

Diversity Policy and Plan

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Abilene Christian University

The unit has long maintained a commitment to the value of diversity in the instruction of journalism and mass communication. Exposure to a variety of cultures, backgrounds and experiences is crucial to the development of grounded professionals and contributes to greater personal fulfillment and appreciation of the societies and communities in which mass communication professionals work. The unit has adopted and regularly readdresses a diversity policy and plan aimed at meeting diversity goals. That document is as follows:

Approved by the faculty in April 1998.

Updated in February 2000, November 2005, and March 2013.

Rewritten and approved in December 2014.

Updated and approved on August 22, 2025.

Foundation

Diversity is a description of the way God created people. Understanding and respecting individuals who are different from one's self, whether in race, ethnicity, gender, ideology or religion, is a natural outcome of understanding the vast diversity of God's creation. The department will seek ways to challenge students to understand and interact with individuals of different backgrounds and viewpoints so that as they create media messages they will be effective, sensitive communicators. To accomplish this, the department will seek opportunities to increase and/or highlight the bridging of these differences using its faculty, staff, student enrollment, course content, guest speakers and alumni recognition.

Department Goals and Measures in Support of the Policy

Graduation Rates

Goal: Because the unit is small enough to provide individual attention to its students, and to ensure that all JMC majors are receiving equal opportunities to succeed, graduation rates will be monitored with attention to populations and groups with limited representation.

Measure: The department will seek to maintain a four-year graduation rate among JMC majors of diverse populations that exceeds the university's four-year graduation rate for diverse students.

Measure: The department will seek to maintain a four-year graduation rate among JMC majors of diverse populations that exceeds the university's four-year graduation rate for all students.

Enrollment

Goal: To maintain a level of diverse student enrollment within the unit that meets the university's equivalent level.

Measure: In cooperation with university recruiting personnel the unit will seek to maintain a domestically diverse student enrollment of 35%, a milestone that the unit set in 2018 and has reached each of the past three years.

Hiring

Goal: When openings allow a new hire of faculty or staff, the department leadership will assertively seek applicants from underrepresented populations.

Measure: Open positions will be publicized in outlets that increase the opportunity for them to be noticed by diverse applicants and with language that makes clear the unit's commitment to creating culturally proficient communicators.

Curriculum

Goal: To have all students taught by nationally respected professionals and/or academics of color in multiple required courses pertinent to JMC majors.

Measure: All graduating majors will have been taught in at least two required courses by diverse visiting lecturers who are given broad academic freedom. This goal has been met for the past decade with JMC 303, a weekend course in the Race and Media curriculum that is a required element of the JMC Core along with JMC 302, an introductory course taught by a faculty member within the unit.

Goal: Syllabi will document how cultural proficiency is addressed in the classroom experience and will provide a variety of ways of encountering diverse ideas through lectures, readings, examples, projects, paper topics and exploratory discussion. At a minimum, two of the eight courses in the JMC core and at least two other required courses in each major will include content relevant to creating culturally proficient communicators.

Measure: In addition to the required JMC Race & Media curriculum, cultural proficiency is also stressed in two JMC core courses: JMC 100 Media Issues and JMC 488 Communication Law.

Measure: Two required courses from each of the unit's three majors also stress diversity. As of 2025, those courses are:

- Advertising and Public Relations: JMC 349 Principles of Strategic Communication, JMC 490 Creativity and Copy Writing
- Journalism: JMC 324 Advanced Reporting, JMC 341 Editing and Content Management
- Multimedia: JMC 348 Broadcast News and Sports, JMC 465 Documentary Practicum

Goal: The faculty will make frequent use of guest speakers from diverse backgrounds in the classroom and in special departmental events.

Measure: Separate from Race & Media guest lecturers, faculty members in the unit will provide an annual listing of diverse guest speakers they have initiated.

Co-Curricular

Goal: With all JMC majors required to participate in student media for two semesters for academic credit, the department will initiate a system of monitoring participation in laboratory media and JMC-managed professional media to ensure that paid student staff members are domestically diverse.

Measure: Monitoring will include students paid to work for *The Optimist*, the student-run newspaper and digital news site; KACU-FM, the on-campus National Public Radio affiliate; ACUTV, which provides broadcast services for ACU Athletics and other events; and Morris+Mitchell, the student-run advertising/public relations agency that serves off-campus clients. Numbers and percentages of domestically diverse students within this data will be recorded.

Goal: To encourage the exposure of majors to a variety of cultures and ideologies, by 2026 the unit commits to sponsoring a JMC-oriented trip within the university's Study Abroad program trip every three years and will track the percentage of JMC majors participating.

Measure: A JMC course generally is scheduled within the Study Abroad program once every three years, and 90% capacity is reached for students participating in that trip.