

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **College of Journalism and Mass Communications**

### **March, 2006**

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

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications (CoJMC) has six academic priorities. These will be detailed in the coming pages. Also included is an explanation of our commitment to international involvement in journalism education.

The academic priorities of our college are:

1. Develop professional specialization in news in the graduate program and expand offerings to the doctoral level
2. Expand and improve the capstone course in each sequence
3. Develop greater diversity of students and faculty
4. Emphasize interdisciplinary education and practice
5. Establish the college as the academic hub for communications education
6. Develop full-time faculty for business and technical communication, and enhance the involvement with the J.D. Edwards Honors Program in Computer Science and Management

#### **Core Values**

These academic priorities reflect the core values of the college. These values are 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 value on which our nation was founded, and our college embraces 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 College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

#### **Student-Centered Learning**

Emphasis on the importance of helping an individual student is at the heart of this program. This is a student-centered college, and student-learning is the top priority. Faculty study the pedagogy and apply successful techniques to classroom teaching.

Moreover, learning outside the classroom is nurtured. The college culture fosters such learning through an open-door policy and faculty rewards for devotion to student-learning. In fact, college policies insist on faculty being available to meet with students whenever they are not teaching or in meetings.

### **Academic and Career Advising**

This academic year (2005-2006) is the first year the college has designated one faculty member to be Advising Coordinator. Because advising can help ensure that students graduate in four years, the advising coordinator is vital to the students of the college. Effective advising by a specialist is one way to accomplish this goal, and is part of our commitment to serving our students. All other faculty are available to answer students' questions, but the Advising Coordinator supervises advising in the college and keeps up on requirements and policies of all kinds.

Career advising is part of every faculty member's responsibility. Each faculty member stays current with contacts in the profession and is able to provide students with information about various career opportunities and contact information. Current internships and jobs are posted on boards throughout the college, and students are able to refer to these at any time.

### **Dedication to Excellence--Teaching**

The college 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 college carefully evaluates the quality of the courses, the faculty and equipment to be sure they meet or exceed standards of excellence as well as the standards of peer institutions.

According to the University of Nebraska Role and Mission Statement "a fundamental mission of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is teaching." The teaching mission for the College of Journalism and Mass Communications is to develop writing and editing skills, visual and design skills and technical and theoretical foundations to provoke creative and critical thinking of professionals.

Our faculty conduct research, take part in scholarly endeavors, engage in creative activities, instruct undergraduate and graduate students and provide services for practicing journalists, viewers, listeners and readers throughout the state, region, nation and world.

Student work appears in print, on the air and on the Internet. It has been presented to media professionals around the world and has been judged in competitions as some of the best work produced by students from throughout the nation. It tells our story better than all the data and all the rhetoric we can provide about our program.

Our faculty take teaching seriously. They spend an enormous number of hours each week working closely with students to produce outstanding work. These hours are both in and outside the classroom. Such devotion to personal growth produces excellence and endears us to our graduates and to professionals throughout the nation.

### **Teaching Students to Become Responsible, Ethical Communicators**

Teaching students to become responsible, ethical communicators is the foundation of everything we do. Audiences trust that media professionals will provide accurate, timely and ethical information that helps them to experience a higher quality of life for themselves and their families. The senior-level media law and media ethics courses are required of students in all majors. The objective is for students to learn to recognize the heavy responsibility of representing the First Amendment as media professionals.

### **International Emphasis**

The CoJMC is making great progress in developing students into international mass communicators. Faculty have taken students to Cuba, France and Sri Lanka to produce depth reports and documentaries and they plan to take more international trips for such productions. Several faculty are educated and experienced in the multiple skills necessary to produce depth reports and documentaries. They are models for the students they teach. The college provides scholarships and awards for international travel. Two years of a language other than English is required of all majors. The college intends for them not only to learn the language, but also as much as possible about the culture of the language.

The college offers three international courses that will take students to either France or Germany during the summer of 2006. Students will be taught by CoJMC faculty who are facile in English and in either French or German. The college intends to continue to offer media courses internationally.

The CoJMC is a partner with the Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication in Kristiansand, Norway, establishing the Graduate School of Journalism and Communication at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. The college has been invited to be partners in similar efforts in Kosovo, Tanzania, the Sudan, and Bolivia. The involvement in this partnership is helping attract more international students each year. Indeed, the college is becoming known as a place for international students to study; this is a safe campus, and the college faculty is filled with high-level professionals who take a personal interest in each student.

The goal is to provide or facilitate an international experience for each student in the college. This is not a requirement, but faculty are encouraging such experiences, and students are finding international experiences to be life-changing opportunities. These opportunities are broadening their perspectives.

**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 college learn to listen to a variety of perspectives and present these objectively. Faculty encourage students to learn about a variety of viewpoints and opinions through coursework, internships and international experiences.

**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 and nation, and in various parts of the world. These opportunities allow students to discover insights about themselves, about audiences and about society.

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

The faculty recognize that media have a great influence on democratic society—and that 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. Our senior-level media law and media ethics courses—for students in all majors—do the same. Each course, in each sequence, at each level, including the skills courses, helps students see how specific skills and ideas relate to a basic commitment to free expression. In other words, our academic priorities are based on a commitment to excellence and to freedom of expression.

**Embracing Change**

The students understand that change is part of the media business, and recognizing the importance of change attracts bright, motivated students to our college. Developing technology allows media professionals to perform their jobs more quickly, efficiently, and with better quality, and our students are eager to meet the challenges. 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.

**Challenges to Our Core Values**

The college faces two major challenges to our core values: inability to purchase adequate instructional equipment and lack of adequate office, classroom and student laboratory space. Fortunately, careful planning and the supportive assistance of the university have enabled us to make some progress in both areas.

However, no progress has occurred in purchasing big-ticket items such as the KRNU-FM audio board or television studio equipment. Those items are vital for the college to be competitive in attracting top students.

**Equipment**

No equipment budget exists. The college uses \$50,000 of technical instruction funds each year to purchase computers and video editing and camera equipment. Thus, students in this college compete against students in peer institutions in national championships, and each of the peer institutions has at least \$300,000 a year in equipment funding (even Baylor University). The comparable college at Penn State, for example, spent more than \$450,000 on equipment last year.

Clearly, this college is equipment-intensive; all professional majors require small-section coursework and extensive use of instructional technology. Some 85 percent of the course sections in this college depend on technology-driven instruction. The college must keep pace with hardware, software and maintenance. Five years ago, the college had fewer than 50 computers. At this writing, more than 275 computers are used each day. The college policy is to buy new computers only when necessary. The college has the same FTE for technology support that it had three years ago. Another technology support person is needed.

The college has received an endowment from the Johnny Carson estate. This will provide \$50,000 a year for equipment. The faculty are grateful, but the equipment needs are much greater.

The college has established a cooperative program with Nebraska Educational Television (NET) and the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts, through which students will be able to access digital equipment at the NET facility on east campus. A specialist in documentaries will work half time for the cooperative program.

**Space**

The college already is cramped for office, classroom and student laboratory space. Increasing technology needs have required more space to be taken for video editing equipment. Storage closets have been turned into editing rooms; faculty share offices (sometimes as many as five to an office); and classrooms are consistently full. Nonetheless, two areas could be remodeled into classrooms, but that would take about \$50,000 for each project.

Our strategic plan calls for thoughtful allocation of resources and careful attention to logistical details.

**Academic Priority #1: Develop Professional Specialization in News in the Graduate Program and Expand Offerings to the Doctoral Level**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications recently approved new guidelines for professional graduate programs. These new policies will allow us to establish a strong master's program that will attract both practicing

professionals and those who did not complete an undergraduate degree in journalism and mass communications.

At the master's level, the new guidelines allow us to develop two specialized writing programs: science writing and technical communication. Both will offer campus and distance education instruction for those working in the mass media and for those who work in scientific or technical fields and are preparing materials to appear in the mass media. We are working with Dr. Del Brinkman, former vice chancellor of academic affairs at the University of Kansas, to implement these two graduate specializations.

### **Science Writing**

The National Science Foundation emphasizes distribution of information on science through the mass media. To that end, the Vice Chancellor of Research has asked our college to develop a science writing program. With temporary funds, we are currently offering one course. It is cross-listed so undergraduate and graduate students both may enroll. That course will produce a depth report within the next few weeks. The college intends to expand that course into an interdisciplinary program (which also relates to Academic Priority #1).

### **Technical Communication**

Corporations, foundations and research centers are clamoring for technical communicators. The college intends to offer a master's degree in technical communication to attract students interested in that career.

## **Academic Priority #2: Expansion and Improvement of the Capstone Course in Each Sequence**

The capstone course in each sequence provides students with an experience designed to broaden their understanding of cultural values in their audiences and to enhance their professional skills in reaching those audiences.

Advanced reporting courses in broadcasting and news-editorial sequences have provided opportunities for students to do documentaries and depth reports on many topics, both locally and internationally. Two have been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Advertising campaigns classes have challenged students to provide integrated marketing communication campaigns for local, state and national clients.

Planning for these capstone learning experiences begins as much as a year before the semester in which students actually enroll in a class. Once a class begins, high tech equipment is requisite. The college's need for equipment, technical staff and additional operating funds is ongoing and immediate.

**News-editorial advanced reporting students** have produced the following depth reports: *Back From Oblivion* (1997) about the American bison; *Coming of Age: The Cather Years at the University of Nebraska* (2001) about the “golden age” of the university, when some say the campus reached a flowering of intellectual activity and Cather found her literary voice; *Reflections on the Little Bighorn* (2001), which was written in conjunction with the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, and tells the history of the Great Plains, the Plains Indians, the battle, and the anthropological discoveries at the site; *Battle of the Bulge* (2002), which focused on fat consumption and negative stereotypes of heavy people; *Could Terror Strike Home* (2002), which researched potential threats and potential solutions should terrorism strike in Nebraska; *Cuba: An Elusive Truth* (2003), which took a class to Cuba to research how American foreign policy affects Nebraska farmers, and was subsequently nominated for a Pulitzer Prize; *I Love You-Neither Do I* (2005), which investigated the love-hate relationship with France, especially since September 11, 2001; and *Cold Blood* (2005), which was written during the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Truman Capote’s book, *In Cold Blood*, and investigated Capote’s work and its impact on literature and journalism, and the community where the story unfolded. *Cold Blood* has also been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

News-editorial and broadcasting students are working on a converged investigation they hope to call *A Tale of Two Disasters*. It will compare the tsunami that hit Sri Lanka in 2004 and the hurricane that hit the gulf coast of the United States in 2005. Students and faculty traveled to Sri Lanka for 10 days during the holiday break after the 2005 fall semester, and plan to travel to New Orleans soon. They are looking at the effects of the disasters a year after their occurrences. A depth report and a documentary will be produced.

**Broadcasting advanced reporting students** have produced documentaries to accompany some of the depth reports. They are: *Reflections on the Little Bighorn* (2001); *Cuba: An Elusive Truth* (2003); *I Love You—I Hate You Too* (2005), to accompany the depth report titled *I Love You-Neither Do I*; and *Cold Blood* (2005).

**Advertising students in campaigns classes** develop advertising campaigns for non-profit and for-profit organizations, many of which have resulted in significant service. A campaigns class in the fall of 2005, for instance, researched the People’s City Mission in Lincoln. The students visited the mission and worked with its director to create possible campaigns. Another class project was designed to get non-English speaking clients in to receive health services. An information campaign was on resources available for abused women. In the spring of 2005, a class worked with the Nebraska Commission on the Lewis and Clark Celebration and discovered that some Native Americans do not consider it a celebration, and do not support the project. The students also found that some who were being called Native Americans actually preferred to be called American Indians to better reflect the diversity of the people who are native to this land.

### **Academic Priority #3: Further Development of Diversity of Students and Faculty**

The newest faculty members have extremely strong professional credentials that enhance the educational experiences of our students. Some have been hired as lecturers so they can complete a terminal degree before moving to a tenure-track position; those who have advanced degrees have been hired as associate or assistant professors and will work toward tenure.

Significant media experience, plus the desire and ability to complete a graduate degree is important to us in selecting faculty. If the college had salary support that could be used for attracting minority faculty into these lecturer positions, it would be able to improve the number of minority faculty positions. However, the college has been able to hire Luis Peon-Casanova as a full-time lecturer in the news-editorial sequence; his still photographic as well as his videographic talents are being implemented to the fullest. Trina Creighton is a full-time lecturer in the broadcasting sequence. Her students have demonstrated the quality of her instruction by placing repeatedly in the prestigious William Randolph Hearst student competitions.

Students benefit from the professional experience these faculty members bring to the classroom. Those who are minority faculty members help to recruit and maintain minority students in the college.

The college hired Scott Winter as Recruiting Coordinator in July, 2005. Although he is not a minority himself, he has made a significant difference in attracting minority students for the college. He also has made great progress in increasing the size of the freshman class that will begin in August 2006. We anticipate more than a 15 percent increase in enrollment. Winter is a faculty member in our college, and teaches two courses in addition to his recruiting position. He prefers to teach freshmen so he has a role in student retention.

He conducts journalism workshops throughout the nation. At the close of each workshop, he asks students if they would like information on careers in journalism, and he touts Nebraska as *the* place for journalism education.

The CoJMC intends to increase its number of minority faculty. We have attracted additional minority students into our undergraduate program, thanks to the assistance of the Recruiting Coordinator. One of the schools with which we continue to compete is the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Twenty-seven years ago it had 14 faculty. Five years ago it had 28. It has added more, and now has a faculty FTE of 52. As a result, it has had the opportunity to diversify its faculty and increase enrollment.

### **Academic Priority #4: Interdisciplinary Education and Practice**

Our emphasis is on using an interdisciplinary approach to educating future journalists. This approach encompasses traditional methods, as well as methods incorporating developing technology. Our main goal is to position the College of Journalism and Mass Communications as *the* place in Nebraska for students to learn how to prepare and produce information for media, regardless of the medium. We continue to collaborate with other colleges, departments and individuals at this university to provide course instruction, work on grants, share facilities, and perform research.

The college offers three undergraduate majors: advertising, broadcasting, and news-editorial. Each sequence offers certain basics, which will prepare future media professionals for multiple specialties in a variety of media.

#### **Rhetoric**

Media are changing, and we anticipate continuing change. Today's journalists no longer can limit themselves to one area of expertise. They must have a broad range of skills. Our college recognizes this, and faculty are educating journalists who will be able to prepare and present reliable, ethical information to an information-hungry audience, regardless of how that audience chooses to receive its information. An increasing number of consumers are choosing to receive news and other information on the Internet, clicking on links to view video. Our faculty now are teaching a variety of skills necessary to provide this kind of information.

As a result of developing technology, the concept of citizen journalism is now part of journalism education. Citizen journalism can be defined as *any document or visual created by an ordinary citizen for the purpose of informing the public*. Citizen journalism includes blogs (Web logs written by ordinary citizens and posted on increasingly popular sites); still photography and short videos taken by digital cameras or cellular telephones and disseminated to a defined public; and individuals who contract with specific media outlets to submit reports on specific events, using the common technology already in the hands of citizens.

In addition to teaching these skills to majors in the college, the faculty also offer courses to students in agriculture and natural sciences, business, engineering, and the physical sciences. These courses teach students to write and speak about their often-complex areas of expertise so others can clearly understand the message. An interdisciplinary graduate program also exists in partnership with marketing and communication studies. The college participates in the visual literacy program that introduces students to the visual communication aspects of the media. The college has developed a course on arts, media and politics that emphasizes the interplay of those influences on a democratic society.

Many opportunities exist for students in our college to work in community, state and national events with for-profit and non-profit companies. Campaigns classes have worked on projects for the Lewis & Clark Expedition anniversary, for the White House Commission on Remembrance, and for the People's City Mission, among scores of other clients.

### Origins

There are two models from which communication education programs are derived—the professional model, and the theoretical-empirical model. The CoJMC was founded on a professional model. Its focus is on application of communication skills. This course of study is designed to educate future media professionals in the skills, history, law and ethics of media. Schools such as Northwestern, Cal-Berkeley, and Columbia often are cited as models of excellence for the professional model. The theoretical-empirical model investigates human communication from an analytical perspective and may focus on forms of communication other than mass communication.

The CoJMC is the only journalism and mass communications program in Nebraska that is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. It has very close ties with media in the state.

What is now the College of Journalism and Mass Communications was organized by the Board of Regents on May 22, 1923, as a school within the College of Arts and Sciences with the purpose of “coordinating the University’s activities in the field of journalism.” In 1924 the school was admitted to membership in the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism.

Before that date, in the fall of 1894, Will Owen Jones, longtime editor of *The Nebraska State Journal*, had introduced journalism instruction. Instruction was expanded in subsequent years, and coursework for the Certificate in Journalism was introduced in 1917. The first recipient was graduated in 1919.

Journalism at UNL began as a news-editorial department and remained that way until after World War II. By that time, some advertising courses had been introduced into the curriculum. Broadcasting, which had been taught largely in the speech department, was introduced into the school in the mid-1950s as broadcast news. Soon thereafter the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences moved the entire broadcast program out of speech and into journalism. Both advertising and broadcasting became curricular sequences during the early 1960s.

In 1979 the Board of Regents approved free-standing status for the school. As the only “school” on campus with a dean reporting directly to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, this school did not fit the pattern of the university. Upon the suggestion of the Chancellor and with the backing of a new Vice Chancellor, the faculty requested that “school” status be changed to “college.” Under our state constitution and statutes, only the

unicameral can name a college. It did so in the spring of 1985. Since that year, the college has offered a Bachelor of Journalism degree.

The focus of the college on excellence and professional preparation is not new. By the early 1970s, Dean Emeritus R. Neale Copple's leadership had brought national respect to the professional preparation the program provided. The simple tenets on which this excellence was based:

1. That the college builds a sound professional program closely coupled with a solid liberal arts education
2. That the college attempts to do very well that which it could afford to do, and no more – an emphasis on quality and not quantity

### **Academic Priority #5: Establish the College as the Academic Hub for Communications Education**

This college focuses on teaching students to communicate to a variety of audiences using a variety of media. The emphasis is on communicating information using a practical, easy-to-understand style.

Both the Business and the Technical Communications programs are in the college. These service courses are required for majors in the College of Business Administration and for the College of Engineering and Technology and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. The college administration meets with representatives of these colleges regularly to be sure the courses are meeting the needs of their colleges and teaching the information their students need, in the way they need for it to be taught. Faculty offer students real-world perspectives on communication in these settings.

CoJMC faculty also teach the communications component in the J.D. Edwards Honors Program in Computer Science and Management (JDEHP). The faculty wrote the pilot for the unique method of “modular” or “parallel” instruction, which has been used since the collaboration began in the fall of 2003. In this method, communications faculty collaborate with JDEHP faculty to teach communications using actual JDEHP assignments. Students in the JDEHP are required to take communications during both semesters of the freshman year and the sophomore year, and communications requirements for their specific majors are waived as a result.

The Science Writing program is a pilot project meant for students who may write about the sciences for the media. It was begun at the suggestion of the Vice Chancellor for Research and the then Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The pilot project ends this academic year, but a request has been made for it to be renewed for three years.

**Academic Priority #6: Development of Full-Time Faculty in Technical and Business Communication, and Enhancement of the Involvement with the J.D. Edwards Honors Program in Computer Science and Management**

The commitment of the college to writing excellence has expanded to the courses we offer in Business Communication and Technical Communication and to our involvement with teaching the writing and presentation components in the J.D. Edwards Honors Program in Computer Science and Management (JDEHP). In fact, the approach used with JDEHP has worked so well that the College of Business Administration (CBA), the

College of Engineering and Technology (CoET), and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) would like to implement this approach as well.

We have two part-time instructors (each .25 FTE) teaching communications in the JDEHP. This is a significant decrease in instructor FTE from last year. The college has 10 part-time instructors teaching a total of 25 sections of Business Communication sections each semester, and eight part-time instructors teaching a total of 11 sections of Technical Communication each semester.

Unfortunately, lack of funding stands in the way of progress on this very important academic priority. The faculty had hoped to have full-time faculty in Technical Communication and in Business Communication by this time, but we have been unable to fund these positions. We are increasing salaries for the part-time faculty who teach these courses, however, and we are committed to progress in this priority, both in creating full-time faculty positions and in enhancing the method of instruction.

We would like to have the funding to offer the JDEHP “parallel instruction” approach to students from CBA, CoET, and CASNR. As is the case with JDEHP, the college envisions having an instructor dedicated to each major area of study (examples: civil engineering, accounting, animal science) who works directly with professors in the specific area, merging communication projects with assignments planned by those professors. This will mean expanding the pool of faculty in both Business Communication and Technical Communication.

The operating budget and faculty salary money that supports those programs came with their transfers to this college. That funding does not allow for development of full-time faculty to provide stability for those programs. The goal is to have a full-time coordinator for both programs (who also would oversee the JDEHP collaboration). In addition, at least two full-time faculty members are needed in the Business Communication program and two full-time faculty members in the Technical Communication program. One full-time instructor is needed in the JDEHP

communications component. These would be new faculty lines. An increase in the operating budgets for these programs also is needed.

The Business Communication sections have been moved into computer labs in Andersen Hall to allow students to receive individual instruction during class time. The Technical Communication courses continue to be taught in available classrooms on both east and city campus. We believe it is necessary to transfer those classes to computer labs, as well. Although lab instruction does increase the operating expenses for those programs, it also increases the efficacy of instruction.

### **History**

In 1997, the vice chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, and the dean of the College of Engineering and Technology asked this college to assume responsibilities for instruction of Technical Communication. They believed that a professional writing program was a better match for their students' needs than a writing and composition program. In 2002, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the College of Business Administration approached this college about teaching business writing (now Business Communication) course that had been taught in what originally was a vocational and technical education program.

When instruction in technical writing (now Technical Communication) was brought to the college, a consultant helped us develop the program. However, years of budget cuts followed, and there has not been funding to implement the consultant's recommendations. An advisory committee has been formed, including the Assistant Dean from CBA, the associate dean of CoET, the associate dean of CASNR, and the associate director of the JDEHP. They have helped us make modifications in both the Business Communication program and the Technical Communication program, despite budget limitations.