



# MEEK SCHOOL

JOURNALISM AND NEW MEDIA

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

FARLEY HALL, UNIVERSITY, MS 38677

**Meek School of Journalism and New Media**

**Will Norton, Jr., Professor and Dean**

**2009-2010**

## **Mission**

The School of Journalism and New Media at the University of Mississippi has as its primary mission the education of students through the development and administration of a professional program of instruction leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees. The school also may offer programs that are complementary to these degree programs and may offer joint degree programs with other units of the University of Mississippi. The school is obliged to serve the citizens of Mississippi by assisting professionals and conducting research on media. Its mission and purpose is grounded in the First Amendment. The 10 academic priorities identified reflect the primary mission of the school: to graduate highly competitive young professionals who have acquired communication and critical thinking skills appropriate to the practice of journalism and strategic communications: writing, editing, oral presentation and design in print, broadcast and interactive media. Because a viable career in media professions requires graduates to understand changes in society that make differences in people's lives, journalism and new media education includes a fusion with the liberal arts and sciences at the University of Mississippi.

The school's mission dictates a high priority role for excellent undergraduate teaching in Integrated Marketing Communication and in multiple-platform journalism. An M.A. complements this emphasis by building on an established and nationally recognized undergraduate curriculum.

## **Core Values**

The 10 academic priorities identified in this strategic plan reflect the core values of the school, values based on the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. The First Amendment states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

## **Freedom of Expression**

The First Amendment makes it clear that freedom of expression is a bedrock principle on which our nation was founded, and our school embraces and celebrates that freedom. We foster freedom of expression by helping students understand the relationship between free speech and a democracy, and that understanding is at the heart of the mission of the Meek School of Journalism and New Media.

## **Student-Centered Learning**

The SoJNM is a student-centered school; student learning is the top priority. Faculty members study the pedagogy and apply successful techniques to classroom teaching. Moreover, the school nurtures learning outside the classroom. The culture of the school fosters such learning through an open-door policy and faculty rewards for devotion to student learning. In fact, faculty members normally are available to students whenever they are not teaching or in meetings.

The school also has implemented an assessment structure that begins at the course level. The school has appointed course leaders for each of the required courses. These leaders are responsible to assess student learning across different sections of each course. In addition, the school assesses student learning to identify how our curriculum can be improved to meet both ACEJMC accrediting as well as industry standards.

## **Academic and Career Advising**

Because advising can help ensure that students graduate in four years, effective advising is part of our commitment to serving students.

Career advising is part of each faculty member's responsibility. Each faculty member is in touch with contacts in media professions and is able to provide students with information about various career opportunities and contact information. Internships and job vacancies are announced via email to students and posted to the school's Web site, in addition to being posted on boards throughout the school.

## **Teaching Excellence**

The school is uncompromising in its dedication to excellence. As a result, the goal is to be a positive influence on students, the university, the community and the world, all the while fostering democratic values. The school carefully assesses the quality of its courses and evaluates faculty and equipment to be sure they meet or exceed standards of excellence, as well as the standards of peer institutions.

Faculty members take teaching seriously. They spend an enormous number of hours both within and outside the classroom, working closely with students to produce outstanding work.

## **Responsible and Ethical Standards**

Teaching students to become responsible, ethical communicators is the foundation of everything the school does. The objective of the school's required courses in senior-level media law and media ethics is that students will recognize the heavy responsibility of representing the First Amendment as media professionals.

## **International**

Fostering international experiences and education is an important core value for the school. Journalists and integrated marketing communications professionals need to be well versed in international issues.

## **Diversity of Opinions and Viewpoints**

Only through respecting others' opinions and viewpoints can students learn to understand the true value of freedom of expression. Students in the school learn to listen to a variety of perspectives and present them objectively.

## **Research about Media Interaction with Society**

Students learn about media interaction with society through specific coursework and hands-on work with academic, business and civic communities throughout the state, nation and in various parts of the world.

## **Influence of Media on and by Democratic Society**

Faculty members recognize that media have a great influence on a democratic society — and that a democratic society influences media as well. They charge students with understanding these relationships and respecting the influence of their daily decisions on the function of society. Our introductory course — for students in all majors — emphasizes the importance of independent media for a democracy. The senior-level media law and media ethics courses — for students in all majors — do the same.

## **Change**

An ever-changing society brings with it different challenges to media professionals, and students learn to understand a changing society through coursework and through the practice of the profession.

## **Academic Priorities That Confirm Our Statement of Core Values**

The School of Journalism and New Media (SoJNM) faculty established 10 academic priorities in 2009-2010:

### ***1. Further revise and enhance the curriculum in response to changes in the industry and through ongoing course assessment.***

Dramatic changes in the industries offering students careers, primarily local television stations and daily newspapers, require that the school move into a multi-platform curriculum. Students still find internships and full-time employment in the news field, but the jobs offered are not necessarily traditional ones.

An Integrated Marketing Communication degree major was approved. Students have opportunities to develop a deeper level of expertise in areas of particular interest. These areas, in addition to the traditional advertising disciplines of research and strategy, creative and media, include coursework in public relations, sales, interactive, direct response and the other tools that comprise the full spectrum of promotional and persuasive messaging and branding.

The faculty recognizes the importance of assessing student learning in order to improve the curriculum. To prepare for an upcoming Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) review, faculty are developing a new assessment structure that includes assessment at the course, program and school levels. The school's assessment plan includes both direct and indirect measures.

Course-Level:

ACEJMC Accreditation: Faculty developed a matrix of the curriculum that shows which required course(s) meet(s) each accrediting standard. The matrix serves as a foundation for new curriculum development. The competencies will be clearly stated on each syllabus and faculty will be developing appropriate assessment plans for each required course as part of the ACEJMC re-accreditation process.

## School-Level

A report was generated at the school level reflecting on the assessment results at the course and program level.

- Faculty developed the accrediting standard matrix in spring of 2010.
- All required courses were assessed in spring of 2010.

### ***2. Finalize preparations—including completion of a written report—for review by the ACEJMC in 2010-11.***

Faculty will organize and complete a comprehensive self-study report before a site visit by an accrediting team. The report will be completed by Labor Day of 2010, and the site visit will be in February 2011.

### ***3. Expand the global perspective in the school's curriculum and enhance international teaching and learning opportunities.***

International experiences and education are important. In order to develop highly educated graduates who are aware of their relationship to the global society, there is a need to have a keen understanding of the cultures, religions and ideologies that exist in the world. Now, more than ever, journalists and integrated marketing communications professionals should be well versed in international issues at all levels. They need to have a keen understanding of the cultures, religions and ideologies that exist in the world. To achieve this goal, the school focuses on these areas:

- Providing opportunities for and increasing the number of students traveling to foreign nations to study journalism and integrated marketing communication concepts, to conduct research, to learn to craft effective commercial messages directed toward different cultures and to report.
- Developing and offering international-related media courses as part of the curriculum.
- Providing faculty with opportunities to teach abroad and learn about foreign media.
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### ***4. Strengthen professional partnerships and develop new ones.***

Like the school's collaborations with other university departments, schools and college, creating programs with media and communications professionals is an important priority. These programs offer students enriching educational experiences inside and outside the classroom.

A number of professional partnerships to enhance students' educational opportunities are being explored. A Media Sales program, designed in collaboration with media leaders, will help develop student expertise in professional selling. The fundamental course of the program will address issues of market and audience research, client needs analysis and cross-platform sales.

### ***5. Support faculty in research and creative endeavors and in further improving their teaching.***

Faculty in the school generally are teaching 3/3 or 2/3 loads and are active in many service and outreach capacities. Some faculty members are simultaneously working on advanced degrees while pursuing creative and research activities. In order to give tenure-

track faculty an opportunity to develop a meaningful creative or research agenda, course-load reductions are necessary so that faculty can use their limited time effectively.

***6. Focus on improving writing at The University of Mississippi.***

The school's faculty needs to work closely with faculty and administrators of other colleges to improve writing courses. This area still is undefined.

***7. Seek additional partnerships with departments granting doctorates.***

The graduate program has several opportunities for growth that are in line with at least two of its core values: freedom of expression and an international emphasis. The dean has helped to develop an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in Communication Arts at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. A partnership with KIJAC in Kosovo to provide strategic communication training to small business owners and professional communicators via distance education also is being developed. One immediate goal is to develop a certificate in integrated marketing communications and then a degree in IMC.

***8. Further develop a more diverse student body and faculty.***

Diversity of opinions and viewpoints is one of the school's core beliefs. Only through respecting others' opinions and viewpoints can students learn to understand the true value of freedom of expression. Because of this core belief, the school is committed to developing a more diverse student body and faculty.

Faculty members continue to work to attract minority students and increase the quality of the incoming freshman classes. There are increasing efforts with regard to placement in internships and permanent positions.

***9. Strengthen and expand interdisciplinary programs.***

A priority for the school is to assure its students are well versed in science, history, philosophy, economics, business, political science, law, the arts and statistics so that they can be effective critical thinkers. The emphasis continues to use an interdisciplinary approach to educate future journalists. The school has or will develop a variety of programs and courses that are the result of collaboration with other schools, departments and units at this university. These programs are in the discussion and conceptualization stage.

***10. Develop additional distance education and asynchronous courses offered across platforms.***

The school needs to be a leader in distance education. In addition to real-time course offerings, asynchronous courses need to be developed.