

Department of Journalism and Digital Communication Faculty Meeting  
Friday, Oct. 7, 2022

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CF: Happy Friday morning, hope you weathered the storm OK. Let's run through updates then discuss a couple of important things: The formal launch of our curriculum planning process and the search for the Poynter Jamison Chair. Joan will be back in a few days but we don't have any advising updates from her. Spring registration is right around the corner so we should encourage our majors to register early and often. We're blessed to have strong enrollment, but that means that virtually all our classes are full. We're putting restrictions on certain classes for only our majors.

CF: This is the kickoff for the Hearst award season. Let's think about how we can involve Hearst in our classes with assignments connected to the awards. Hearst is a major awards program for only accredited journalism programs and every qualified application results in \$250 back to the department. The awards are sweeping in terms of types of media – 15 different competitions. Going to send out details on the schedule and will put posters around PRW. Nov. 1 is the deadline for feature writing, Dec. 6 is deadline for explanatory reporting. Rest of the deadlines go into spring. They will consider work done in the current academic year.

CF: We have a Fulbright scholar from Bulgaria in St. Pete for the next month and a half working out of Poynter. She's interested in connecting with us while she's here. Keep a lookout for the email. Her area of focus is on fact checking, particularly where it combines with media literacy. We're also looking to set up a workshop for our students.

CF: We are officially in the midterm grading period, which ends on Oct. 18. It's an important check-in point for our students, and this is the time we need individual outreach to assess what is in the student's best interest: doubling down on succeeding, withdrawing.

DE: I echo this point. You have a week between the midterm deadline and the withdrawal deadline. We really don't want students to withdraw because we have trouble retaining them. We strongly encourage you to work with the student to figure out a way for the student to be successful in the class. I'm doing a study on CDF at midterms vs. CDW at end of semester. Campus average is 9%, and our department is doing higher than average. The only way we deviate from that is with adjuncts. We're in good shape but let's keep up the good work.

CC: I am working with a SAS student who just isn't turning in work. I'm trying to get the student to do the work but it's just not happening. SAS is going to reach out to the student.

DE: That's exactly the type of intervention I wish everyone would do. There are resources here.

CF: Let's talk curriculum brainstorming. We're coming out of a dormant period around the development of curriculum. We've done some small things but nothing on a large scale. Now that our new faculty are here it's a good time to step back and look at curriculum across the board. This morning is kind of a kickoff to this process, and an opportunity to define what we're trying to accomplish. I wanted to share some thoughts on the strategic goals we want to embrace through this process.

CF: One goal is to ensure our programs reflect contemporary media landscape. Second goal is to fully embody STEM designation. DJD emerged on the leading edge on digital journalism and we want to keep it there. We want to contribute to the Center of Excellence while keeping our focus on technology and social consciousness. For example, we can migrate toward the DIG prefix classes to move toward STEM. We should consider the university's new certification process for new online courses.

CF: What should be the overarching goals of our curriculum review? What are we doing that we want to keep, and what's missing?

MW: Where does recruitment fit into this? We should see this as a marketing strategy?

CF: One way I think about that: what do we know about what incoming students are looking for? How can we learn more about that?

DE: Does ACEJMC have resources about that? In terms of strategic goals, we need something about educating our students for leadership because that's part of the R1 perspective. We can teach students skills, but they need to be leaders in media.

CF: That could apply to both undergrads and grads.

CC: In terms of leadership, the things we're doing with interns in VideoWorks is application of real world leadership skills. I'm seeing that in some of the students.

CF: I'm hearing creation of co-curricular opportunities.

MA: On a more practical level, simply looking at courses, maybe we can build the program where the core is journalism-focused: leadership, critical thinking, etc. And then load it up with electives on digital media production skills. The proposed goals for the program make students graduate with skills that make them competitive on the job market. Before consolidation, when the department proposed a new program, the dean's office would work with a research company to do a market study to analyze job openings in a particular field and develop a list of skills

required by those openings. The department could then take that and build courses around it. Susan Toler might be a good point of contact to see if this is still an available resource.

CF: I think anything involving market studies, student outreach is important.

NY: We should consider digital content creation on different platforms.

MA: We could do different tracks – social, audio/visual, coding, etc.

DE: I agree in part – we want somewhere in our goals educating visionary and analytic leaders. That sums up critical thinking, etc. But I'm less taken with the idea of having different lines because it seems to me that journalism today is multimedia, multi-platform. Text is no more important than pictures, pictures no more important than text.

MA: I'm not advocating they do the core together then split into different tracks. The skills would be reflected by the courses. I don't mean an official concentration. Right now we have only one course that covers social, web design, etc. We should offer groups of classes that cover different areas. I think right now our program is more general – it's one class and done. We should offer the opportunity to take at least two classes in certain areas.

CC: The challenge I see in advanced video, if I talk about something more advanced I lose them.

MA: Our curriculum misses the opportunity to get advanced knowledge if you want to. They need more chances to practice their craft. One course is not enough – they forget.

CC: My problem is that when I give them advanced topics, they glaze over.

NY: Because a lot of them aren't going into journalism so they don't want to practice.

MA: Since we won't make it official, we would have room to experiment. If we offer advanced courses over multiple semesters and they don't take it, we know there's no market for it.

CC: We also have to consider the pressure to have full classes.

MA: We could offer advanced classes every two years.

DE: In terms of class size, we are going to be focused on reduced class size. We want 19 or 49 for metrics. We aren't going to overload classes because one area we can excel in is class size – they can't do that in Tampa.

CC: Letting in people who are not ready for the class almost serves a disservice to those who are all advanced.

NY: That happens at every university. There are intro classes and advanced classes.

MW: I get concerned when we talk about building a program that reflects demand. We should build one that is responsive to demand. A program where we can morph and implement change. We can't lock ourselves in.

CF: I like the idea of making that dynamic quality explicit in our plan. Many students are considering many different careers, all of which are changing. We need to be nimble in responding to these changes.

MR: As far as keeping up with shifts in this digital environment, there's a growing appetite for alternative forms of journalism. We need the objective, neutral approach but you also need alternative approaches that capture stories issues and problems that the mainstream media won't capture. Social media has given these room to evolve. For example, I designed a course on critical journalism in American history – this stuff isn't new. Let's not ignore activism journalism; let's engage with it. Whether it plugs into a career, it could, but there are students who might dabble in this on the side.

NY: Building off what Mark said, we won't know what forms journalism will take in five years. The critical skills need to remain, but journalism functions on content.

MA: The students don't understand what good content is and how to make it.

NY: We have the chance to teach them.

MA: Those skills will transfer to anything.

CF: When I look at our undergrad courses, we have a number of reporting classes and a number of the 101-level.

NY: When they get to NNB, I ask them where they're published and they're just not. We need to show them how the skills they're learning transfer to digital content.

CF: How much of that is about taking an existing course and ensuring we're teaching it right versus whether we are teaching the right courses in the first place.

MA: They're focused on the mechanics and details without understanding the bigger picture. They see the work as an assignment, but it could be so much more.

DE: Critical assignments can include both the assignment and the bigger picture.

CC: Where's the passion? Sometimes it feels like you're talking to a brick wall. I try to highlight the importance of being published but it's frustrating. We're Journalism and Digital Communication – how are they intertwined or separate? Many students don't want to be journalists.

MA: If you want to learn to make good content, you need photo and video and social and...

NY: It's a porous border between journalism and digital communication.

MW: Are we still a niche department? We were when we started but it may not be so anymore.

CF: Good question. I want to look at our peers in Florida to see how similar degrees are being framed. What are our marks of distinctions?

MW: If we do a marketing question, that's an important question.

MA: SPC teaches digital media with DIG courses. I think Eckerd or somebody else also teaches a digital track where they do web-based work.

MW: I think our STEM designation will be key to defining that niche.

DE: With the new center there will be undergrad research opportunities, too.

CF: One big challenge I think we have is that we are preparing students for complicated jobs that involve lots of different skill sets, and at the same time there is significant overlap from one course to the next in terms of skill because everything is intertwined. Social media will involve photo and video. Photo will involve distribution of work through different platforms. We should be thoughtful about those points of overlap.

SS: I agree – are we trying to be a niche program or are we trying to be generalists. I want to look at other universities' curricula not only in Florida. I was interested in mass communication before journalism for a long time. Giving students options for a concentration is a good idea, too. I think to define a concentration we need a cluster of three courses. But if we want to add something we need to prune something, so that will be a problem too. I'll circle back if I find something interesting.

CF: We want to make informed decisions as we work through this process. Let's look at other programs, what our accreditors see as a path forward and embark on the market research phase.

MC: My impression of our curriculum is that it has a good foundation. We need to know the market. We could do entrance and exit surveys for every student. Why are you coming to the program? What is your purpose? And then ask them again at the end. That would give a good idea of what our students want. We shouldn't be a program just for current students – we should be a program for future leaders. We can build up courses based on current issues – sustainability, crisis in journalism, race & gender. My contribution could be development of critical discussion courses. We should start to think about the direction of data journalism too. I think we already apply a lot of critical thinking skills in our courses, though.

MA: I'd love a course in data journalism.

SS: I think one problem with finding out what undergrads want is that they often don't know what they want. In my prior institution I was in a class taught by three full professors who taught

five weeks each. That way, there's less pressure to build a new course for the faculty and the students can try new things.

NY: ProSem is like that – a mandatory course where students are exposed to multiple professors.

MA: We need to start mentoring our students as a group. We teach courses, they come to the class, and that's it. They may take a second or third class with us, but they leave.

CC: I see my students all the time but who knows what they want at 18? 19?

MA: If we coach them from the very beginning it can be so much better for them.

MR: I want to endorse Miyoung's point. There should be timely, contemporary issues in class. It's important to have these discussions, and students get engage with them. Sometimes they feel like a university setting is antiquated. There's a healthier way to engage with them.

MW: How strongly will the STEM designation dictate or guide our curriculum?

CF: There's a mechanical question there I'm not clear on in terms of what we can bring in under the new CIP code.

MA: The STEM designation comes with certain prefixes like DIG. Are you asking whether a certain percent of courses should be STEM? Because I don't know that off the top of my head. I don't think it's a certain number.

MW: We will need to find out if we're going STEM because the basic map may already be there.

MA: We should make a list of our courses. A bunch of our courses are MMC 4936 because it's a generic special topics course. We should try to find equivalents with DIG prefixes in the SCNS. And we should look at our permanent numbers. I teach Social Media and have students from majors around campus. They don't come to class for news, they come for marketing. We need to find courses that align with what we're actually teaching.

MW: Let's learn more about the requirements/opportunities of STEM to see what we need to do.

MA: I wonder what students feel when they look at our outdated course titles, including Writing for the Mass Media.

NY: We need to ask whether the term "mass media" is antiquated. The course titles look boring. Can we change the titles?

CF: We're beholden to the titles, but we can find courses in the SCNS that reflect what we are doing.

NY: There's a course on Kanye West called "Yeet: Genius by Design" and it's garnered press coverage. The syllabus is thorough – it's popular because of the name.

CF: Yes, and that's where we can use Special Topics courses come in.

CF: I'm hoping to establish a workgroup on this with Mark and Monica at the helm. The lowest hanging fruit we can tackle is the DIG prefixes.

DE: I agree that whatever we can do with titles is important, but our website is also important. Students are made to check a box when they apply. If we can put something on the website that will entice students we need to do that. Another thing is that our emerging technology lab will be open as soon as spring. It's a designated classroom both for teaching and research and I'd like to see JDC take advantage of that.

MC: Our website is not good. It's really important. Faculty websites should be improved as well because people will check who will teach their classes. Also, I don't have a data science lab on the St. Pete campus. How can journalism work their curriculum if they don't have the resources?

DE: The emerging technology lab is supposed to meet some faculty research needs like eye tracking. We also have some resources at the library.

SS: The faculty and staff page on the department website is broken on mobile. Also if we want to have access to the emerging technology lab we need to work with them because the line will form quickly.

DE: There isn't a "them," it's university-wide. Frechette is on the committee, so work with him on what equipment you want.

SS: Virtual reality research is dependent on equipment.

CF: We need a website improvement ad-hoc committee.

CF: Second discussion item: Poynter Jamison Chair.

MW: We had some updates on the previous job description.

MA: I wrote something but haven't sent it to you yet. The original application wanted someone with experience in machine learning and it made it sound like we wanted a computer scientist.

MW: Does everyone agree with the newly-written paragraph?

MA: Yes, perfect.

CF: Are we suggesting a mix of the areas of focus is what we are looking for as opposed to a comprehensive list?

MW: If everyone is good with that, we're good. Thanks for your help Miyoung.

DE: It's comprehensive. I like it. It defines scope in terms of university expectations as well as what we would expect the chair to be doing.

MW: I will send out another version of this and we can vote on it.

DE: The preferred qualifications in terms of teaching the law class, we're talking about an endowed chair who will teach two classes per year. Another thing is whether the candidate would meet the requirements of a full professor. You're going to have more trouble getting it through if you're hiring an associate professor at an endowed chair level. Endowed chairs are supposed to be models of senior researchers and educators. The idea is to bring in people at the pinnacle of their careers. Lastly, I think it's worthwhile to put in language that explains the chair is one of the nation's first endowed chairs in media ethics. New chair will be only the third to hold the position. May be worthwhile to say it's one of two or three endowed positions in ethics on our campus. I'll send along language.

CF: Back to the rank issue: how does tenure fit into this? This person would be presumably tenured.

DE: Yes, this would be a position hired with tenure.

MW: Full professor vs. associate professor – do you feel strongly about this? If we're looking over the horizon we don't want someone past their prime.

DE: It all comes down to how endowed chairs are seen at an R1 university. I guess you could say "associate" or "full" professor but you'll get a lot of applications out of range and you will get a hard time getting a tenure hire. If you get the search started, you can take a look at the application after a few months to see how you're doing.

MW: What do we think about the preferred qualification of background in law? Should we keep that?

MA: I trust Deni's opinion, we should probably nix it.

MW: Preferred qualification of expertise in journalism – should we say experience instead? It's yet another thing we are asking for expertise for.

MA: I agree and would like to add Miyoung's suggestion – grant writing skills to even the minimum qualifications.

MW: Do we want to include that in preferred?

MA: We can do that.

MR: It looks good. Some terms from the deleted bullet points don't appear in the paragraph like digital privacy, etc. Are the omitted words encapsulated in the new graf?

MW: I think the challenge is that if you have too many requirements people will think they have more boxes they need to check. Please send any suggestions to me if you'd add on anything. Can we take a vote on agreed-upon changes?

MW: Move we accept this as job description pending changes.

MA: Second

<<All vote in the affirmative>>

MC: For midterm grades, when is the deadline?

CF: Oct. 18. You have a little time and considering the disruptions we have been working through I wouldn't feel bad going right to the deadline.

MA: It's a Tuesday at Midnight. Make sure you get the confirmation email.

CF: Thanks to the search committee. Time for ongoing business. Following up on our discussion about advising, they have a template for a Canvas advising section they're setting up for various units and we are going to piggyback on that to create an information hub for students.

MW: Re: grad program. We have 12 applicants and three admits so far. Eager to get a report on the internship portal.

MW: For faculty senate, the BOG sent up a trial balloon regarding the prospect of post tenure evaluation and it produced an ominous document. The burden falls on the chair of the department to make these evaluations, going eventually to the Provost. Many legal questions arose.

NY: New mission statement for NNB.

CP: Business cards on order.

CC: The webcast is coming along.