

## **Report of the Journalism Task Force**

September 30, 2003

### Task Force Members:

Robert Wilson, Associate Professor, Hospitality and Tourism Management (Chair)  
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### Ex Officio Members:

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# Report of the Journalism Task Force

## Background

The Task Force was appointed by Provost Charlena Seymour to “consider how best to deploy faculty resources and sustain the [Journalism] major without resources beyond its permanent faculty. The goal is to maintain our ability to serve existing student interest, and potentially to tap into a larger pool of interest.”

The full Task Force met once in August and twice during the month of September, 2003; reviewed written materials of many kinds provided by the campus administration and the departments of Journalism, Communication, and English; and heard presentations from the three department heads and from the Deans of Humanities and Fine Arts and Social and Behavioral Sciences. In addition, a subcommittee of the Task Force met twice to explore areas of overlap among the three departments.

## Main Issues

The Task Force identified three main topics to be explored: 1) the overlaps or affinities between Journalism and other programs on campus; 2) the capacity of the Journalism program in light of the requirements of the charge; and 3) possible organizational configurations.

### A. Affinities

The question of “affinity” was seen as central to the task of arriving at the best deployment of the Journalism faculty. In our discussions, members suggested two ways of thinking about this: “intellectual affinity” and “practical affinity.”

#### 1. Intellectual Affinity.

It seemed to us that the first question must be the matter of intellectual fit. The instructional and scholarly productivity of the faculty would be diminished if they were isolated from others on campus with shared interests. We looked at this from several perspectives. First, we were interested in learning where on campus the most significant overlaps with the academic preparation and professional interests of the Journalism faculty could be found.

After considerable discussion, the strongest overlap was found to be with the Communication faculty. Several members of the Journalism faculty hold advanced degrees in Communication, and a number of shared interests seem to exist (e.g., media criticism, media and society). To a lesser extent, there appears to be some overlap with the English department, primarily in the area of expository writing.

We were also interested in “fit” from the perspective of students and prospective students. Journalism majors are required to complete a minor in another department as part of their degree requirements. There are roughly equal numbers who choose humanities departments or various social science disciplines, with a small number scattered across other schools and colleges. A Communication minor is neither offered nor permitted, so it is not possible to know how many Journalism students would choose to minor in Communication, but both the Journalism and Communication chairs reported that they felt overlap in student interest is strong. It was also

reported that much of the external data on the interests of prospective students is collected for the broad category “journalism and mass communication,” suggesting a natural link between the two in the wider world.

Another perspective on intellectual affinity was possible by examining the way in which the field organizes itself. It was pointed out that journalism and communication are frequently (and perhaps usually) organized together in some manner at other universities. Accrediting bodies view the fields of journalism and communication as so closely linked that programs must limit the number of credits students are allowed to take in combination. The phrase “journalism and mass communications” seems to be in general use (by publishers of scholarly books, etc.).

Finally, we were interested in how the discipline is evolving. The best deployment of faculty resources would be that which looks to the future and provides the strongest basis for future development. There seemed to be widespread agreement that, at least at the undergraduate level, interest is growing in broadcast journalism, as well as in the internet and other emerging communication technologies. The Communication and Journalism departments both have significant offerings in broadcast journalism (although approached from somewhat different perspectives), and both report moving into web-based media, as well. The English department also reports interest in web-based communication.

## 2. Practical Affinity.

While intellectual fit was an important consideration, we were also looking for relationships that could result in tangible benefits to help offset Journalism’s diminished resource base. We therefore looked for specific resources that could be harnessed to help sustain the Journalism program (course offerings, faculty interest, logistical support, physical facilities, etc.)?

Our most important finding in this regard came as a result of discussions within the subcommittee, which were themselves an extension of an ongoing conversation between the departments of Journalism and Communication. The two departments identified a significant number of courses offered by each, and of interest to each, but currently unavailable to each other’s majors. More important, the two departments worked out a framework for swapping access to such courses, and in some cases increasing capacity for that purpose. Under this approach, each department would agree to designate certain courses offered by the other as meeting the requirements for the major (principally upper division electives). Student choice (and, presumably, likelihood of timely completion) would be increased because of the wider array of courses available. In addition, the expanded capacity would increase the overall instructional resource available to Journalism (as well as Communication). This approach is described in detail in Attachment A.

The Task Force asked whether a similar arrangement might be possible with the English department. The English department identified two or three courses in which a few seats (perhaps five or ten) might be available, but did not see the basis for the kind of reciprocal arrangement being explored by Journalism and Communication.

In addition, the Journalism department identified WFCR and the television studio in Herter as important resources that could be tapped, especially in response to student interest in broadcast journalism.

## **B. Capacity**

The Task Force was given the goal of sustaining the Journalism major within a diminished set of resources (specifically, the resources associated with the six tenure-system faculty). We were therefore confronted with two questions: 1) is the program viable at this resource level? and 2) if so, what kind of capacity could be imagined?

We began by examining the current and recent teaching capacity of the six faculty. According to campus data, the six (5.6 FTE) Journalism faculty currently teach approximately twenty sections per year. Last year, this accounted for roughly 40% of the department's total instruction, with nearly all the remainder provided by lecturers and other part-timers. In the mid-nineties, by contrast, the same twenty sections accounted for roughly two-thirds of the department's total instruction. The change is a consequence of enrollment growth. The department has grown from 250 majors and pre-majors to 350 or more, and this growth has been accommodated through the increasing use of part-timers. If it is assumed, as the Task Force charge indicates, that only the tenure-system faculty will be available in the future, then instructional resources will be reduced by roughly half. At this level of resources the program would probably remain viable, but at a sharply reduced size.

However, as indicated above, a reciprocal course arrangement between Journalism and Communication could increase teaching capacity and expand availability of courses, as detailed in Attachment A. In such a case it therefore seems to us that, combining the 5.6 FTE and the expanded courses, the instructional capacity would exist for a Journalism program of approximately 250 majors. It is important to note, however, that we were looking only at instructional capacity, and not any necessary support costs for the program.

### **C. Organizational Configuration**

The Task Force looked at possible configurations under which the Journalism program might be organized. We concluded that a number of different approaches could work, ranging from the current configuration to various interdisciplinary approaches to various combinations with Communication. In the limited time available to us we were not able to explore the pros and cons of these options in detail, but are confident that the two Deans will be able to carry whatever perspectives emerged from TF discussions into their implementation conversations with the Provost.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

With the above in mind, the Task Force has the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. A viable, albeit smaller, Journalism program can be offered. If a reciprocal course arrangement with Communication is possible, a program similar to that of the early to mid-nineties (approximately 250 majors) seems possible, not including support costs.
2. There was consensus within the Task Force that the program's strongest affinities are with the Communication department. It was agreed that the best location for the Journalism major would be somewhere within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, but also that it could continue to function in Humanities and Fine Arts, as well. Discussions should continue among the Provost and the two Deans. The Task Force also acknowledges useful connections with the English department, and believes that these could continue and even expand wherever Journalism were to be housed.

Appendix A.

Sept. 18, 2003

**From: Norman Sims, Chair, Journalism Department**  
**To: Journalism/Communication Task Force**  
**Subject: Successfully meeting the requirements of the Journalism major**

I was asked to demonstrate how the Journalism major can be provided to a substantial number of majors using only the 5.6 FTE Journalism faculty and our Writing Program allocation. In this document I will demonstrate how that works, as well as how a close collaboration with the Department of Communication makes it work better.

The Journalism Department full-time faculty currently offers 23 sections per year. This is up from 2000–2001, when we offered 20 sections, because of the return of Bill Israel to full time status. In addition to those 23 sections, I am counting on the Writing Program to pay \$200 apiece for approximately 60 junior Journalism majors, a sum that will provide three additional sections. We therefore have 26 sections.

I am targeting the graduating class size at 60 students, and the total number of majors at 240. From approximately 1992–2001, we graduated from 60 to 72 students per year, and our total numbers were around 250 with a sharp upward curve in recent years. With the arrival of the Cunningham money last year, excess demand was met and the major increased in size to about 400. In this plan we are moving from "Journalism Department 2002" back to "Journalism Department 1992–2001" because of the loss of part-time faculty.

The calculation assumes we will teach each element of the Journalism major every year to 60 students. Below I have listed the requirements for the majors, the seats needed in classes, and how we would assign the 26 sections, as follows:

1. **Requirement:** Any two of the following five courses:
  - Journal 312, Journalism & Law
  - Journal 320, History of American Journalism
  - Journal 345, Media Criticism
  - Journal 360, Ethics
  - Journal 450, Freedom of the Press

**Needed:** 120 seats so students can have two required "menu" courses.

**Meeting the need:** We would offer 5 "menu" courses, at 30 students per course, serving a total of 150 students.

2. **Requirement:** Journal 300, Newswriting & Reporting, the Junior Year Writing course.

**Needed:** 60 seats.

**Meeting the need:** We would field 5 sections serving a total of 65 students.

3. **Requirement:** At least one advanced writing course offered by the department.

**Need:** 60 seats in advanced writing classes.

**Meeting the need:** We would field 5 sections serving 65 students.

4. **Requirement:** At least four additional elective courses from the department, numbered 200 and above.

**Need:** 240 seats needed so that each of 60 students can have four electives.

**Meeting the need:** We would offer 11 elective courses to complete our 26 total courses, at 15 students per section, serving 165 students.

In addition, through our close collaboration with the Department of Communication, our majors would be granted access to a total of approximately 200 seats in some 26 Communication courses that are approved for cross-listing with the Journalism major. The total seats available would be 365.

5. **Requirement:** An academic minor in another department or program, or a double major.

**Meeting the Need:** No changes necessary. The minor would still be required.

In exchange for access to Communication classes, we would increase enrollment in many of our classes to serve Communication majors. Several Journalism classes are scalable, meaning they can increase enrollment by from 2 to 10 students without drastically altering the nature of the course. Among the Journalism courses that are of interest to Communication students and that could be expanded, we have identified the following:

Journal 310 **Press and the Third World**  
Journal 312 **Journalism Law**  
Journal 320 **History of Journalism**  
Journal 335 **Public Relations**  
Journal 345 **Media Criticism**  
Journal 360 **Journalism Ethics**  
Journal 391R **Travel Writing and Photojournalism**  
Journal 392R **The Future of Online Journalism**  
Journal 393F **Journalists in the Movies**  
Journal 393N **Writing Broadcast Narratives**  
Journal 395N **Newscasting**  
Journal 397P **Introduction to Photojournalism**

Journal 397S **Objectivity and Power**  
Journal 397T **Information Technology in Social & Historical Perspective**  
Journal 397W **Introduction to Web Journalism**  
Journal 450 **Freedom of the Press**  
Journal 491B **Public Strategies**  
Journal 491C **Writing about Popular Culture**  
Journal 491P **Press and Politics**  
Journal 497R **Covering Race**  
Journal 497P **The Politician and the Journalist**

Among the Communications courses that are of interest to Journalism students and that could be cross-listed, we have after consultation with Carolyn Anderson, chair of Communication, identified the following:

Lecture courses (with present enrollment capacities of 125–300):

Comm 222 **Media Programming & Institutions**  
Comm 226 **Social Impact of Mass Media**  
Comm 287 **Advertising as Social Communication**  
Comm 297C **Democracy & Discourse**  
Comm 297D **Film & TV Production Concepts**  
Comm 297E **Popular Culture & Cultural Studies**  
Comm 297M **Communicating Gender**  
Comm 297N **Media & Law**  
Comm 297Q **Global Media & Social Change**  
Comm 297T **Issues in Information Technology**  
Comm 312 **Cultural Codes in Communication**  
Comm 387 **Advertising, Public Relations & Social Control**

Upper-division courses (with present enrollment capacities of 20–43):

Comm 334 **Media History & Communication Policy**  
Comm 355 **Behavioral Research in Communication**  
Comm 397E **Comparative New Media Systems**  
Comm 397F **Media Ethics**  
Comm 397J **Media & Public Policy**  
Comm 397N **Inter-racial Communication**  
Comm 397P **TV & the Public**  
Comm 397R **Cases in Media Law**  
Comm 412 **Political Communication**  
Comm 497E **Advanced Popular Culture**  
Comm 497F **Spanish Language Media**  
Comm 497L **International News**  
Comm 497R **New Communication Systems & Labor**  
Comm 514 **Social Uses of Language**