UCC Program Review Committee summary of review

Program – E. W. Scripps School of Journalism

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- B.S.J. Journalism Carr Van Anda Program
- B.S.J. Journalism News and Information Major
- B.S.J. Journalism Strategic Communication Major
- Journalism Minor
- B.S.J. Honors Tutorial College
- M.S. Journalism

This review does not include the Ph.D. in Mass Communications which is run jointly by the School of Media Arts and Studies and the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism. This degree program is reviewed as part of the review of the School of Media Arts and Studies.

Recommendation

This program is found to be viable, see report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

Date of last review – AY 2007

Date of this review – AY 2016

This review has been sent to school director and the dean. The school director had some corrections which have been included, otherwise he was satisfied with the report. The dean’s response is attached. This review has been sent to the Graduate Council, they have no comments to add.
School of Journalism
Academic Program Review
On-Site April 23-24, 2015
Report Submitted October 2, 2015

Prepared by:

Mingun Lee, Ph.D., MSW, Internal Reviewer
Associate Professor of Social Work, Department of Social and Public Health, College of Health Sciences and Professions

Michael R. Kushnick, Ph.D., Internal Reviewer
Associate Professor of Exercise Physiology, School of Applied Health Sciences and Wellness & Chair, Department of Interdisciplinary Health Studies, College of Health Sciences and Professions

Caveats for this report:
- The information provided to the reviewers was not all up to date;
- This report does not include review or evaluation of the doctoral program.

Overview

Faculty Profile & Teaching

The E.W. Scripps School of journalism is one of the Ohio University’s signature programs, ranking among the top journalism schools in the United States. The school is made of 805 undergraduate majors and 50 master’s graduate students.

At present (from the School website), there are 24 faculties: 18 Group I (14 at the Associate or Professor rank and 4 at Assistant professor rank) and 6 on Group II contact and 4 Group III (3 of whom are visiting professionals). The base teaching load is four courses (2/2) per year for Group I faculty and six courses (3/3) per year for Group II faculty. Student-faculty classroom ratio is adequate for effective teaching and learning in all courses: undergraduate student-teacher ratio in skills and laboratory classes does not exceed 20-1. Group I faculty also advises students with a student-faculty ratio of 30-1. Several faculty members have been recognized by the University for their outstanding teaching or mentoring.
B.S. Journalism (undergraduate)

- The program requires students to complete a core of journalism courses (four courses), a track made of journal courses (four courses), a wide variety of courses in the liberal arts, and a specialization in one or two areas of study outside of journalism.
- For a B.S. Journalism, students must earn a minimum of 120 hour credits including non-professional coursework (at least 72 credits) and professional hours (no more than 48 credits).
- The program offers two specialized tracks: News & Information track and Strategic Communication track.
  - The News & Information track covers the fields of broadcast news, magazine journalism, news writing and editing, and online journalism. Students can select courses that focus specifically on one of those areas, but they also have the option of choosing a wider array of courses.
  - The Strategic Communication track covers the advertising and public relations fields. Students in this track learn how to communicate messages on behalf of clients.
- The curriculum offers learning flexibility and many opportunities to gain professional skills working in a variety of media platforms to more broadly prepare for the changing industry.
- All students are required to complete an internship before graduation. The internship, the hands-on courses and many hands-on opportunities on campus, together provide students numerous opportunities to gain real-world experience.
- Self identified as “data-based investigative reporting”-focused augmented with vast experiences in reality-based experiences

M.S. Journalism (graduate)

- The program currently offers a two-year M.S. program.
- The program requires students to take a minimum of 38 semester credit hours as classroom credits. Three of the 38 credits will be thesis or professional project.
- All master’s students must take a minimum of four courses from the Journalism School. Students are also required to complete either a thesis (3 credits), professional project (3 credits), or reading option (1 credit plus additional coursework).
• Of the 25 masters students, 22 currently receive stipends as teaching assistant (1) and research assistants (21).

• Self defined as a theoretical/foundational focused-program

As a clear representation of their success, the Scrips College of Communication and the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism recently moved into a new building, the Steven L. Schoonover Center for Communication, funded in part through a donation by a Scripps College graduate. The building features dedicated to the journalism school include: 4 computer labs, 3 research labs, 1 conference room, and a learning center/resource room. The school also uses E.W. Scripps Hall, the Radio-Television Building, and Sing Tao Center on the Athens Campus. It should be noted that a substantial portion of the cost of the new facility has fallen to the Scripps College of Communication and, by extension, to the schools within it, including the School of Journalism, putting great financial pressure on the School.

Assessments

Over the course of one and a half days the two (2) internal reviewers had meetings with different faculty, administrative and student groups to assess the past, present and future of the School. While not all topics could be explored in great detail, the following Commendations, Challenges and Recommendations will serve as the platform of this report. To provide further guidance, the report is divided into Undergraduate (only), Undergraduate and Graduate, Graduate (only) and Members of the School and/or College as appropriate.

Commendations

The School of Journalism should be commended for the following:

Undergraduate

1) maintaining a large undergraduate population.

The School is the largest academic program in the College with approximately 805 majors (as of April 2015) in the journalism degree through two tracks – News and Information (approximately 2/3rd) and Strategic Communications (approximately 1/3rd) and continues to
maintain a large student population. While the actual number of undergraduate students has fluctuated they continue to be among the largest program at the University. This reflects the popularity of the program that addresses important (foundational) knowledge and professional experiences/preparations.

2) maintaining accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
3) achieving a national reputation as being a very high caliber program.
4) providing strong professional experiences for their students.

The undergraduate journalism curriculum has been dynamic, recently undergoing a transformation from quarters-to-semesters, and moved from six sequences to two tracks. While the process was intensive and there were a number of challenges, according to a senior-level student, the faculty helped “…make the transition from quarters to semesters fairly seamless and easy…” and the current students were not short on compliments regarding their satisfaction with the new majors and course requirements.

All told, the faculty indicated an openness to evaluate and to continue to address the curricular needs of the current students to help prepare them for professional careers. Importantly, there is a large expectation of students within the curriculum to be involved in their discipline, and the faculty provide significant opportunities for students to do so (described below). Additionally, and to that point, the School has invested in bringing a number of external professionals in to speak with students/student groups.

What’s more, the School has a large Honor’s Tutorial program enrolling 26 students in 2015. Overall, it was suggested that the undergraduate program has a high retention rate.

The School offers its students a plethora of hands on internships and extra-curricular experiences in many media-related organizations and local and on-campus opportunities. All students are required to complete an advisor-approved internship. The College also has an internship coordinator who maintains a database of more than 2,000 internship sites. Internship
opportunities are located throughout the nation and abroad.

One of the strongest achievements of the students and faculty of the School are their involvement in an impressive array of professional organizations and media enterprises that provide extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities related to journalism and strategic communication. The professional organizations include the Society of Professional Journalists, the Ohio University Advertising Association, The Association for Women in Communication, and many others. Student media include outlets such as The Post, the student newspaper, Impressions, a public relations firm, WOUB Public Media, which operates licensed public television and radio students, CollegeGreenmag.com and Global Spotlight. To highlight their success, in 2006 and 2014, the Ohio University chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), which is sponsored by the School of Journalism, was named the “National Outstanding Campus Chapter of the Year.”

Graduate

5) developing a global collaboration.

The School and the Institute for Communication and Media Studies at Leipzig University have developed a double master’s degree for graduate students from the two partner institutions. This double master’s degree program prepares graduate students for a successful career in the rapidly changing field of globally connected media and to become responsible global communicators.

6) promoting graduate student research and professional experiences.

While the primary focus of the master's program is on the fundamentals of journalism research, there is a strong emphasis, as with the undergraduate program, on professional involvement. There are a large number of graduate student development opportunities that parallel those for the undergraduate students (see above). In addition, the journalism master’s degree requires either a thesis (selected by approximately two thirds of the students), a professional project (selected by approximately one third of the students), or the seldom used
“readings” option. Recently, the degree changed from 1 year into a 2 year program. From a number of discussions, it was apparent that this change was needed to ensure that the students had enough opportunities to acquire course requirements (transitioning from more quarters than there are semesters in a year), but also to enhance a graduate student’s time spent in professional development experiences. To address the latter, and to further facilitate professional involvement in research and presentation at the regional and national level, the School has developed a pool of funds to financially support these experiences. While the funds are limited, it is a welcomed step to supplement funds offered through Ohio University’s Graduate Student Senate.

Members of the School and/or College

7) developing a strong community relationship.

The School has developed and maintained a unique community relationship, starting with a High School Journalism Workshop involving regional students as well as students from across the nation. While such efforts are time-intensive, the rewards clearly include helping to establish a recruiting pool as well as the opportunity to demonstrate the changing nature of the fields within journalism.

8) hosting an annual symposium.

To exemplify the faculty and student involvement, annually the School contributes to a well-known symposia providing the students with additional exposure to the field.

9) The credentials of the faculty represent a balance of scholarly and professional experience.

For this seven-year review period (2007-2014), the following summarizes scholarship and creative activities of the faculties: 207 Refereed Presentations, 93 Invited Presentations, 127 Refereed Publications, 57 Books and Chapters, and 139 Articles, reviews, and reports.

The faculty are also effectively engaged in professional services and organizations. In
2014-15, 12 faculty members are advising 13 professional student organizations. One Group II faculty also supervises the Statehouse News Bureau Fellowship program, which is a unique internship to provide students educational opportunity for public affairs reporting. In addition, a number of faculty are editors or serve on editorial boards for journals within the discipline.

**Challenges**

The following *Challenges* are concerns that were discussed within the School and their programs, including:

**Undergraduate**

1) reduced enrollment by 20%. Based on reduced student enrollment, the School’s budget decreased from $3.18 million in 2006-07 to $2.69 million in 2012-13.

While the number of students remain large, the trend over the last few years has been a reduction in undergraduate student enrollment. While this trend is not isolated to journalism, nor Ohio University’s major, a continued reduction in the head count must remain a principle concern for the School.

**Undergraduate and Graduate**

2) a perception of the field(s) of journalism
3) staying at forefront of profession – “digital age”

The School has provided a balanced curriculum between theoretical courses and professional skills. However, amid uncertainty and fewer “traditional” jobs in the field, action is required by the School to respond to new challenges in student recruitment, curriculum with new courses, and contemporary instruction. This will need to include bringing more integration of current topics into hands on and practical courses – and not necessarily relying on student external experiences to suffice for acquisition of the skills the media industry demands.

4) documenting student success.

With a large undergraduate program and a well-known graduate program there is a real
need to document student outcomes. This documentation should include individual student and
group achievements, internship and job placements, students advancing to higher degrees as all
being valuable resources that are not currently (thoroughly) being advertised.
What’s more, documentation of a School-wide professional involvement portfolio will assist
communicating experiential learning opportunities to current and prospective students.

Graduate

5) the “competitiveness” of the program.

An inherent difficulty in higher education is recruiting and retaining high quality graduate
students. While no attempt was made to compare cross-department or college master’s level stipends, we can only compare to our own College, it is important to stay in touch with how the School’s total number of stipends and value per stipend compare to similar programs. One difficulty that seems to have been encountered was the transition to a two year program – resulting in the stipend moving “backwards” from $9,750 to $8,000/year. However, besides the fiscal value, an assessment should be made regarding the less tangible benefits, including experiences in their job and academic preparation.

Members of the School and/or College

6) creating a plan for faculty makeup.

While the School has a very organized system for academic advising, the roles and value of faculty producing scholarly work, involvement with professional organizations, promoting student involvement in professional experiences and scholarly mentorship at all levels is diverse among the faculty. As is a valuable conversation being had across all of higher education and experienced throughout divisions at Ohio University there have been shifts in the balance between the number and roles of tenure track vs non-tenure track faculty (i.e., Group I vs II, III, IV). A number of conversations arose in meetings within the School regarding the division of roles and responsibilities of faculty by position. While a difficult topic to broach there appears to be multiple views/opinions on the appropriate balance and roles for each classification of faculty.
7) the number and strength of strategic partnerships and collaborations within the College and across campus.

The School has been quite successful developing and fostering collaborative initiatives. However, it is appropriate to continue to explore new efforts that may benefit the School (e.g., co-curricular offerings), its faculty (e.g., scholarly productivity) or students (e.g., new and/or innovative approaches for skill acquisition and professional development).

8) evaluation of the way that you are fitting into your new space.
9) evaluation of the balance between student and faculty staff – justify large amount of student help (not necessarily volunteer “student ambassadors”, but paid positions); consider a position to manage recruitment and retention

Beyond faculty resources, while the Schoonover Center is new, there are a number of challenges being uncovered fitting into this new space. These include location of offices between sub-units or people within the School and finding a way to deal with not having resources (or maybe considered, but not necessarily, luxuries) that were in place previously.

It seemed as if there were a large number of paid student employees. In fact, it was identified that the administrative support staff had recently been reduced to two full time employees.

**Recommendations**

The following are the internal reviewers recommendations based off of our one and a half days interviewing different cohorts of faculty, staff and students with the overall goal of maintaining high quality programs at the undergraduate and graduate (master’s) level.

It is **recommended** that the School of Journalism:

**Undergraduate**
1) develop strategies for recruitment.
2) continue to maintain a high quality academic experience.

While efforts toward recruitment are strong within your program, documenting student success and demonstrating how your curriculum addresses the changing nature of journalism are important. In addition, a concerted on-going efforts toward curriculum evaluation is recommended to maintain student satisfaction and learning outcomes achievement. Inevitably, new avenues for student recruitment need to be investigated and appropriate institutional resources identified to seek these additional students. However, the program size must carefully be considered in light of a hands on education model employed so that the School is able to maintain the quality and accreditation of this program.

Undergraduate and Graduate

1) evaluate curriculum in perspective of the changes and advances in the field of journalism.

With the recent transition from quarters to semester and changes made to both the BSJ and MS degrees, it is recommended that internal (i.e., student and faculty) and external (i.e., comparison to other programs) evaluations occur in the curriculum. One of the major emphases should be to ensure advances in media technology is well explored. Additionally, it is important to demonstrate that overall program outcomes are being achieved.

2) continue to build successful curricular collaborations.

Much like the global collaboration that has been initiated, it is strongly recommended that the School explore additional collaborations within the College, across campus and the country, not necessarily limiting itself to traditional sources, but new and innovative media outlets.

3) expand on opportunities for students involvement.

One of the School’s strength has been involvement of student and faculty in professional experiences. It is recommended that these experiences be strongly documented and new
opportunities explored for furthering the Schools mission.

Graduate

4) improve the graduate experience.

While finding mechanisms to increase graduate stipends is tantamount, it is strongly recommended that the School makes students aware of the other benefits of the masters degree program. These include, but are not limited to, student support for research presentation participation, the large number of opportunities for professional skill development, and assisting faculty and participating in an annual symposia.

Members of the School and/or College

5) develop a plan to fill current and future faculty lines.

Besides developing a strategy to fill a void for a cognate area within journalism, it is our recommendation that the School considers positions that may be used for strategic and innovative direction. It is also recommended that the faculty work with administration to consider the balance between tenure track and non-tenure track faculty lines and to evaluate how each may strengthen student engagement as well as teaching needs. Overall, the plan should consider current faculty and new hire’s roles, weighing each carefully to ensure equity.

6) request an evaluation of the entire School and it’s programs at the same time that your external review takes place.

Considering the enormous effort expended by the School’s administration, faculty and staff preparing for both internal and external reviews, it is recommended that you work with the University Program Evaluation Committee to align these two reviews – even if it entails the next internal review occurring earlier than necessary.
Overall:

The School of Journalism at Ohio University boasts a very successful undergraduate program and well-balanced master’s program. The strength of these programs are founded and supported on the invested faculty. It is the recommendation of the reviewers that both programs are strongly viable and add strength to our campus.
March 20, 2016

Dr. David Ingram
Chair, Programs Review Committee
University Curriculum Council
Ohio University

Dr. Ingram:

I have had the opportunity to review comments provided by the program review team assigned to the E. W. Scripps School of Journalism, as well as their own self-report documents. I appreciate the time of the review team as well as their attention to detail in providing thoughtful suggestions and comments. As I read the report, there were several excellent suggestions, to which I’m sure the School will give direct attention. I note that the review team concluded that the School of Journalism is “strongly viable” with “very successful” programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The team also provided recommendations for action. I focus on four such areas in this letter: undergraduate recruitment, enhancing the undergraduate experience, improving the graduate experience, and maintaining an appropriate mix of faculty.

1. Develop strategies for recruitment

The School of Journalism has aggressively pursued a multipronged strategy to maintain or enhance undergraduate admissions and yield. For example, the School has renewed its emphasis on delivering a high-quality summer workshop for high school students. That workshop not only targets underrepresented students—a critical area of need for the entire profession—but also actively recruits students nationally. Yield for that workshop—that is, workshop attendees who then enroll as Ohio University Journalism majors—is quite high. The School has also worked aggressively with the Office of Admissions to participate in recruitment and yield activities.

The Scripps College of Communication recently deployed a new branding campaign to enhance the overall value proposition of the College and its Programs. The School has an opportunity to more fully utilize aspects of the branding campaign to refine its core value statement to prospective students. I also believe that a careful analysis of the School’s website as a recruiting mechanism is warranted and will encourage the faculty to consider that option. The Scripps College will create a new web presence as soon as the new CMS is
deployed by OIT. That college-level revision may also help in this for the latter issue.

Overall, the School has remained aware of concerns surrounding the decline in applications. Our program has not declined at nearly the same rate as other nationally prominent programs (some as high as 50%). And, our projections suggest a relatively flat enrollment rather than additional declines. That said, the School is aggressively pursuing all available options to maintain its status as the second most popular major at Ohio University.

2. Enhance the student experience through curriculum review and revision

The School of Journalism is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and as such is evaluated every six years on nine separate standards, ranging from governance, diversity, research, assessment, to curriculum. ACEJMC accreditation is the gold standard in journalism education. The E.W. Scripps School of Journalism was first accredited in 1952, was reaccredited as recently as 2012, and will be up for reaccreditation in 2018. Their curriculum must meet the high standards outlined by the accrediting council, which stipulates being up-to-date and hands-on. The school prides itself on providing state of the art facilities and instruction across the various disciplines included in our curriculum. Extra curricular hands-on opportunities available to our students are a hallmark of our program, in that they provide students the chance to develop their professional skills outside of the classroom. This is essential, given that ACEJMC limits the number of journalism courses that can be taken, to ensure a broad, liberal arts education.

With that said, faculty in the School have done much to maintain a forward-thinning focus with the curriculum and associate co-curricular activities. For example, faculty have emphasized use of digital technologies in the practice of creating journalistic content, have created courses on computer assisted reporting and data journalism, and have heavily integrated social media into the entire program. The newly created Social Media Analytics lab in the Scripps College will further enhance these efforts. And, the immersive media initiative will allow students the opportunity to engage in cutting edge production of journalistic content using augmented and virtual reality. In short, there are a number of innovative initiatives that allow students to shape the future of journalistic and strategic communication practices.

3. Improve the graduate experience

The Scripps College of Communication is distinctive, both at Ohio University and national, because of its highly successful graduate programs. The PhD and MA degrees offered by the E. W. Scripps School are cornerstones of this reputation. The School remains highly successful in this area. The school will conduct a competitive analysis of its graduate resources (stipends, travel and
research support, etc.) against other graduate programs to determine how our resources compare.

At the College level, I will convene a retreat during the Fall of 2016 to focus on the future directions of our graduate programs. My interest is to identify areas for collaboration, particularly among the three PhD granting units (JOUR, MDIA, and COMS). However, that discussion will also have positive implications for the other graduate programs in the College. The school has also, this year, expanded research and professional colloquia. I intend to build on those efforts with a college-wide colloquia series for graduate students. In short, I intend to focus on enhancing our graduate programs during the coming year; that focus from the Dean’s office coupled with the work already being done by the JOUR faculty will give direct attention to this issue.

4. Faculty composition

The review team noted that there was not consensus among the faculty concerning the composition of group 1 vs. non group 1 faculty in the school. The School Director has enacted a very intentional strategy of using non-group 1 faculty to achieve specific outcomes: exposing students to recently practicing professionals and creating additional teaching capacity so that group 1 faculty could have more time for research and creative/professional activity.

In keeping with our overall staffing strategy as a college, all requests for positions (either new or for replacement due to attrition) require careful analysis and justification. New positions must be justified both in terms of faculty type (i.e., Group 1 vs. Group 2, etc.), and in the focus for the position relative to student demand and the strategic needs of the school and college.

In closing, the review team and self-report were very informative. Overall, the E. W. Scripps School of Journalism is a high functioning unit. Since 2000 (and likely prior to that), the school has the highest average number of majors across undergraduate programs at Ohio University and a graduate program that is respected as one of the very best nationally. The activities stemming from the review will help ensure that these successes continue.

Sincerely,

Scott Titsworth, Ph.D.
Professor and Dean