

Department of Journalism and Digital Communication Faculty Meeting
Thursday, November 10, 2022

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CF: Let's get started. Thanks for working with shifting schedules. To recap where we're at with the self study: today is a chance to have a discussion around some of the critical documents we reference throughout the self study – policies and plans we've compiled throughout the years. Let's discuss any changes that would be valuable and then give voting members of the faculty a chance to weigh in on whether they should be adopted. The draft is coming together and narrative writing is active now. Deni took the lead on executive summaries and they're complete. Any holes in the draft will be plugged over the weekend and on Monday we will have a solid draft of all prompts. After we submit in digital form, ACEJMC does a preliminary review. If there are any questions, they will send the self study back for elaboration in early December/late November. From there, it's distributed to our site team. In the weeks ahead we will schedule travel and accommodations.

JE: I'd like to introduce Amanda Timmers from advising. Classes are filling and full. Transfer students have not yet registered. Nov. 14 will be the day. I'd love to have the opportunity to chat with whoever is scheduling summer and fall because students try to schedule two days per week and are having trouble.

CF: Let's start with the Mission and Vision Statement. It's one of the oldest documents we have but it's been updated over time to reflect changes to our program. Any thoughts on suggestions for revisions or changes?

MA: I don't see anything that requires a change. Small typo in section 2's list of courses that had some HTML on the page. And shouldn't we list some department electives?

CF: You're looking at the link to the self study?

MA: Yes.

CF: Got it. We're looking at these standalone documents today.

NY: It's thorough and comprehensive. No changes. But as an outsider looking in, I think in the current moment where we are, the part that comes about race and gender pages down might do better higher up and highlighted. I feel it's a loss if we don't highlight that up high.

CF: To an extent, the themes are dictated in an order but early on, we are asked to highlight diversity.

NY: In the part where it says "our mission is to..." we have an opportunity to highlight it.

CF: To clarify, that comment is on the Mission and Philosophy Statement?

NY: Yes. If we can incorporate the dedication to race and diversity in the first bullet points it would be good. Can I volunteer to work on the punctuation?

CF: Yes. Let's put it in a Google Doc.

CF: Let's move on to the Strategic Plan. It's a newer document that hasn't been refined like our mission statement has. It's based on a strategic hiring plan we put into play in 2021 before the recent hiring we've done. The focus was crafter with an eye toward what we wanted the next iteration of the department would look like. To what extent do those themes look pertinent now that we are 4/5 hires into the process?

NY: Do we want the word "data" in the document somewhere? It doesn't appear.

CF: Good point.

SS: Where we talk about a STEM bachelor's degree, maybe we can add "data visualization." Maybe we should add something more visual here like virtual reality.

CF: Another question is whether we feel this document is doing a good job capturing what our strong suit would be around these topics. We aren't a computer sciences department, but we also aren't a media studies department that doesn't deal with tech at all. Our forte is blending the technical with the journalistic. I want to ensure that balance is coming through in this document.

NY: I don't think this comes off like a computer sciences department. This weaves journalism and tech together. We don't have that "who are we?" nugget. If someone would glance at the document, who would they think we are? What do we stand for? That driving narrative isn't summarized up high.

DE: I agree. We made a major change to our undergraduate major and we need to not bury that. The accreditors will be looking at us with fresh eyes. Taking the undergrad major and using it as a platform to say who we are and why we are special should be high in the strategic plan. In the executive summaries, I was looking for ways to say how we're new and different.

MA: It does come out a little too much as computer science. We should rearrange the bullet points, putting everything about journalism at the top. Point 2 on artificial intelligence, neural networks and virtual reality – do we do any of that right now? It sounds like a lot of buzzwords.

MW: We talk about the tech a lot. But how many journalism programs live at ground zero for global climate change? It gives a real impact of what we're trying to do. We have the opportunity to impact relevant research.

NY: We should speak for the country, not the world.

MW: We don't want to look grandiose, sure.

CF: One of the emerging themes for me is that the changes to the undergraduate program is a huge evolution forward but there's a lot of growth that can happen within this new STEM degree: curricula, avenues of research, etc. If we can articulate what STEM means for us in terms of where we are and where we want to be, it would be helpful.

CC: The students' YouTube show is really taking off. Students have roles and they're doing a good job. We are on the verge of saying it's an application of STEM, using professional equipment to make a show.

CF: That's exciting and we can elaborate on this co-curricular experience in the self study.

MC: The mission statement is comprehensive, but I hope we can highlight what is unique about our department. What's the direction regarding current issues? Climate, environment, democratic issues? People will ask what type of courses we have – we can add those to the strategic plan. In the first paragraph of the strategic plan, the last sentence is a bit vague. We should include the word "critical."

CF: In the mission statement, there may be more contemporary themes that should bubble up. The strategic plan can then fully elaborate on those themes. I'd like to explore Natatcha's question of "who are we?"

CF: I think Miyoung is touching on the strategic plan of balancing the things our students need to know today and looking forward to where we think journalism and new dissemination is going to get to. VR would be one particular theme – news industry might get there, might not. In our documents, if we can separate what we're focused on because it's imminently important and where we think we're going would be good.

NY: Accreditation is for journalism, not digital comm right?

CF: Advertising and mass comm programs fall under accreditation as well.

NY: We're neither of those. For us, journalism is driving accreditation.

CF: The journalism as well as the digital communication is our way of teaching. At the end of the day, it's not the department that gets accredited, it's the degree programs. We're putting up our undergraduate and graduate degrees up for reaccreditation.

MW: Can we answer the question of who we are with noting our culture? We're small, tight knit. Students often highlight this. Could we state our strategic goal to maintain this student-focused model?

MA: I'd change "develop" to "maintain" our national model status (point 4), since we work with NNB and Midtown. We're advanced in that.

MR: Furthering the strategic plan discussion on points 2 and 6. Some of the language is dated. We should highlight algorithmic data journalism and surveillance in terms of media ethics. The university system should address these concerns because the FCC won't. We should tie active job descriptions into the strategic plan.

CF: Moving on to the master's program strategic plan. Questions/comments?

NY: Some verbiage. Point 1: change "media landscape" to "mediascape." And rather than "embrace," use an active verb.

CF: Something to take us from observer role to hands on action teaching.

MW: Point 2 – how do we dovetail with the university's strategic goals? I'd like to expand on that.

CF: My thought is that the university's strategic plan is very broad and the particular goals around student and faculty success are easy to map but those connections are generic. One workaround would be to look at the areas of strategic focus on the strategic plan and one or two such points tie into our plan. It's a good idea to look at points of alignment.

MW: And when we go looking for funding, it's good to be able to highlight how you map our plan to the university's.

MA: There's nothing about the Food Writing certificate in the strategic plan.

MW: I wondered how to include that. We can use that as an example of a specialty that can be attained with a graduate education.

MA: Elsewhere in the self study, I read about the Food Writing certificate and how it was unique when we started it. Since we mention it in the self study, we should put something in the strategic plan for the master's program, even if it's as basic as saying we want to grow it and advertise it more. Maybe a plan would be to work with those students to find an adviser and increase number of publications coming out of the certificate.

CF: I think the uniqueness of the Food Writing program is worth focusing on. We know we are uniquely suited to do well in the Food Writing program, our connections to climate and marine science groups in the area and others. We can also think about how the types of stories that come up can employ data and multimedia storytelling techniques.

CF: Moving on to the assessment plan. It hasn't been updated in a significant way in a few years, which is a reflection of an assessment program we solidified in the last self study. Since then we have tweaked it but have not really overhauled it. We continue to engage in data collection about critical assessments and reflect on student outcomes and how we can refine our curricula and teaching methods. One note: ACEJMC have refined the list of competencies they are interested in and we need to make sure we're up to date on that. For example, domestic and global diversity competencies have been fused into one. They've gone from 12 to 10 competencies, but we continue to focus on additional competencies of visual literacy and business/entrepreneurship. Any thoughts on assessment?

MA: Numbers is a competency. Which courses assess that one? One of those may have been Research Methods, which we don't offer any more. Also, the research competency. I'm surprised that theory is only listed as one course. Can we incorporate additional competencies in other courses?

CF: For each course, we identify two big competencies, so it could be true that other courses touch on them.

MA: Is there any rule keeping us from assessing more than two competencies per course? Is that something we decided?

CF: Yes, that was our decision so we could focus on the most dominant competencies on each course. We also include the caveat that courses can touch on a range of competencies. It was our way of making this more streamlined and manageable. We need to ensure the way we map these competencies is up-to-date. We can put together a Google doc showing what we've been doing so far and see if it makes sense to move some things around.

SS: Suggestion: There's no mention of being up-to-date with the industry. We can include in assessment plan or mission statement. Could be just one sentence highlighting our desire for students to get jobs.

CF: The industry piece of the assessment plan is important. There are a couple of questions in the self study on how professionals engage with student work. The internship program provides an avenue for professional assessment of student work.

CF: Moving on to the diversity and inclusion plan.

CP: This was the most recently updated plan and includes action items. Self study requires a date of last revision, which will be today.

CF: A minor update on point 5 talking about diversity as a learning outcome/competency. This goes back to the melding of the global and domestic diversity competencies.

CF: Another prompt to consider is any reflections we have on how well we are doing on these points. Strengths and weaknesses.

NY: Would it strengthen our material to highlight that we are doing more in today's Florida than we are expected to?

CF: ACEJMC deserves credit for how transparently they operate. A couple of months ago I was on a council call and they specifically highlighted how state legislatures are making it difficult for accredited units to adhere to accrediting body expectations on diversity and inclusion. They were showing a sensitivity to such units operating under legal and political constraints. We will also have the chance to talk with our site team when they visit.

MY: Why is "equity" not included with "diversity" and "inclusion?"

NY: I think we should follow whatever USF uses.

CF: It definitely includes equity. Consistency with university-level statements is important.

MC: Let's include that. It's important.

MA: Now that we're talking about language. Maybe we should just standardize it across the board to be DEI.

CF: Another key word is "access." We should try to include that more prominently. In terms of improving the process around the plan, we could do a better job of tracking the evidence that we are doing well on these five points. We are all making efforts to do that but we haven't set up a way to do that type of measurement over time.

MC: There's a DEI index for universities. Does anyone know USF's ranking?

CF: I didn't know there was a ranking.

MY: I'll find and share.

CF: It would be interesting to see the metrics they're looking at and seeing if we are tracking the same things.

CF: Let's talk next steps. We will work through feedback/suggested changes and circulate the documents to everyone. We will have digital votes on adopting or rejecting changes. Keep an eye out for that email. We will set up documents so you can put in suggestions beforehand. Meanwhile there will be a lot of activity in the self study document. We're probably 97% of the way to complete data compilation. Monday, I'll send out an update confirming that the self study

is completely drafted and ready for final review. Please review ASAP and weigh in with final feedback.

MW: Thank you for your incredible amount of work.

Regular Updates/Ongoing Business

CF: Just found out that CAS is looking for summer schedules in early December. So, we need a finalized plan in the next couple of weeks. You'll be hearing more about that soon.

CF: We have a small reprieve on textbook adoption but please submit via Follett ASAP.

CP: Frechette, check email from Kim Miller re: financials for self study.

CF: It's been a challenging semester with a couple of storms, but hopefully students are plugged back in and ready for the final push.

CF: One final faculty meeting on Dec. 2. Also end of semester gathering that day and we will see graduating DJD student final project presentations.

MC: Can we get floors cleaned?

CP: Yes.