

School of Journalism report to the Council Committee on Academic Mission

Thank you for gathering to discuss the School of Journalism's recent unit review. Overall, our reaction was a positive one as we feel the report is accurate and fair. I am pleased to report we do not outright reject any of the suggestions, all which can be implemented in some shape or form. They are:

Recommendations

The unit review made nine recommendations. They are:

1. Reimagine the school's mandate and size by a.) developing a professional communications program, and b.) enhancing Indigenization efforts.
2. Develop street-ready journalists.
3. Adapt updated course content/descriptions for the digital era.
4. Establish new collaborations across the University.
5. Find efficiencies in the MJ curriculum.
6. Connect more students with the Jscool.
7. Re-Imagine our space.
8. Engage University expertise in marketing, recruitment and advancement.
9. Strengthen sessional recruitment.

Naturally, there are a few findings and suggestions some in the unit take issue with. And as the review states under "Key challenges," a number of different priority directions exist within our unit. So while we do not reject any of these suggestions or propose any alternatives, we do need to align our priorities and determine which suggestions require the most urgent action.

Timelines

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 has yet to fully unpack this review. However, we have secured an external facilitator and scheduled a full day retreat to do so at the end of this semester on **Dec. 13, 2019**. The goal for this retreat is to determine our priorities and draft a strategic plan which we will begin implementing immediately upon its completion in early 2020.

In the meantime, our unit has begun implementing many of the report's recommendations. In terms of re-imagining the school's mandate to expand into professional communications (which the school once did but dropped), we have recently begun offering communications internships in addition to our newsroom internships. Currently we offer 13-week paid communications internships at the Western Veterinary College in Saskatoon and at the Courts of Saskatchewan in Regina. We are also working on a new communications internship with the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Regarding Indigenization, 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.

The review suggests we focus on developing “street-ready” journalists. As noted above, we do not reject any suggestions. However, some in our unit take issue with this suggestion simply because we feel developing street ready journalists is already one of our core strengths. We are the only journalism school in Canada offering paid 13-week journalism internships. In fact some of our students receive two paid 13-week internships. Many of our students are working in the field or freelancing before they graduate, often at the organization they interned at. More than 90 per cent of our graduates are working in the field within a year of graduation. Newsrooms and communications departments 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 an issue of us failing to develop street ready journalists. It is an issue of us increasing our enrolment and supplying *more* street ready journalists.

We 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, creating nightly news broadcasts) and focusing on more contemporary approaches, such as creating podcasts, multimedia pieces, online journalism and social media.

We have also made efforts to connect more students to the Jscool. As mentioned above, our new Asper Chair, Jeanelle Mandes, has already made an impact in her first semester with us by attracting Indigenous students and creating a more welcoming place for Indigenous people. Jeanelle is also actively recruiting at job fairs, high schools and in various communities. We have also had success attracting new students with a new course offering in 2019, Introduction to Journalism and Democracy (JRN 100) and have begun to open up core classes to outside students.

Marketing, recruitment and advancement is an area we are putting more focus on than ever. In terms of marketing, we maintain an active presence on social media which we know is having an impact on enrollment. In terms of recruitment, as mentioned above our new Asper Chair has attracted new students, as has our new course offering, JRN 100 and opening core classes to outside students. We've also recently secured funding from a number of industry leaders including Rawlco Radio (\$100,000), Bell Media (\$34,000) and Corus Global (\$20,000). We are currently working to create a new fellowship and chair position intended to bring high profile journalists into the school to teach.

Finally, 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. We've only just begun to tap this resource and bring these people back to the school to teach. In Winter 2019, three of our graduates served as sessional instructors. In Fall 2019 five classes were delivered by sessionals who graduated from our program. We are in touch with many more graduates working in the field who are keen to return to the school to teach. Our unit has also opted to move to a 4/4 teaching load, a decision which will open up even more sessional teaching opportunities.

This is all a drop in the bucket. There is much more work to be done. Thanks to this unit review, and the strategic plan we are about to embark on, I am confident we can get the School of Journalism back on track.

Sincerely,

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