I talk to restaurant folks who want social media interns – but they don't have money.

CF: In terms of our relationship with the CN, it's important to keep them independent. Historically, they have done important criticism of the university administration, and if they were under the department, their ability to do that type of work would be imperiled. On the other hand, we can provide guidance and connections to them. At some universities, the newspaper is under the journalism department, but that is something we'd need to look at cautiously.

DS: On that point, in Florida, everything we do as professors is governed as “government speech” according to the State. As employees, we don't have freedom of speech in our classrooms. If the CN would be brought under the department, that would apply to them as well. They'd lose their First Amendment right. Whether this approach survives scrutiny of the course remains to be seen, but for the time being, that's the case.

MW: We're free to say what we want in our books, but not in the classroom?

DE: That's right.

NY: Is that applicable to academic publications we release as faculty at USF?

DS: That hasn't been broached yet. If you're not devoting university resources, you are probably able to do what you want.

NY: So that 25% research for tenure applies?

MA: I read that at a university in Montana, a researcher was doing work on abortion and the legislature threatened to withhold the budget for the entire university.

DS: We saw a similar thing happen at UF. A line was drawn where if it was outside work that didn't use university resources, it would be allowable.

CF: We will table our discussion about advising and our annual evaluation criteria until next meeting. I wanted to talk about approval to run a new search for another full time colleague in the Chair in Media Ethics and Press Policy. It will be a senior level position within the department so we will advertise it as an associate or full professor position. Goal is to have advertisement posted this month to bring someone on board in fall 2023. The first thing the committee will be working on is a job description including minimum and preferred qualifications. I distributed a short paragraph that was our pitch for getting the hire approved. The goal is to bring someone on board who is steeped in media ethics but who can also bring a digital focus to the role. Could be someone who works in social networks, emerging AI, use of data, privacy, bias in data, lots of ways it could come about. Ideas/language we want to build into job posting?

MC: What is the difference between press policy and media ethics?

CF: This title has been around for close to 20 years.

MC: Can we narrow the scope? Are we locked into the title?

MW: We are probably locked into the title, but we have a lot of options with the description.

MA: I'd probably remove STEM from the description and instead say "data" or "digital." I don't want to confuse anyone and keep them from applying because they think it's very hardcore math. Before the pandemic, when I was participating in STEM events in Tampa, I was the only one from the social sciences.

NY: Unless we are actually interested in candidates with a history in health communication

MW: We should think about what we want to become and back into this.

MA: There's so much confusion even within our department. When we put together the STEM program, the digital media courses were important. We never talked about health or science at the time.

MW: Can we put the name of the department in there and elaborate on what we do?

DS: I'm skeptical of any argument that would approach ethics as a hard science. Ethics is an aspect of every hard science, but ethics itself isn't a science.

CF: Monica's point about a distinction between the science and the STEM pieces is important because two forces are affecting us in terms of big picture strategy. We moved toward the undergrad STEM designation with digital classes, then a year or two later the campus got focused on oceanographic and marine science (and continues to be). A big part of the buy in we got from the campus to expand the department is based on our ability to contribute to this focus. This position is possibly a channel to begin bringing these two focuses together.

MA: Is the center functional?

CC: I am working on a video to get people excited about the center.

MA: Is the center just an idea? Do they have faculty?

CF: It's an idea that is quickly becoming realized. The big setback was not getting funding for the building, but people are expecting it will go up soon.

MA: They're making a big hire soon.

CC: And there is a task force being assembled.

MA: We need to be aware of what's happening and what they're doing, but no one is there for us to collaborate with us, so in the meantime let's focus on what we need to develop the multimedia part. We don't teach any science.

MW: Let's each throw out two or three words we'd like to see. Synthetic media. Science communication. Data visualization.

MA: I think we should wait until Deni can be here for this discussion to see where she sees the Chair moving forward.

CF: We will definitely confer with Deni on this but I do want to move on with this. We will continue this conversation, but think about some words you'd like to see in the description.

CF: Undergrad program. Joan is an incredible resource but faculty have an important role in advising. Some things can come up in internal advising sessions that don't come up with Joan. Keep a lookout for that. Everyone is assigned students based on last name and the expectation is the students reach out to us to initiate advising sessions. Joan knows how to tell students what classes they need, and our role is to keep them successful.

CF: Grad advising is different and assigned individually. It's best to reach out to your advisees. A lot of that advising is setting them up for success when they reach their culminating projects.

MW: Ten DJD new students. Three undergrad interns – we need a portal. We need something on paper to include in our self study that says we are planning on streamlining the process. No faculty senate meetings.

NY: Putting into motion what was planned for NNB.

CP: Be on lookout for self study requests.

CF: Congrats to Natacha for her paper, and Deni for getting her book agent.

MW: Working on my next book.

CP: Give me your syllabi. Contact me if you need stuff purchased.