Department of Journalism & Digital Communication

Governance document

Forward

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication operates under the principle of collegiality. We practice shared governance and engage in civil, respectful discourse among colleagues with shared goals.

The Department is not currently a multi-campus unit. If departmental faculty are hired at other campuses, we will modify our governance and Tenure and Promotion documents to ensure those faculty have a voice in departmental issues. We recognize the principle of equity of assignments, resources, and opportunities for faculty across a multi-campus university.

Our mission

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication strives for teaching excellence, supports faculty and student research, promotes community and professional service, and embraces multicultural understanding. We work untiringly to graduate accomplished students who can make valuable contributions to their chosen fields and become informed, active citizens.

We endeavor to provide our students with an education rich in practical experience and theory; collaborate with one another and the campus community; promote respect for others and their views; develop innovative and creative expression and the unfettered pursuit of truth; nurture deliberative dialogue and shared governance; promote ethical behavior imbued with honesty, integrity, and openness; and encourage civic awareness and service.

We further endeavor to:

- educate journalists who can report, edit, present, and interpret the news with skill, responsibility, and social consciousness in an evolving media world;
- engage in research, service, creative endeavor,s and professional activities that contribute to the academy, the community, and the profession;
- detect and explore emerging issues in journalism, mass media, and society;
- question journalism's traditional methods and values and test alternatives;

- promote cultural understanding and broaden perspectives;
- prepare students for careers in the communication industry, emphasizing skills in digital media;
- develop abilities and expand imaginations of students and faculty; and
- affirm the belief that journalism, at its best, encourages and protects the democratic process.

Diversity & inclusion

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication fosters diversity and inclusion in our faculty, staff, students, and curriculum. We recognize global and domestic groups that have experienced de facto or de jure discrimination or under representation in mass media. We make special efforts to bring individuals and perspectives from these groups into our curriculum, our classrooms and our conversations.

Dimensions of diversity can include, but are not limited to, sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic status, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, cognitive style, and communication style.

Governance structure

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication functions as a part of the governance structure of USF in the College of Arts and Sciences, complying with all its policies and procedures.

The Department serves all USF campuses, although its faculty presently belong exclusively to the St. Petersburg campus. Accordingly, the Department adheres to local campus policies, while working to advance the University's mission to better society through intellectual inquiry.

Within this structure, the Department exercises the extent of its authority over budgetary, academic, and administrative matters.

The chief administrator of the Department holds the title of Chair and reports to the College Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the College's Campus Dean at USF St. Petersburg.

The faculty of the Department assumes primary responsibility for shared governance, with the Chair. It does so as a Committee of the Whole that reviews, proposes and approves a range of academic and administrative areas, including curriculum development and faculty performance review.

The faculty includes four ranks: professor, associate professor, assistant professor, and instructor.

Joint appointments may be made, and individuals may assume voting rights if at least 50% of the appointment is in the Department.

Department Chair

The Chair of the Department of Journalism and Communication provides administrative leadership and fulfills the following duties:

- oversees curricular development and internal review;
- sets academic schedules and teaching assignments;
- establishes short- and long-term strategic priorities;
- administers the unit budget;
- ensures the Department maintains its professional accreditation;
- assists faculty in professional development, tenure, and promotion;
- determines faculty hiring needs and coordinates recruitment and hiring;
- represents the Department and its interests to administrative and academic officers;
- represents the Department within our local communities and across the profession;
- represents the Department at orientation sessions, open houses, and other events for prospective students;
- seeks external support and funding;
- seeks and cultivates partnerships;
- ensures undergraduates receive timely, appropriate advising within the major;
- works with the Advising Office to coordinate communications with students;
- oversees campus-community joint ventures;
- appoints and supervises adjunct faculty;
- monitors enrollment and proposes changes to the curriculum;
- maintains and enforces policies regarding student performance and conduct;
- conducts scheduled meetings;
- hires, supervises, and evaluates office staff;
- recruits and retains students;
- supports the Graduate Program Coordinator as needed;
- engages in outreach to alumni of the undergraduate program;
- ensures the undergraduate program stays in compliance with ACEJMC, our professional accreditor; and
- ensures the overall effectiveness of the Department in meeting its mission.

The Chair serves a three-year, renewable term. The Chair serves at the pleasure of the College Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Campus Dean of the College in St. Petersburg. At the end of the three-year appointment, the Department shall hold an election to recommend reappointing the Chair or electing a new Chair. Members of the Committee of the Whole may vote, and the Department shall inform College leadership of its recommendation.

Graduate Program Coordinator

The Graduate Program Coordinator can be any full-time faculty member and serves for the duration of the academic year. The Coordinator may remain in the post as long as they choose. If a vacancy must be filled, the Committee of the Whole will vote for a replacement.

The Graduate Program Coordinator:

- organizes the graduate program;
- takes the lead in advising graduate students;
- represents the Department at open houses and other events for prospective students;
- represents the Department at orientation events;
- works with the Graduate Office to coordinate communications with students;
- maintains and enforces policies regarding graduate student performance and conduct;
- monitors graduate enrollment and proposes changes to the curriculum;
- engages in outreach to alumni of the graduate program;
- works with admissions and others in the recruitment of students; and
- ensures the graduate program stays in compliance with ACEJMC, our professional accreditor.

Meetings

The Department shall meet at least four times a semester, with roughly equal spacing between meetings. The meeting schedule shall be set before the start of each semester.

Meetings can be joined in-person or via video conference.

Full-time and adjunct faculty, staff, and graduate assistants may attend meetings. The Chair prepares agendas, with input from the faculty, and conducts the meetings. Any member of the faculty may submit an agenda item within 24 hours of a scheduled meeting.

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, any two members of the faculty, or the Chair, may call a special meeting. At least one week's written notice is required, except in an emergency.

Substantive decisions about hiring, curriculum, departmental practices, new initiatives, and

partnerships require a majority vote by the faculty.

Votes can be cast in person or electronically. Secret ballots will be used, when appropriate, regardless of the medium of voting.

Committee of the Whole

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication operates as a Committee of the Whole. Membership comprises full-time faculty. Others affiliated with the Department, including adjuncts and staff, may join the committee as non-voting members.

The duties of the Committee include, but are not limited to, the following:

- reviewing curricula;
- proposing and approving new courses or revisions;
- recommending budget allocations and disbursements, including foundation accounts;
- proposing, reviewing, and approving program policies and procedures;
- considering new partnerships and strategic initiatives;
- assembling ad-hoc committees as specific needs arise; and
- hearing complaints and grievances from or about students, faculty, and staff.

Processes

Annual evaluations

The evaluation process begins with a conversation between the Chair and each faculty member to establish goals and set expectations for the upcoming calendar year. During this meeting, workloads and effort assignments are set.

After the calendar year completes, faculty upload their annual reports, with narratives for teaching, research, and service, along with any supplemental information, to a University-designated system.

Throughout the year, the Chair communicates and enforces deadlines set by the College to complete each phase of the review process.

Tenure-track faculty who wish to count research, including work in progress, toward their annual research productivity should make that work available via links or attachments.

A Faculty Evaluation Committee convenes annually to review each faculty member's report and provide evaluations.

The Faculty Evaluation Committee comprises the Department's tenured faculty members but does not include the Department Chair. The Committee organizes itself each year and nominates a Chair to oversee the review process. Three committee members review each full-time faculty member's performance with regard to teaching, research, and service. The evaluation committee follows all CBA guidelines.

Faculty with administrative assignments are also reviewed in this area.

Categories are weighted differently for each faculty member and set by the Department chair, in consultation with the faculty member, ahead of the academic year, as part of the workload assignment.

Scores in each category range from 1 to 5, with higher scores representing better performance. Partial scores (for instance, 3.5) may be given when reviewers deem performance falls between levels.

- A score of 1 is considered **unacceptable**, signifying expectations have not been met in a pattern that spans multiple reviews.
- A score of 2 is considered **weak**, signifying expectations have not been met.
- A score of 3 is considered **satisfactory**, signifying expectations have been met.
- A score of 4 is considered **strong**, signifying expectations have been exceeded.
- A score of 5 is considered **outstanding**, signifying expectations have been far exceeded.

Generally, Department faculty are expected to perform at a level commensurate with faculty from the discipline at other top-tier research institutions. Specific expectations depend on the category and are enumerated below.

Research

Faculty earn credit for the scholarship they produce, whether published or in progress.

Peer-reviewed journal articles in high-quality publications (published or in press) are considered a core unit of measurement in assessing faculty research. As per the Department's Tenure and Promotion Guidelines, publishing, on average, two journal articles (or their equivalents) a year will meet the bar for outstanding performance in scholarship, a requirement for tenure.

Other scholarly efforts also count as evidence of scholarship. Unless otherwise noted, each product generally equates to one peer-reviewed journal article:

- a peer-reviewed book chapter published by reputable university or academic presses
- a scholarly book (equivalent to three–to–five journal articles, depending on the scope of effort)
- a successful grant application and related activities, e.g., grant administration (equivalent to one–to–five journal articles, depending on the scope of effort)
- peer-reviewed proceedings in an international conference
- an edited book or other edited collection

Other scholarship activities can add to a faculty member's research point total.

Creative works

Creative works are significant publication efforts of a journalistic, nonfiction nature. Such works include:

- non-scholarly books
- long-form reporting series
- multimedia productions

- interactive and data-driven journalistic projects
- documentaries and other substantive journalistic products based on investigative reporting, historical analysis, public records research, and related techniques
- community journalism and engagement projects

Creative works generally count as two-thirds of a peer-reviewed journal article, depending on 1) the scope of effort, 2) evidence of merit, 3) comments from independent, outside reviewers, and 4) the prestige of the publisher.

Public scholarship & other publications

Additional forms of scholarship can earn credit toward research. These efforts include, but are not limited to:

- invited book chapters not subject to peer review
- self-published works validated by external reviews
- invited, peer-reviewed papers or presentations
- non-refereed, published journalistic articles
- book reviews, essays, commentaries and other critical-analytical publications
- invited presentations or workshops
- research fellowships
- photo essays
- other professional works

Public scholarship generally counts as one-third of a peer-reviewed journal article, depending on 1) the scope of effort, 2) evidence of merit, 3) comments from independent, outside reviewers, and 4) the prestige of the publisher.

Credit for works in progress

Credit can be given for unpublished works in progress when there is evidence of substantive progress in research or writing. The faculty member under review should indicate whether they would like to receive partial credit for work in progress and describe what was accomplished in the review period.

Evaluators should award partial credit after determining the total credit that the effort constitutes and then gauging how much progress has been made. Examples of achievements that warrant partial credit include:

- instrument, scale, or measurement design
- data collection
- draft research manuscripts
- book manuscript contracts from reputable publishers
- submitted (but unpublished) manuscripts
- grant applications

These examples can be adapted to other types of scholarship to provide credit for work in progress.

A faculty member could earn credit for a work that ultimately is rejected for publication and, accordingly, doesn't contribute to their tenure or promotion application. However, this disadvantage is offset by the need to recognize work in progress and the potential to bring unpublished efforts to fruition by finding alternative publications, combining studies, or building on efforts in other ways.

Criteria

1. **Unacceptable**
   a. no evidence of published scholarship and limited evidence of works in progress
2. **Weak**
   a. **fewer than one** peer-reviewed journal article in a high-quality publication (published or in press), or equivalent forms of scholarly work, but evidence of work in progress **AND**
   b. **fewer than one** creative work, but evidence of work in progress; and **fewer than one** form of public scholarship **AND**
   c. **fewer than three** forms of public scholarship
3. **Satisfactory**
   a. **one** peer-reviewed journal article in a high-quality publication (published or in press), or equivalent forms of scholarly work **OR**
   b. **one** or more creative works; and **one** or more forms of public scholarship **OR**
   c. **three** or more forms of public scholarship
4. **Strong**
   a. **one** peer-reviewed journal article in a high-quality publication (published or in press), or equivalent form of scholarly work; and evidence of significant progress on a second peer-reviewed journal article in a high-quality publication (published or in press), or equivalent form of scholarly work **OR**
   b. **two** or more creative works **OR**
   c. **one** or more creative works; and **two** or more forms of public scholarship
5. **Outstanding**
   a. **two** or more peer-reviewed journal articles in high-quality publications (published or in press), or equivalent forms of scholarly work **OR**
   b. **one** peer-reviewed journal article in a high-quality publication; and **two** or more creative works **OR**
   c. **one** peer-reviewed journal article in a high-quality publication; **one** or more creative work; and **one** form of public scholarship **OR**
   d. **three** or more creative works **OR**
   e. **two** or more creative works, and **two** or more forms of public scholarship

Teaching

Journalism and Digital Communication faculty are expected to be well-rounded educators who bridge theory and practice; stimulate student interest; provide support, coaching, and mentorship; and uphold high standards of academic performance.

Faculty earn credit toward their teaching score across four categories:

1. contributing to student learning and growth
2. supporting students in their academic pursuits and transition to the profession
3. engaging in curriculum development
4. exploring innovative approaches to instruction

Evidence of teaching excellence across these categories can take many forms. The sections provide examples but are not exhaustive.

Contributing to student learning and growth

Examples of evidence of contributing to student learning and growth can include:

- student publications emanating from a class the faculty member taught
- qualitative comments from student evaluations affirming learning experienced
- scores on critical assessments, pre/post test comparisons that document growth from the beginning to the end of a semester
- positive external/professional assessments of student work tied to a class the faculty member taught
- written comments from colleagues based on classroom observations, including observations of online courses
- high marks on student evaluations, particularly the items *Description of Course Objectives & Assignments, Communication of Ideas and Information, Expression of Expectations for Performance, Stimulation of Interest in the Course,* and *Facilitation of Learning*.

Faculty may include other forms of evidence, to be considered at the discretion of the reviewer.

Supporting students in their academic pursuits and transition to the profession

This category involves connecting students to opportunities outside the classroom, including student clubs and media, and jobs and internships. It also encompasses the kind of informal coaching and mentorship that happens in advising, office hours and other co-curricular activities.

Examples of evidence of supporting students in their academic pursuits and transition to the profession include:

- qualitative comments affirming support received on student evaluations

- notes from students affirmed support received

- notes from students crediting the faculty for help finding a job or internship

- high marks on student evaluation items *Availability to Assist Students In or Out of Class* and *Respect and Concern for the Students*

Faculty may include other forms of evidence, to be considered at the discretion of the reviewer.

Engaging in curriculum development

This category involves developing new teaching material, ranging from updating examples to conceiving new classes or programs of study. New assignments, new modules, and new course proposals are examples of curriculum development.

Examples of evidence of engaging in curriculum development include:

- syllabi
- lesson plans
- assignment descriptions
- University-approved or in-process course proposals

Faculty may include other forms of evidence, to be considered at the discretion of the reviewer.

Exploring innovative approaches to instruction

This category focuses on the use of innovative instructional and pedagogical techniques to foster student learning, both in the classroom and online. Examples include adopting methods new to the course or instructor and devising and testing novel methods.

Examples of evidence of exploring innovative approaches to instruction include:

- syllabi
- lesson plans
- assignment descriptions

Faculty may include other forms of evidence, to be considered at the discretion of the reviewer.

A note on student evaluations of instruction

Student evaluations of instruction provide a seemingly straightforward means to assign numeric values to faculty teaching performance. A one-to-one translation, though (for example, by calculating an overall weighted average of student scores), is problematic:

- Shortcomings with student evaluations have been well-documented. These include the problems with novices assessing experts; biases that can disadvantage female and minority faculty; difficulties in assessing the value of a learning experience as it is just concluding; the gap between perceived and actual learning; and other concerns.

- Response rates have been low for many years and seldom offer a representative sample (extremely satisfied and dissatisfied students are overrepresented).
- Over-relying on student evaluations can also discourage innovation in the classroom, as experimenting with new teaching methods and materials can result in a short-term hit to quality while approaches are ironed out.

Criteria

1. **Unacceptable**
   a. no evidence of contributions to any category of teaching
2. **Weak**
   a. some evidence of contributions to student learning and growth, but no evidence of additional instructional accomplishments
3. **Satisfactory**
   a. evidence of contributions to student learning and growth in *some* courses taught, and documented accomplishments in at least one of the following additional categories: 1) supporting students in their academic pursuits and transition to the profession; 2) engaging in curriculum development; 3) exploring innovative approaches to instruction
4. **Strong**
   a. evidence of contributions to student learning and growth in *most* courses taught, and documented accomplishments in at least one of the following additional categories: 1) supporting students in their academic pursuits and transition to the profession; 2) engaging in curriculum development; 3) exploring innovative approaches to instruction
5. **Outstanding**
   a. evidence of contributions to student learning and growth and documented accomplishments in at least two of the following additional categories: 1) supporting students in their academic pursuits and transition to the profession; 2) engaging in curriculum development; 3) exploring innovative approaches to instruction

Service

Journalism and Digital Communication faculty are expected to contribute to the mission, values, vision, and goals of the Department, College, Campus and University and Department. They are also expected to contribute to the profession and to the public's understanding of and appreciation for journalism and professional communication.

Many activities count as service, including the following partial list:

Internal service (Department)

- participation and leadership in Department committees
- participation and leadership in Department programs and initiatives

Internal service (College, Campus & University)

- participation and leadership in College, and Campus, and University committees
- participation and leadership in College, and Campus, and University events

External service (professional)

- participation or leadership in professional associations or activities
- editorial support for publications and journals in the field
- participation in conferences and workshops related to the practice or teaching of journalism or other subject matters
- professional consulting
- peer evaluations of outside individuals, such as external reviews for tenure and promotion candidates

External service (community)

- volunteer activities to help educate the public about journalism
- judging professional competitions
- providing expert information for media interviews and public presentations

Criteria

1. **Unacceptable**
   a. no evidence of service-related contributions
2. **Weak**
   a. no evidence of substantive service-related contributions, but some evidence of other service-related contributions
3. **Satisfactory**
   a. evidence of at least one substantive service-related contribution, but no evidence of other service-related contributions
4. **Strong**
   a. evidence of at least one substantive service-related contribution in the review year and one or more additional contributions
5. **Outstanding**
   a. evidence of at least two substantive service-related contributions in the review year and one or more additional contributions

The Department Chair will review the Committee's assessments and add their own evaluations and scores to each faculty member's report.

In cases where a score in any area falls below satisfactory (2.5 or lower), the Chair and the faculty member will work together to develop a plan to improve performance in the coming year.

Faculty members who wish to dispute Committee or Chair evaluations may do so by contacting both the Committee and the Chair. In outlining the concern, the faculty member may submit additional material for consideration and request a re-evaluation.

The Chair and Committee will report back their decision and, if the re-evaluation results in material changes to the faculty member's report, update the University's review system accordingly.

Branch campus faculty members should be aware that the Regional Chancellor or their designee can provide formal written input on the evaluation prior to completion of the performance appraisal.

Faculty hiring

When the Department has the opportunity to conduct a faculty search, the Committee of the Whole will assemble a search committee composed of at least three of its members and one graduate student. The resulting Search Committee will:

- select a Committee Chair from its members;
- oversee the search process and engage in initial vetting and phone-based interviews;
- write the job description, in consultation with the Committee of the Whole;
- develop a plan to conduct the search, in accordance with College and University policies;
- review applications and select a short list of candidates to interview via video conference;
- organize and make available to the Committee of the Whole application materials;
- recommend to the Department Chair a smaller group of candidates to be invited for campus visits or, when such visits are not possible, additional video-conference interviews;
- organize the second-round interviews; and
- hold a meeting, open to the Committee of the Whole along with the Regional Chancellor or their designee, to discuss candidates.

The Committee of the Whole and the Regional Chancellor will use ranked-choice voting, via secret ballot, to construct a list of the top three candidates. The Department Chair will present that list, along with a hiring proposal, to the College and Campus Deans and the Regional Chancellor. When agreement is reached about the selections, the Department Chair will contact the preferred candidate to make an offer. If the offer cannot be negotiated successfully, the Chair will contact the second person on the list.

Regional Chancellors or their designees will serve as a voting member on all search committees for faculty hiring on branch campuses.

Faculty Senate seat

The Department will hold elections whenever its Faculty Senate seat becomes vacant; the result will be forwarded to the Faculty Senate Office.

Tenure & promotion

Procedures and guidelines for Tenure and Promotion appear in a separate document.

Amendments to this document

This governance document may be amended at any scheduled meeting of the faculty. Proposed amendments must be made in writing and distributed to all faculty with the published meeting agenda. Proposed amendments require a two-thirds vote by the faculty.

- Approved by the Dean's Office: June 23, 2020
- Approved by the Provost's Office: June 23, 2020
- Revised by faculty vote: Feb. 10, 2024
- Approved by Provost's Office: March 1, 2024
- Approved by Dean's Office: August 5, 2024