

2024-29 Strategic Plan

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Updated by the faculty (Updated Feb. 12, 2025)

Introduction

This plan reflects consideration of the university's most recent strategic plan as well as changes in the college and in its leadership. It acknowledges uncertainty in funding and in enrollment in recent years.

The goals below fall under five broad categories:

- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Co-curriculum and student services
- Faculty and scholarship
- Fundraising and alumni involvement
- Global and domestic diversity

Within each area, broad goals have been set that will evolve over four to six years. Some important planning assumptions underlie all of these goals:

- Undergraduate enrollment at the university will remain under substantial pressure as several factors impact the number of prospective students. Among those factors are the declining number of college-age students throughout the U.S., the increased cost of higher education driving many potential students out of the market and competition from lower-cost state universities.
- The university will continue to face budget challenges, but long-term security will continue to be buoyed by a healthy endowment of close to \$1 billion. Gaining approval for faculty and staff positions that become open and for new positions will continue to be challenging. Any significant capital improvements or major equipment purchases will require substantial fundraising efforts.
- The university's raise pool for existing faculty and staff will continue to target 3%, with some years falling below that and cost-of-living raises.
- The nationwide emphasis on online and hybrid learning models will continue, driven by technological advancements and student preferences. This will especially impact universities such as ACU that historically have emphasized experience and experiential learning.
- The university and other competitive institutions will focus on improving access and affordability, particularly for underserved populations, potentially through innovative financial-aid models and fundraising.

- Workforce alignment will become more critical, with colleges and universities collaborating more closely with industries to ensure that curricula and experiences meet the needs of the job market. This will be particularly challenging in the journalism industry, which has made substantial cuts to staffing in the past three years.

Departmental Mission

Our mission is to engage students in critical and creative thinking in the classroom, in the laboratory and through mentoring relationships, leading them to become exceptional, ethical and agile communicators in a rapidly changing media environment, embracing technology, valuing diversity and embodying Christ-centered service.

Goals

Curriculum and pedagogy

1. The department will continue to emphasize creative hands-on curriculum that enables students to prepare for professional workplaces and will cultivate relationships with appropriate local or regional media, creating spaces and emboldening students to lead in specific media fields.
2. Because writing is crucial to critical thinking and professional success, the curriculum will continue to reflect an emphasis on strong writing and will seek to incorporate writing components in each course.
3. The curriculum will seek to ensure each student becomes proficient in multimedia skills, regardless of major.
4. The multimedia major, which has experienced substantial growth, will continue to be adjusted to emphasize two paths based on industry trends: sports media and film and video (or digital media or content creation), ultimately being split into two separate majors.
5. The department will continually assess developments in career fields to make sure courses remain relevant and current.
6. Faculty will incorporate academic research or scholarship as a significant component in at least one class in each major in addition to any requirements in the JMC core.

Experiential Learning and Student Services

1. Faculty will help students recognize their leadership potential and help them find training opportunities including campus programs and other leadership training offered by professional organizations.
2. The faculty will develop systems to expand off-campus coverage by KACU-FM and student media to extend the reach of the classroom through the co-curricular student media.
3. The faculty will develop, implement and assess a collaborative effort with the university's Center for Careers and Experiential Learning (ACCEL) that requires earlier participation and registration to improve the rate of internship and career placement in higher-profile markets and organizations.
4. The department will dedicate a staff member's efforts toward assisting students in arranging internships that stretch their abilities and open new doors for career development.
5. Faculty will maintain an ongoing business development program for Morris+Mitchell that acquires clients with bigger budgets including some outside the Abilene market.
6. Despite an industry decline in local media, the department will continue to seek out partnerships with local media to provide professional journalism opportunities.

Faculty and Scholarship

1. The department will continue to push for the addition of a faculty member who has skills, professional experience and graduate training in film and video production.
2. Tenure-track faculty members will develop a specialty in scholarship that extends its expertise in hands-on pedagogy and other extensions of the scholarship of teaching as it relates to JMC fields.
3. The department will continue the emphasis on undergraduate scholarship through the JMC 100 Media Issues course, and students in other courses will be encouraged to submit work, under faculty mentorship, to the university's annual Undergraduate Research, Creativity and Innovation Festival.

Fundraising

1. The department will continue efforts to create an endowment to fund operations of ACUTV to reduce reliance on the Department of Athletics.
2. The department will continue its program of communication with alumni to support fundraising and will maintain close relationships with its primary donors.
3. The department will develop ongoing fundraising goals to meet curriculum, faculty and co-curricular needs.

Diversity

1. The department's diversity plan specifies goals and strategies to direct our activity in this area. Faculty will regularly review the diversity plan to make sure we execute and improve the plan.