

**School of Journalism formal written response to
The Council Committee on Academic Mission
&
Provost's Office**

The School of Journalism would once again like to thank you for your work on this unit review. Our unit feels the report is not only accurate and fair but an invaluable roadmap for moving the school forward. I am pleased to report our unit does not disagree with any of the nine suggestions made by the reviewers. We intend to implement them all and have already begun doing so.

Recommendations

1. Reimagine the school's mandate and size by a) developing a professional communications program, and b) enhancing Indigenization efforts.

Our unit agrees with both parts of this recommendation and has already made significant progress implementing both.

a). Develop a professional communications program. Our unit agrees our school must not only acknowledge but promote the fact that our graduates are highly sought after in the field of professional communications. We recently expanded our internship program to include a number of new paid communications internships, adding two new placements in Winter 2020. Now included in the mix are paid 13-week internships with Courts of Saskatchewan in Regina; SaskEnergy in Regina; Canadian Western Agribition in Regina; and the Western Veterinary College in Saskatoon. We are also working to create additional communications internships at the RCMP Heritage Centre and with the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

We have already begun promoting these communications internships in our marketing materials. Further down the line we intend to develop and deliver various communications courses exploring a variety of communications topics—none of which our school currently covers but we know there is demand for—such as social media, public relations, internal communications, external communications, crisis communications, etc. Sessionals could lead these classes. Or, as the report suggests, tenure-track positions may be required or we collaborate with the Centre for Continuing Education's Certificate in Public Relations.

Our unit believes the school's name should reflect this expansion. Some are in favour of simply adding "and Communications" back to our official name and once again be known as the University of Regina "School of Journalism and Communications." Others feel that may be regressive and have proposed going with something like "School of Journalism and Media Communications."

Whatever the case, reimagining our mandate, developing a professional communications program, changing our name and rebranding the school will require the most work of the nine recommendations. As such, we want to get it right, which is why we hired a consultant to assist with creating a strategic plan and have also enlisted the help of the Faculty of Business Administration's Hill and Levene School of Business Centre for Management Development to prepare a business plan. See "Timelines and Workplan" at the end of this report for more details.

b) Expand into Indigenous Journalism. The School of Journalism has a long tradition of working with Indigenous academics and journalists to teach students how to responsibly and respectfully cover First Nations people, communities and issues. This has resulted in an impressive list of distinguished Indigenous graduates now working in journalism and communications. But we can do better—and we have since the unit review report was completed. In the last year we've hosted elders, chiefs, and First Nation high school students. Smudging now takes place in every Friday at our school. We've also recently taken our students outside our school on field trips to a number of First Nations and reconciliation events.

In Fall 2019 we filled our Asper Chair with Jeanelle Mandes. A member of Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation, Jeanelle earned both her bachelor of arts in journalism and her masters with us. She also holds a BA in Indigenous Studies from First Nations University of Canada. Since 2016 Jeanelle has worked as the editor of Eagle Feather news. Jeanelle is our only Indigenous staff member. She has already proven herself invaluable for the journalism skills she brings to the school, as a resource for faculty and students covering Indigenous topics and stories, and as a recruiter of Indigenous students. Moving forward, we would like to create a tenure track, chair or fellowship position for an Indigenous journalist. Quite simply, our school has been too white for too long. We know this has been a barrier for potential Indigenous students. Not only would this increase enrolment, we feel securing such a chair or tenure-track position is our (and the University's) obligation as part of our commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, particularly number 86.

2. Develop street-ready journalists

We agree with this recommendation. However, we feel this is already one of our core strengths. As the review states, "professional practice is taught by people with significant and appropriate professional experience. This professional training of future journalists was the area of strength consistently emphasized in our discussions with faculty members, students, graduates and employers alike."

We feel this is achieved by balancing theory and practice in our classrooms and by us being the only jschool in Canada offering paid 13-week journalism internships. Many of our students are working in the field or freelancing before they graduate, often at the organizations they intern at. Newsrooms throughout this city and province are filled with our graduates. There is more demand for our graduates than we are currently supplying. So it's not so much an issue of us failing to develop street ready journalists. It is an issue of us increasing our enrolment. That said, we agree we can do better, which is why we are focusing our efforts on recommendation number three.

3. Adapt updated course content/descriptions for the digital era.

We agree with this recommendation and have already begun adapting course content for the digital era. Examples include revising course outlines and assignments to include fewer traditional assignments (laying out newspapers, producing television and radio broadcasts) and focusing more on contemporary approaches, such as podcasts, livestreams, multimedia pieces, online journalism, photojournalism and social media.

In spring/summer 2020 we will perform a gap analysis of all our courses and update all of our course descriptions. To give a sense of the discussions we've had so far, we feel we should eliminate words like "print", "magazine" and "broadcast (tv/radio)" from all course names and descriptions. A substitute for "print" could be "newswriting," "digital" or "digital storytelling."

A substitute for “magazine” could be “long-form.” A substitute for “broadcast” could be “multimedia.” We believe our courses must continue to focus on the fundamentals of journalism and we have to be careful not to hitch our wagon to trends. But there is no question we have to adapt and teach more contemporary skills.

4. Establish new collaborations across the University

We agree with this recommendation as well as the report’s finding that the School of Journalism has isolated itself from other disciplines within the Faculty of Arts and the University at large. We feel meaningful connections can be made with the Faculty of Media, Art and Performance; the Faculty of Business Administration; and the First Nations University of Canada’s INCA program.

We have already begun such collaborations by agreeing to cross list our Investigative Journalism course in Winter 2020 with FNU. Our school also offers its space, instructors and gear for FNU’s INCA summer institute every year it is offered. As mentioned above, we have also connected with the Faculty of Business Administration’s Hill and Levene School of Business Centre for Management Development to prepare a business plan to be implemented alongside the strategic plan we are currently working on. There are many other connections to be made with the Faculty of Business should we expand, as is our plan, into professional communications and public relations courses.

5. Find efficiencies in the MJ curriculum

We agree with this recommendation and have taken steps to implement it. As the review states, “the MJ experiment is working but needs to be streamlined to reduce costs and improve the student experience.” While we feel strongly about maintaining our reputation as a professional school, we have decided (and received approval from RAGS) to offer a thesis option. We believe doing so will increase enrolment and reduce project production/travel costs and are currently drafting language to reflect this change on the graduate studies web page.

6. Connect more students with the Jscool

We agree with this recommendation and have taken steps to implement it. Developing and delivering a new introductory course, JRN 100, has proven to be an effective recruitment tool and means of connecting the School to the broader university community. We believe we should build upon this success and create more new courses. This could include other 100 level courses in communications, social media, sports and business journalism. We have a deep talent pool of talented alumnus ready and willing to develop and deliver these courses. This would also strengthen sessional recruitment and could lead to other new collaborations across the university. We have also recently opened six of our classes to outside students. This has increased our enrolment and led to a number of students applying for and being accepted into our program. We are also working on ways to attract more part-time students. Our program has traditionally followed the cohort model, which we feel has many benefits. But we have also come to realize the cohort model is a barrier for students with children, jobs or other commitments. The more flexible we can be, the more students we can attract.

7. Re-imagine our space.

We agree with this recommendation and have taken steps to implement it. This includes a much-needed house cleaning of our studio and upgrading, in summer 2019, every computer in our

school. We intend to remove part or all of the window decals that currently hide the inside of our school from its high traffic location on the main floor of the Ad-Hum building. We believe doing so will literally make us more transparent and welcoming to the university community and the thousands of prospective students who walk by our school each day. We also hope to work with the university to secure a fulltime administrative person for our front of house, at least during the Fall and Winter semesters.

8. Engage University expertise in marketing, recruitment and advancement.

We agree with this recommendation and have begun work to implement it. In terms of advancement, in Fall 2019 we worked with University of Regina development officers to secure donations from Bell Media (\$34,000) and Corus Global (\$20,000) to fund three new annual student awards. Working with those same development officers we just submitted a proposal to a board that, if successful, will secure a \$500,000 donation to fund a chair position intended to bring a working journalist into the school to work and teach. The board has indicated our chances are good and that a decision should come by March 31, 2020.

In Fall 2019 we worked with enrolment services to update recruiters on all of the changes taking place at our school. We have already benefitted from these efforts and intend to work even closer with enrolment services moving forward.

Regarding marketing, all of ours is currently produced in-house. We know it is making an impact, but we need help. Our most pressing need is a professional school website that all faculty and staff can manage and maintain. Fortunately, the University is about to undergo a Web Redesign Project, a move the School of Journalism fully supports and will benefit from. On March 24, 2020, our unit will be participating in a discovery session as part of this project.

9. Strengthen sessional recruitment

We agree with this recommendation and have begun work to implement it. We have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to our alumni, many of whom are some of the best and brightest working in journalism and communications today. In Fall 2019 five of our classes were delivered by sessionals, all graduates of our program. We have been in touch with many more graduates at the top of their professions who are keen to return to the school to teach. Our unit has recently opted to move to a 4/4 teaching load, a decision which will hopefully allow us to bring back some of these distinguished grads to teach.

Timelines and workplan

Due to a change in department head (effective July 1, 2019) and then two of our six faculty members being away for Summer 2019 and on leave for Fall 2019, our unit was not able to convene and formally discuss our unit review until Dec. 13, 2019 (which we did during a full day retreat with the help of an external facilitator). We have only just recently received the summary from that retreat and have scheduled another full day retreat on **April 30, 2020** to draft a 3-5 year strategic plan. This will hopefully be completed by June 1, 2020. We have also just received approval from President Timmons to proceed with a business plan proposal drafted by the Faculty of Business Administration's Hill and Levene School of Business Centre for Management Development (CMD). Our unit is grateful to President Timmons and the University of Regina for this investment in our school. Work on this business plan, valued at \$23,790, will begin immediately with an industry and market analysis. However, CMD advises that the bulk of the work required for the business plan cannot begin until our strategic plan is complete. That

business plan, combined with our strategic plan, will constitute our workplan and will more clearly outline the actions our unit will take, the team lead for each action, and the date each will be completed by. Thank you again for your work and patience with this. We look forward to this exciting new chapter at the School of Journalism.

Sincerely,

Mark Taylor
Department head, instructor & internship coordinator
School of Journalism