

Strategic Priorities

COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Our college is committed to fostering free expression. The First Amendment makes it clear that freedom of expression is a bedrock value on which our nation was founded. It is essential that students understand the relationship between free expression and a democracy, and that understanding is at the heart of the College of Journalism and Mass Communications' mission.

Core values that flow from this fundamental commitment include the belief that all media influence and are influenced by the democratic society in which they function. We help our students learn to embrace a diversity of opinions and viewpoints in order to grasp and act on that fundamental value and to be responsible citizens in both their academic and their professional careers.

Understanding the media's roles and responsibilities in their close interaction with society, engaging in research about that interaction, and reaching out to varied audiences are at the core of the education our students receive. Students work with academic, business and civic communities throughout the state, the nation and various parts of the world to discover insights about themselves, their work and their audiences and to be responsible and ethical communicators in a changing media landscape. News-editorial and broadcast majors produce depth reports and documentaries on national and international subjects. Advertising students produce campaigns for clients locally and nationally.

This college excels at teaching communications. Here students learn to think clearly and analytically and to communicate in written, oral and visual media.

Our mission and core values reflect and complement those of the university. We are a student-centered college and consider student learning our top priority. Faculty members continue to study the pedagogy of teaching and apply successful techniques to their classroom practice. Our college culture fosters an open-door policy. That means faculty are expected to be available to students nearly any time they are not in class or in meetings. We pride ourselves on providing good — and abundant — academic and career advising for our students.

Our curriculum encourages interaction among students and faculty in our various majors. We collaborate with other colleges and departments on campus in a variety of interdisciplinary programs and courses.

At the root, our goal is to be a positive influence on our students, our university and our community, helping to foster democratic values in a world desperately in need of them. We are uncompromising in our dedication to excellence.

Core value: Freedom of expression/democratic values

Priority 1: Interdisciplinary projects to promote free expression

Our curriculum focuses on this core value in a variety of ways. Our introductory course — for students in all majors — emphasizes the importance of a free media to a democracy. Our freshman honors seminar and our senior-level media law and media ethics courses — for students in all three majors — do the same. In between those levels, every course, including the skills courses, helps students see how the specific things they are learning relate to the basic commitment to free expression, which includes both political and commercial speech.

Our college has a partnership with the Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication in Norway to help develop a journalism program at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, helping to foster free expression and democracy in this African nation.

With Fine and Performing Arts, we have developed a course to study the arts, media and politics and the interplay of those influences within America's democratic society.

The dean is currently working with the dean of the Law College to develop joint initiatives to study and promote free expression. We plan to begin dialogues with the Political Science Department, the Center for Great Plains Studies, and the Ross Film Theater for further projects.

Core value: Communications center

Priority 2: Establish the college as the academic hub for communications education

A main goal for the College of Journalism and Mass Communications is to establish ourselves as THE place in Nebraska where students learn how to prepare and produce news and strategic communications for the media. In a multicultural, multilingual, multimedia world, we offer instruction and guidance in how to write, edit, produce and market information, ideas and opinions to various audiences through a variety of media.

We offer a multimedia approach for preparing students for careers in a variety of areas. We teach them writing, editing, production and presentation skills that can be used in a variety of media outlets. We teach them about themselves and about their audiences. We ask them to write about and talk about the values in their own culture and the values of other cultures.

We offer this education to our majors, but we also offer courses to help students in agriculture and natural sciences, business, engineering and the physical sciences to be able to talk about their areas of expertise in a format that fits into a multimedia world. In addition, we have an interdisciplinary graduate program with marketing and communication studies. We are part of the visual literacy program that introduces students in our college and other colleges to the visual communication aspects of the media. With the College of Fine and Performing Arts, we have

developed a course on arts, media and politics that emphasizes the interplay of those influences on our democratic society.

A review of the evolution of journalism and communications education may be helpful to explain our goal.

Journalism and communications education at the college level evolved from two paradigms. The first arose because newspapers needed to hire reporters and editors who had both the skills and the education to make good editorial decisions. Many college and university journalism programs were started or, at least, encouraged by state press associations or newspaper publishers. Names like Pulitzer, Hearst, Newhouse, Medill, William Allen White, Gaylord, Cronkite, Reynolds and Neuharth are attached to professional programs in journalism education.

The other model was developed by scholars — many in the fields of sociology and psychology — who were interested in the study of human communication. They include people like Osgood, Tannebaum, Lazarsfeld, Rogers, Hovland, Schramm, Newcomb, MacLean and even some mathematicians like Shannon, Weaver and Wiener.

Gradually, journalism programs began to embrace one or the other of the two models. Today, some universities emphasize undergraduate and master's degree programs with a professional emphasis, educating future professionals in the skills, history, law and ethics of media. Programs like Northwestern, Cal-Berkeley and Columbia are recognized as outstanding examples of this approach.

At other universities, journalism and communications education is part of a broader program of study that investigates human communication from an analytical perspective. Programs at Stanford, Michigan, USC and Wisconsin pursue this approach, studying the impact, functions and effects of media on audiences. Forms of communication in addition to media are included in their courses of study.

The journalism and communications program at UNL was founded and continues to function on a professional model. It is the only JMC program in the state that is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. It has close ties with the media in Nebraska.

Journalism education at Nebraska began when Will Owen Jones, long-time editor of The Nebraska State Journal, began teaching journalism classes in 1894. NU was one of the first universities to recognize the validity of academic preparation for professional journalists. Instruction was expanded in subsequent years, and the Certificate of Journalism was introduced in 1917. The first recipient of that certificate graduated in 1919.

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.

The coursework in the early years and through World War II was focused on newspaper journalism, although some advertising courses were gradually introduced. Broadcasting, which had been taught in the speech department in the early years, became part of the journalism program in the mid 1950s. Both advertising and broadcasting joined news-editorial as curricular sequences in the early 1960s. In 1979 the Board of Regents approved freestanding school status for the program. The Legislature named it a college in 1985.

The college has wholeheartedly embraced the university's fundamental teaching mission. In this college, that includes writing and editing skills, visual and design skills and technical and theoretical foundations to provoke creative and critical thinking among future professionals. Faculty take teaching seriously, working to help students "mature and develop their own sense of self-confidence and individual responsibility" as outlined in the university's mission statement.

Faculty understand that our students' work is meant to be seen and heard. It appears in print, on the air and on the Internet. It has been presented to CEOs, publishers and general managers in Nebraska and across the nation. Students' work is regularly recognized with high rankings in national and regional competitions, and recruiters describe it as evidence our graduates can do the job. Our students' work tells our story better than all the data and rhetoric we may be able to provide about our program.

An emphasis on helping individual students is at the heart of our program. Faculty work closely with students both inside and outside the classroom, leaving their office doors open and encouraging students to come with questions and problems and ideas. That kind of openness and willingness to help endears us to our students and graduates and earns us respect from professional throughout the nation.

The continuing growth of our program's reputation is largely the result of two decisions made about 40 years ago under the leadership of the late Dean Neale Copple:

That the college build a sound professional program closely coupled with a liberal arts education.

That the college attempt to very well that which it could afford to do and no more.

In keeping with those principles, the college has three majors: advertising, broadcasting and news-editorial. It does not offer majors in telecommunications, media management, magazine writing, photography or any number of specializations found in other communications programs. The basics taught in each of our sequences will prepare future journalists for a variety of specialties in a variety of media.

Writing is considered basic throughout the college. The same can be said for what might be called "editorial decision making," more commonly known as newspaper editing, broadcast production and advertising strategy.

Clearly, our goal of being a first-class multimedia program is tied to our history and our commitment to our college's and the university's core values. We are developing a strategic communication plan that will guide our efforts to contact and inform current students,

prospective students, alumni, donors, and prospective employers of our graduates of the outstanding multimedia, multicultural educational program we have developed. We began to move to a multimedia approach when we revised our undergraduate curriculum in 2003 and implemented it in 2004. Now we will devote faculty and staff time and technological expertise to the creation of print, online and video presentations. We plan to begin this effort in fall 2005 and continue it through our next accrediting visit in 2009.

Core value: Communications center

Priority 3: Development of new specializations in the graduate program.

Three paragraphs in the 2020 Report provide support for our plan to develop new specializations in our graduate program. They read, in part:

“... it is important to value the alternative approaches necessary for developing successful programs in different areas of scholarship.”

“... UNL should support multiple models of research and scholarship in an integrative framework to produce work that meets national and international standards of excellence.”

“Strong research and graduate studies programs complement undergraduate education. Two factors remain key to accomplishing this premise: 1) The university recognizes the resource commitments needed to accomplish excellence on both fronts and 2) the university culture finds ways to recognize different paths to faculty excellence.”

In addition, our national accrediting body approved new guidelines in 2004 for professional graduate programs. The 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 communications. Furthermore, our longer-term goal is to develop a non-fiction writing program at the doctoral level in collaboration with the Department of English.

At the master’s level, the new accrediting guidelines will allow us to maintain and improve our current program, which is designed primarily for people with undergraduate journalism degrees and/or significant professional experience, and also to develop a professional program. The program will be designed for people with undergraduate degrees in other disciplines who want to learn journalism skills and attitudes in order to work in some part of the media. They would enroll for on-site classes in an intensive schedule that would prepare them for careers in journalism in 18 months to two years.

Our traditional program, which generally follows the second paradigm described above, will continue to offer courses both on campus and through distance education. Students will be able to have an emphasis in science writing as well as in general news-editorial, broadcasting or advertising or the integrated marketing-communications-advertising program we currently offer.

At the doctoral level, we envision a non-fiction professional writing program that would focus on narrative writing, the new media term that is used to describe stories that, in the past,

might have been labeled as feature stories or personal columns. The stories are longer than a typical news story and are told from a personal perspective, based on the writer's experience related to an event or situation. They often employ techniques used by fiction writers. This would be an interdisciplinary program involving COJMC and the English Department.

To accomplish these goals, we will require more resources than we have now. We have only one graduate fellowship that is endowed and never have had any state-supported graduate assistantships. In order to be able to attract students into the program on a full-time basis, we need state funds for 12 graduate assistantships.

The timeline for establishing the new master's program is fall of the 2006-07 academic year. The goal for the doctoral program is to admit students for the 2010-11 academic year.

Core value: Communications center

Priority 4: Development of full-time faculty for business and technical writing, and enhancement of the involvement with the J.D. Edwards program.

Our commitment to writing excellence has expanded to include the courses we offer in business and technical writing and to our involvement with enhancing the writing and presentation component of the J.D. Edwards program. In fact, the approach used with the J.D. Edwards students has worked so well that the College of Business Administration and the College of Engineering and Technology have indicated they would like to implement this approach as well.

In 1997, the vice chancellor of the Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources, the dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences and the dean of Engineering and Technology asked that we take on the instruction in technical writing. They believed a professional writing program was a better match for their students' needs than a traditional composition program. In 2002, the senior vice chancellor for academic affairs and the College of Business Administration asked us to take over the business writing courses for their students.

As we prepared to bring technical writing into our college, we brought in a consultant to help us develop the program. However, years of budget cuts followed, and we have not had funding to implement the consultant's recommendations. Therefore, we have contracted with another consultant to assess the program in 2005-06 and help us find ways better to meet students' needs.

Meanwhile, we have formed an advisory committee that includes the assistant dean of business, the associate dean of engineering, the associate dean of agriculture and a representative of the director of the J.D. Edwards program. The advisory group has helped us make modifications in the program, given budget limitations.

The operating budget and faculty salary money that currently support those programs came with their transfer to our college. That funding is not at a level that allows for the development of full-time faculty who would provide stability and direction to those programs. A myriad of part-time instructors are hired at minimal salaries for a semester or year at a time.

We have been fortunate to have a small core of instructors who have taught in these programs for several years, but we also have lost several experienced people because of better job offers or retirements. Instructors in these courses are teaching students from the Colleges of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, Business, and Engineering. These colleges keep reminding us of the importance of this writing instruction to the success of their graduates. Employers continue to seek graduates who write well.

Our goal would be to have a full-time coordinator for the business and technical writing programs who also could supervise our involvement with the J.D. Edwards program. In addition, we would need at least two full-time faculty members in each of the business and technical writing programs and at least one full-time instructor in the J.D. Edwards program.

We also need an increase in the operating budgets for these programs. We have moved the instruction for the business writing sections into the computer labs in Andersen Hall so that students can receive individual instruction on their writing during class time. The technical writing courses continue to be taught in various places on both East and City campus. We think the writing experience would be enhanced if those sections could be taught in computer writing labs as well. Lab instruction does increase the operating expenses for those programs.

We would hope to have the full-time coordinator and full-time faculty members in place by the fall of 2006. This would require new faculty lines.

Core values:

Research and outreach

Interaction between media and society

Priority 5: Expansion and improvement of the capstone courses in each sequence.

Capstone courses in each sequence reflect the college's learning-centered focus. They provide students with an experience designed to broaden their understanding of cultural values in their audiences and to enhance their professional skills in reaching their audiences.

The faculty used the 125th anniversary of the Battle of the Little Big Horn to show in a depth report and documentary how American history traditionally has not been accurately told. The college did another depth report on American bison. Most people do not know why raising bison on the Plains would be better than raising cattle. They do not know that bison's hooves do less damage to grass than the hooves of cattle and that bison's shark-like immune and metabolic systems can take hot and cold better than cattle. Another depth report focused on fatty food, fat consumption and stereotypes related to obesity.

Nebraska used to be populated largely by northern Europeans. Now the number of Hispanics on the Plains is increasing dramatically. A depth reporting class including both news-editorial and broadcasting students went to Cuba to study how American foreign policy affects Nebraska farmers. On their way, they stopped in Miami where Alberto Ibarguen, publisher of the Miami Herald, set up interviews for them with leaders in the Cuban American community. In

Cuba, the students talked with government officials, ordinary citizens and dissidents. Their experiences in Miami and Havana let the students discover and examine the complicated relationship between Cuba and the United States.

Students in the science writing classes have produced multiple stories about water in Nebraska, particularly in the Platte River basin. Many of those stories have already been published in the Lincoln Journal Star, and all the stories will be collected into a magazine that will be available at the spring 2006 Nebraska Water Conference.

In the advertising major, campaigns classes provide students with the capstone experience, applying the strategic and creative problem solving skills they have learned in previous classes. One recent campaigns class project was designed to get non-English speaking clients connected with health services. Another project laid the groundwork for a fund-raising campaign for shelters for homeless women. Last spring one class worked with the Nebraska Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission and discovered that some Native Americans did not consider the commemoration a reason to celebrate. In addition to applying their learning to a real-world experience, students learned that even what looks on the surface to be an innocuous and positive cause may not be universally embraced.

Other classes worked with the state of Nebraska to create a campaign for the roll-out of the Nebraska state quarter design; White House Commission on Remembrance to promote Memorial day; Nebraska Health & Human Services for HIV/AIDS Awareness campaigns; Downtown Lincoln Association to promote downtown Lincoln; the Nebraska Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Event; the Nebraska State Historical Society; the Nebraska Urban Indian Health Care; and the People's City Mission.

All these projects entail both research and outreach, and many also have a strong diversity component. Planning for these capstone learning experiences begins up to a year ahead of time. Once they begin, they are equipment intensive. Our need for equipment, technical staff and additional operating funds is ongoing and immediate.

We brought outdated, aging equipment from Avery Hall. In order to continue our pursuit of excellence, we need equipment and furnishings to enhance the educational experience of our majors. We are an equipment-intensive program that needs to be able to prepare students for the job market of today and tomorrow.

The college has no equipment budget. We use \$50,000 of technical instruction funds each year to purchase computers and video editing and camera equipment. Our peer institutions, against whom students compete in national championships, have at least \$300,000 each year in equipment funds. Penn State's journalism college, for instance, spent more than \$450,000 on equipment last year. We have never had such a luxury.

All our professional majors require small-section coursework and extensive use of instructional technology. Some 85 percent of or course sections depend on or are enhanced by technology. The college must keep pace with hardware, software and equipment maintenance needs.

By carefully marshaling university-appropriated and private resources, we have made some progress toward meeting our equipment needs in recent years. Most of that progress has been possible because technical writing and business writing were added to our college. Those programs enable us to produce more student credit hours and receive more technical instruction money. Moreover, these additions have intensified our focus on writing.

The college has implemented systematic strategies for the purchase, allocation and re-use of computers that provide for redistribution of aging but still viable computers from student laboratories to other uses (faculty, staff, graduate assistants and work study stations) as appropriate.

Private donations have helped us buy some new equipment; however, needs surpass private funding. The dean is committed to continuing to raise private money to help meet the college's needs.

One goal is to find donors who are interested in helping us make the learning environment in Andersen Hall even better and even more of an attraction for students and potential employers. The building has helped raise our stature on campus and among accredited journalism programs throughout the nation. We now need the tools to raise the educational experience from very good to great.

Our goal is to obtain funding to enhance our capstone courses through the acquisition of new equipment by the fall of 2008. Some of the equipment is needed for the 2005-06 academic year in order to allow our students to compete successfully in the Hearst competitions. Other equipment is needed to prepare us for a move to high-definition television production by 2008.

Core value: Understanding diverse opinions and viewpoints

Priority 6: Further development of diversity of students and faculty.

The college seeks salary support to be used for attracting minority faculty into lecturer positions. Competition for faculty from underrepresented groups who hold terminal degrees is intense, and it is difficult to attract these people to Nebraska. One strategy for increasing the number of minority faculty is to find people with professional experience who will teach while pursuing advanced degrees.

Because we prepare students for the professions, it is imperative that our faculty have professional experience. We try to hire faculty who also have advanced degrees. However, some of our newest faculty members do not hold advanced degrees but have strong professional credentials that enhance the educational experience of our students. Because these faculty have been hired as lecturers, the college benefits from their expertise as the faculty members complete higher degrees before moving into tenure-track positions.

If we had salary support to attract minority faculty into these lecturer positions, we would be able to improve the number of minority faculty members. Students benefit from the professional experience these lecturers bring to the classroom, and lecturers who are minority faculty help to recruit and retain minority students in the college.

The college intends to increase minority faculty numbers by two and attract an additional 10 minority students into our undergraduate program during the next three years. The college intends to build upon its student recruiting contacts in the Washington, D.C., and Omaha metropolitan areas to enhance our opportunities for meeting this goal. The addition this fall of a full-time recruiter for the college will help us increase not only the number of quality students generally but also the number of students of color.