

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: Accreditation Report of the Journalism and Mass Communications Program, Iowa State University
Date: March 6, 2000

Recommended Action:

Receive the report on accreditation of the Journalism and Mass Communications program, Iowa State University.

Executive Summary:

On May 18, 1998, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism (ACEJ) granted full accreditation to Iowa State University's Journalism and Mass Communications program, through 2003-2004. The program was found to be in compliance with all standards.

The on-site visiting team concluded its report by noting six key strengths: (1) an ambitious vision expressed by ambitious energetic leadership; (2) a continuing commitment to effective teaching; (3) a strong formal and informal advising program; (4) an excellent internship program, supported by effective relationships with media enterprises in the state and beyond; (5) impressive computerized facilities maintained by first-rate professional staff; and (6) a fund-raising program of increasing sophistication and promise.

The visiting team provided a summary of the problems or deficiencies that must be corrected before the next evaluation in 2003. They were:

- Re-evaluate the science communication program at both the undergraduate and graduate levels
- Implement the department's plans for recruiting and retaining minority students
- Improve the department's mentoring program for all faculty in tenure-probationary status, particularly female and minority faculty.

One method of measuring quality of academic programs is to have them accredited periodically by appropriate professional/state agencies. This process is consistent with Key Result Area 1.0.0.0, Quality, of the Board of Regents' strategic plan. More specifically, the goal of accreditation matches Objective 1.1.0.0, "to improve the quality of existing and newly created educational programs." The departmental self-study emphasized that its mission and strategic plan were consistent with the University's strategic plan. The visiting team concurred.

Background and Analysis:

Iowa State's program in journalism was begun in 1905 and has been continuously accredited since 1948. It is the largest journalism and mass communications program in the state, with approximately 700 students, and 24 faculty (full-time and part-time). All undergraduates are required to have an internship of 400 hours, for which they receive three semester credit-hours.

The department offers four degree programs: B.A. in Advertising; B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communications; B.S. in Journalism and Mass Communications; and the M.S. in Journalism and Mass Communications. The department also offers a Communications Studies program, which is also available to non-departmental majors, and hence was not part of the accreditation review. At the time of the self-study (November 1997), 43 percent of the graduates were completing their programs of study in four years.

At the time of the self-study, there were 17 full-time faculty members in the department. Three replacement searches were in process (two retirements and a negative tenure decision). When completed, there will be 19 full-time faculty positions in the department. In the self-study year, there were nine part-time faculty, and two journalists-in-residence, the latter sponsored by a grant from the Freedom Forum.

Accreditation by the ACEJ involves compliance with 12 standards. All standards were met. The standards are:

- 1) Governance/Administration
- 2) Budget
- 3) Curriculum
- 4) Student Records/Advising
- 5) Instruction/Evaluation
- 6) Faculty
- 7) Internships and Work Experience
- 8) Equipment/Facilities
- 9) Faculty Scholarship/Research/Professional Activities

- 10) Public Service
- 11) Graduates/Alumni
- 12) Minority and Female Representation

The visiting team noted many strengths, as it reviewed each of the standards. Strengths included: a faculty active in teaching and advising, a well-supported internship system, improvements in facilities (from the 1992 visit), increased scholarship support for students, recognition of students and alumni through national awards and honors, and improving financial resources.

The visiting team expressed a general concern that the department was trying to do too many things. For example, the requirement that undergraduates have an extensive internship experience places heavy demands on faculty and staff for advising and evaluation. Also, there is the expectation that professors be highly involved with students, consistent with the University's motto of "science with practice." Finally, there is the expectation that the same faculty increase their research, consistent with the status of the University as a Research I institution.

Both the visiting team report and the self-study express concern about two matters -- the desire for a more diverse faculty and student body, and the need for better contact with alumni. The self-study gave an extensive explanation of efforts to recruit faculty and also reported on ways the department is attempting to increase the diversity of students. The self-study also indicated that faculty and staff would be increasing efforts to maintain better contact with graduates.

As noted on page 1 in the Executive Summary, the visiting team stated that three areas should be addressed prior to the next accreditation. They are: (1) reevaluation of the science communication program at both the undergraduate and graduate levels; (2) implementation of the department's plans for recruiting and retaining minority students; and (3) improvement of the department's mentoring program for all faculty in tenure-probationary status, particularly female and minority faculty. The University responded that a full academic program review during the 1998-99 academic year will address these issues.

A copy of the self-study, the visiting team report, and the letter of reaccreditation are on file in the Board Office.

Charles R. Kniker

Approved: _____
Frank J. Stork