

To: Weber State University Department of Communication (COMM) Faculty

From: Interim Dean, Amanda Sowerby

Re: Dean's Response to COMM Self-Study, Reviewers' Report. And COMM's Response to the Review

Date: May 28, 2020

A sincere thank you to the COMM faculty for the input of thoughtful detail, time, and dedication to the COMM Program Review process. Your comprehensive report reflects the care with which you address strengths, strategies, and areas of concern for your program and the Lindquist College of Arts and Humanities. I would also like to express a special thanks to Dr. Sheree Josephson (COMM department chair), Dr. Lawrence J. Mullen, Dr. Louise Moulding and Dr. Todd Norton, who generously gave their time to this process.

After analyzing the documents generated for the self-study and review of the Department of Communication, I want to comment on components that I believe deserve attention.

- 1) As noted by the Review Committee, COMM's Mission Statement aligns with the college mission to deliver a mix of theory and practice to its students while serving multiple constituencies in a complex and ever-changing world. The Review Committee commended the focus on faculty diversity while encouraging greater efforts to increase diversity among the student population. In addition, the Committee noted a need for updated equipment, used by students and faculty, in order to maintain current standards of practice; most specifically television and radio production equipment. I agree with the department that an increase in faculty service to Ogden's Latinx community would benefit student diversity. Additionally, a tenure-line specializing in the General Education curriculum offered by COMM is necessary due to a large number of adjunct instructors teaching those courses.
- 2) The Review Committee applauded experiential learning as a "strength of the Department of Communication with many outlets such as co-curriculars and required internships to apply the concepts learned in class." Of the internships, they pointed out that they are an important transition from academia to the workplace for many students. Committee recommendations for improvements on the already strong curriculum include a clearer focus on course requirements versus electives. I encourage faculty to design and deliver micro-internships. Student feedback indicates a desire for additional and diverse professionalizing experiences.
- 3) The department was recognized for consistent growth of enrollments; a 3.3% year-upon-year over the last five years with strong student interest in the two new associate's degrees. I agree with the Review Committee when they note that the

department would benefit from an increase in tracking graduates after completion. I also recommend opportunities for the department to invite alumni to work with and mentor current students, enhancing their acquisition of industry skills.

- 4) The Review Committee commended the department on the in-depth advising provided to COMM majors and minors. Maintaining this high level of advising excellence is time-consuming for faculty and I support the establishment of a dedicated department advisor position should funding allow.
- 5) COMM faculty are clearly strong educators and are noted for their “disciplinary expertise and contribution to the student experience.” The faculty action plan, to focus on the research of pedagogy in order to combine teaching and research expectations, supports the need to balance a heavy teaching load with scholarship expectations. I recommend that a path forward in this way be articulated in the department’s tenure document.
- 6) Regarding program support, the Committee noted the strength of the administrative staff. The faculty response included the expansion of responsibilities and decision making in line with staff capabilities. I acknowledge space and staff issues, identified by both the Committee and the department, which includes an additional computer lab along with design and renovation support for the space accommodating the digital media/film and multimedia journalism students.
- 7) The Review Committee commended the department for its variety of engagements with external communities. I encourage the department to work with the Development Office and the Dean’s Office to secure scholarships and/or donations from established external partners and alumni.
- 8) To conclude, the Department of Communication is committed to the success of their students. This commitment is evidenced by the dedication of the chair, faculty, and staff who wholly commit their time to provide innovative education to Communication students, supporting them to excel in a complex world and providing them the ability to graduate in a timely manner.



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