

CAP's Final Recommendation on Journalism & Professional Writing B.A. Degree

TO: Steering Committee
FROM: Committee on Academic Programs
RE: Journalism and Professional Writing BA Degree
DATE: April 10th, 2015

Background:

On April 1st, 2015, Steering sent CAP a charge regarding the Journalism and Professional Writing BA Degree (“JPW”). Included in this charge was information from a memo Dean Benjamin Rifkin sent to Steering regarding this issue. In this memo, Dean Rifkin noted that the proposed major in Journalism and Professional Writing already exists as a major within the English Department and that the proposed change would take “the current JPW curriculum (English-BA03) *as is* and merely re-christens it with its own bachelor's degree.” Dean Rifkin also noted that “the proposed BA in Journalism & Professional Writing needs no additional resources whatsoever, as it merely recognizes with a degree what we are already doing.” He also verified that the proposal had been approved by the faculty of the JPW program, the English Department, the HSS Curriculum Committee and the HSS Dean.

Charge:

Steering asked CAP to “consider whether there are any units that might be affected by the proposal that have not been consulted and whether the designation of a BA in Journalism and Professional Writing is consistent with the College’s mission.” Steering also noted that CAP did not need to collect testimony on this charge.

Final Recommendation:

CAP reviewed this proposal and it was noted that the program has been existence for a long period of time and that the proposed major does not draw on resources from any other units at the College save for the one in which it is housed (the English Department). Both the English Department and the School of Humanities and Social Science support the proposed change (as indicated in Dean Rifkin’s memo and in discussions during the CAP meeting on April 8th). CAP confirms that the proposed major does not impact other units at the College and that it is consistent with the College’s mission. As such, CAP approves the proposed change in designation for the Journalism and Professional Writing major, and affirms that this part of the approval process has been fulfilled.

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

B.A. in Journalism and Professional Writing

1. Objectives

Currently, students studying Journalism and Professional Writing (JPW) are coded as participating in the English BA-03 academic plan within the English department (as opposed to English BA-01, English Liberal Arts, and English BA-02, English Secondary Education); since transformation in 2003, courses in Journalism and Professional Writing have also had their own JPW prefix. These students receive a degree in English. We, the faculty in Journalism and Professional Writing, believe our students will be better served by earning a degree in Journalism and Professional Writing. Therefore, with the support and approval of our colleagues in the English Department, we propose to establish a new Bachelor of Arts degree program in Journalism and Professional Writing with the existing English BA-03 curriculum.

The College of New Jersey's Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism and Professional Writing (JPW) is intended for undergraduate students who wish to pursue careers in news media, magazines, digital media and publishing. The skills taught in this major also are well suited for students interested in careers in business and not-for-profit entities, especially when they involve communications and social media. The program relies primarily on a variety of existing resources at The College of New Jersey and its media partners.

More specifically, the purpose of this new degree is to have Journalism and Professional Writing designated as a freestanding major. The purpose of forming Journalism as a new degree-granting program is to allow JPW graduates to be awarded a degree in Journalism and Professional Writing, rather than in English, as is the current practice. A JPW degree will more accurately reflect the nature of the education that students receive. Clarity on this issue will benefit students and faculty.

2. Evaluation and learning outcomes assessment plan

As per our established and department-approved learning objectives, upon completion of their program of study, English BA-03 majors are able to:

- a. Research, write, edit and create material of entry-level professional quality according to the practices and standards of news organizations, magazines and professional communications. These materials include news stories, features, newsletters, business documents, headlines, photo captions, photos, videos and web/digital content.

- b. Demonstrate an understanding of media law and ethical conduct in journalism and professional writing, and other requirements of good journalistic practice.
- c. Demonstrate an awareness of the assumptions about culture and gender implicit in choice of media, representations, and focus in journalism and professional writing.
- d. Demonstrate knowledge of the history and traditions of journalism and professional writing.
- e. Perform entry-level work at a professional publication or as a professional writer, as demonstrated by completion of a media experience.

A self-study and external review of the JPW program were completed in 2013-14; a strategic plan has been developed and is expected to be approved in spring 2015. JPW will be formulating an assessment plan during the 2015-16 academic year as part of this program review process. In accordance with the principles of assessment in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, this assessment plan will feature both direct and indirect measures to evaluate student learning outcomes. In preparation for this process, a JPW professor has joined the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, which will help JPW formulate the measures to be used to assess the program.

3. Relationship of the program to the institutional strategic plan and its effect on other programs at the institution

In 2011-12, The College of New Jersey engaged in a comprehensive initiative to update the institution's strategic plan. That process resulted in a document, approved in May 2012, with priorities and objectives for the next 3-5 years and set forth a dynamic process for implementation, review, adjustment and communication. Journalism and Professional Writing adheres to all the guiding principles of the College's strategic plan, including its mission and core values, the institutional strategic map, and the rationale for strategic priorities and their supporting objectives. In particular, this includes strategies to sustain educational excellence, keep education affordable, and achieve long-term sustainability in a difficult and changing economic climate. As a result of completing its recent self-study and strategic-plan documents, JPW has committed itself to clarifying its identity and distinctiveness, and strengthening and focusing its course offerings. JPW also strongly supports and identifies with the College's signature experiences; for example, each student is required to complete at least one professional internship, and our program provides opportunities for study abroad as part of the HSS plan for curricular integration of study abroad in all majors.

JPW is interdisciplinary and complementary to a number of other majors, including English, Interactive Multimedia, and Communication Studies. No additional impact on other programs is anticipated in granting JPW freestanding status.

4. Need

As of the start of 2014-15 academic year, there were 107 students listed as English BA-03 majors or minors (90 majors and 17 minors), indicating the clear demand for this major and justifying the transformation of JPW into an independent, degree-granting program. Admissions reports a roughly 20% increase in freshman applications for the JPW program in Spring 2015 as compared to Spring 2014. As of March 1, 2015, twice as many freshman applicants were admitted to the JPW program than were admitted at this time in March 2014. Indeed, while there has been much emphasis in recent years on STEM, there is a continuing demand for graduates from the undergraduate humanities, and TCNJ has a strong liberal arts core. Professional journalism is changing rapidly and dramatically, with hiring for traditional media jobs, especially at newspapers, flat or dropping nationwide. But career opportunities are expanding in other, related areas, particularly in digital media and marketing, which demand strong writers and editors who can work across platforms and understand social media. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, opportunities for social media specialists are expected to increase by 24% by 2018. The career paths of many JPW students reflect that trend. Other popular jobs include reporter, editor, content producer, copywriter, grant writer, public relations specialist, publications specialist and information director.

For its size, TCNJ's Journalism and Professional Writing curriculum compares favorably to that of 10 other New Jersey public colleges and universities (Rutgers, Rowan, Rider, Montclair State, Kean, New Jersey City, Richard Stockton, Ramapo, Thomas Edison and William Paterson) as well as some smaller journalism programs in neighboring states. Among the latter group are fellow members of the Small Programs Interest Group of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (including Cabrini College in Pennsylvania, Hood College in Maryland, California University of Pennsylvania, Central Connecticut State University, and Utica College in New York.) While larger programs offer more courses, JPW is interdisciplinary by design, and provides related courses to its students through departments such as Communication Studies, Business, Computer Science, and Interactive Multimedia. All JPW courses are routinely updated to reflect the technological and other changes sweeping through the field of journalism. It also should be noted that SAT reading scores for TCNJ students are the highest in the New Jersey group, giving JPW the distinction of teaching some of the state's top journalism students. Consider:

- The Signal, TCNJ's student newspaper, (for which all JPW students are assigned to write) wins multiple awards each year from the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association, in categories including news, features, sports, editorial, column, arts & entertainment, and for general excellence.

- TCNJ students routinely receive prestigious journalism scholarships and internships, including those from the New Jersey Press Foundation, Dow Jones News Fund, New York Women in Communications, the Bernard Kilgore Memorial Scholarship, and the Maureen Roscelli Memorial Scholarship. TCNJ journalism majors have performed internships at the White House (which later hired that student), Gov. Christie's office, the New York Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, NBC News, ABC News, CNN, Bloomberg, Good Housekeeping, Rodale, Sports Illustrated, Simon & Schuster, Sirius Satellite Network, BBC, and most if not all of New Jersey's top newspapers.
- Our graduates work at the Star-Ledger (one of whom recently was hired by the Los Angeles Times), NJ.com, the Times of Trenton, the Asbury Park Press, the Press of Atlantic City, and numerous other New Jersey publications. Other graduates work for the Wall Street Journal, Dow Jones, Bloomberg, Scholastic, Hearst Digital, Psychology Today, Meredith, Princeton University Press, NBC News, ABC News, Law 360, Science News Magazine, the Wistar Institute, the Philadelphia Phillies, CNNMoney.com, and the Omaha World-Herald. Several go on to graduate and law school. One runs her own newspaper; another founded a not-for-profit organization that funds education for girls in developing nations.

5. Students

As of the start of the 2014-15 school year, there were 107 students listed as English BA-03 majors or minors (90 majors and 17 minors).

The College of New Jersey is a selective institution that attracts higher-caliber students. SAT scores of English BA-03 students generally are comparable to College averages, according to the College's Institutional Profile Annual Reports. For 2013, the College's average combined math and reading score was 1235; for JPW it was 1204. In both groups, incoming freshmen score higher on the SAT than transfer students.

TCNJ's overall undergraduate population is 57% female. In JPW, approximately 70% are women.

6. Program resources

Because JPW is housed within a larger department, its physical and staffing resources are already in place. There are three tenured faculty and one who is tenure-track. A tenured professor serves as coordinator and receives one course release per year. Adjunct professors teach optional courses ranging from sports writing to photojournalism. Administrative staff is shared with the Department of English and includes a secretary, program assistant, two student workers, and a graduate assistant.

In terms of equipment, laboratory and computer support, JPW courses are taught in the computer labs of Bliss Hall, the Social Science building, the Business building, the Education building, and the Art and Interactive Multimedia building. The primary lab in JPW's home building in Bliss Hall is scheduled to undergo software upgrades in Spring 2015 to better support multimedia education.

JPW shares facilities with the English Department, and equipment with the Art and IMM departments. English BA-03 students who are interested in broadcast careers take courses in Communication Studies, where the College's television and radio facilities are located. JPW will offer its own Broadcast News course starting in Fall 2015.

7. Degree requirements

English BA-03 students are required to complete 32 course units; the English BA-03 program requires 12 units. Those include eight JPW foundation courses, three JPW options, and one related elective from outside the JPW offerings. Other requirements include nine courses designated as Liberal Learning, proficiency at the third level in a second language (either by courses taken, appropriate score on an AP exam, or by examination through the Department of World Languages and Cultures), and four courses under Civic Responsibilities. The JPW major will have the same curriculum.

All courses listed below are offered for one course unit (e.g., 4 credits):

Required Courses (Students take all 8 courses on this list)

- JPW 208 – Introduction to Journalism
- JPW 250 – Writing for Interactive Media
- JPW 301 – Data Journalism
- JPW 308 – Media Law
- JPW 309 – Media Ethics
- JPW 311 – News Editing and Production
- JPW 498 – Beats and Deadlines
- JPW 499 – Media Experience

Journalism Electives (Students pick 3 from this list)

- JPW 251 – Feature Writing
- JPW 310 – Press History
- JPW 321 – Race, Gender, and News
- JPW 322 – Future of the News
- JPW 350 – Magazine Writing
- JPW 370 – Topics in Journalism
- JPW 371 – Topics in Professional Writing
- JPW 397 – Practicum (by permission)
- JPW 493 – Independent Research II (by arrangement)

Outside Elective (Students pick one)

One course, by advisement, from outside the JPW courses (e.g. creative or advanced writing, literature, business, design, political theory, science and technology, international studies), as approved by the JPW advisor.

Applied/Accepted/Enrolled Report for ENGL_BA_03 (Journalism and Professional Writing)

While applications have fluctuated since 2002, enrollment/yield is strong, returning to and even exceeding levels we have not seen since 2008, when the Great Recession was peaking. The 2014 yield of 34% was substantially better than the HSS and campus-wide yield that year, both at 27%.

Applied	Accepted	Enrolled	Yield	Year
112	57	5 (early decision)		As of 3/1/2015
91	62	21	34%	2014
105	68	25	37%	2013
121	66	12	18%	2012
129	83	23	28%	2011
152	72	23	29%	2010
165	73	15	21%	2009
157	78	25	32%	2008
141	69	22	32%	2007
114	43	15	35%	2006
101	54	18	33%	2005
122	57	19	33%	2004
124	74	24	32%	2003
137	73	23	32%	2002

National data, based on the University of Georgia's most recent Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates, shows the following:

- While 2013 employment and salaries were flat compared to 2012, the vast majority of graduates of journalism and mass communications programs left the university with at least one job offer. In 2013, 73.8% of the bachelor's degree recipients from journalism and mass communications programs reported having at least that single offer. The average number of offers held by the graduates was 1.4. Both figures are unchanged from a year earlier.
- As was true in 2012, only a small percentage (3.2%) of the bachelor's degree recipients who looked for work in 2013 reported having no job interviews in the time since they started looking for a job. More than nine in 10 of the graduates reported having had at least one in-person interview.