

# **School of Journalism and Mass Communications Master of Mass Communications Long-Range Plan**

Updated February 18, 2017

The Graduate Council selected a committee to review the status of the M.M.C program and make recommendations concerning the future direction of the program. In addition to reviewing our own program, the committee reviewed several IMC programs from various universities to evaluate current trends in M.M.C/IMC programs to see how our program compared with other programs being offered. To a certain extent, we were looking for best practices and current trends in those programs.

Our outside reviews consisted of programs from Northwestern, which has a very professional degree program where incoming students must have several years of experience in the field, to West Virginia where they have the largest program with some 385 students in basically a “masters in a box” degree program where all courses are online, and students do not attend regular classes. It should be noted we found these two programs, while completely different, were the most publicized programs and both had a strong online presence. We did review other various programs that fell somewhat between Northwestern and West Virginia, specifically to evaluate current program trends. In reviewing our own curriculum, we looked at the overall program of study as well as our specific courses for the areas of Integrated Communication and the General Program of Study.

It should also be noted that as a committee we basically agreed on the purpose and direction of the program but there were some different views concerning various aspects of the curriculum. But we did have a consensus concerning curriculum fundamentals and our discussions/differences basically concerned specific courses and course content.

## **General Findings/Recommendations on the M.M.C. Program**

The major aspect of our discussions and recommendations is our program should continue with the basic premise the program is designed for students with various undergraduate majors and backgrounds, some with limited prior experience in the field, and some recent graduates, who are looking for an opportunity for additional educational opportunities specifically in the mass communications profession. Our program was originally developed for students looking for a change of direction in their careers toward mass communications or to enhance their recent education and knowledge of the industry to better prepare them for a competitive job market. Upon graduation, these students will be seeking positions in the mass communications industry, the majority for their first or second time. The committee believes the program, with some enhancements, should continue in this direction.

We also feel it is important to continue the M.M.C program as a professional management-oriented degree but we also recognize the need for additional skills training to equip students with the ability to function in today's communication environment. The major point being the communications profession has changed and is continuing to evolve and we need to prepare students for this increasingly competitive profession. To accomplish this, we believe the program should continue to be a professional management program but provide additional skills training.

The general consensus of the committee is that we have a good solid program, especially our core courses, but the program should be strengthened by a complete curriculum review. While we do not advocate a major change in our basic course structure, we believe each course should be reviewed and updated to reflect current changes in the industry and we also felt some new courses should be added. Specifically, we felt that our courses needed to incorporate more visual communication training and include some additional writing fundamentals and basic economic education in terms of understanding costs, developing budgets, and program evaluation.

### **Specific Findings/Recommendations**

As a committee, we basically believe that we do have a solid program of study, especially the core courses. However, in reviewing other programs and considering the changing nature of the profession, we believe the following areas, in no particular order, should be considered:

- Additional visual communications instruction to enhance student skills, especially for those without a communications background – one recommendation is to develop a design class specifically for our students, possibly a Maymester class, that would be considered as a skills course teaching both principles/best practices of communication design and hands-on training, should be a 500-level course; and/or provide opportunities for additional non-credit instruction/training during the program.
- Continue the online aspect of the degree but keep courses in Columbia in a classroom setting with students participating through distance education with the possibility of expanding the online aspect outside the state.
- With our online presence already developed, we should research possible connections with Palmetto College, especially with any 500-level classes; this should be done in conjunction with our undergraduate program.
- Develop a better name and description than the General Program of Study, such as Media Management, with the emphasis being on management. As stated now the emphasis is very unclear as to the purpose and the reasons for the emphasis; if the emphasis or course

structure is not much different from the IMC emphasis consideration should be given to dropping the emphasis and focusing on Integrated Communications.

- More available electives – either as Maymester classes or topics in communication, could also include courses to improve specific communication skills.
- Develop a professional certificate program for integrated communications – many schools have the program and generally is a 15-hour certificate that can be used for professionals who wish to continue their education or obtain credit for professional recognition – could use our part of our core courses or could also be a weekend seminar type program (PRSA Atlanta just announced a two-day program that members can use as part of their PRSA certification at a cost of \$800) We suggest having preliminary discussions with SCPRSC, IABC, SAF, and the AMA to see what is needed in South Carolina. To a certain extent, we could use the opportunity as professional training where our students could participate with professionals.
- Continue but review the Camp Carolina process in terms of developing a complete orientation program for incoming students with a focus on students who have no or little mass communication background; this process should include some skills training and could continue throughout the semester with special programs featuring speakers and one-time training as necessary. Individual students who need additional work in specific areas, such as writing, should still be encouraged to take undergraduate non-credit courses as necessary to improve their communication skills.

## **Secondary Committee Recommendations**

As a committee our focus was on the program itself but our research in other programs led us to the following discussion and suggestions which we understand was not our mandate but seemed to fit with our overall direction:

- We have a very strong program, but no one seems to know about it. We do no promotion and we do not have much information on the school's site about the program, especially compared to other programs. We support the concept of promoting the program and developing a more detailed website.
- We need to establish our own brand, our image, and our identity, if we are to differentiate our program from others that are available. Our brand needs to reflect our core purpose of providing a program designed for students with various undergraduate majors and backgrounds, some with limited prior experience in the field and some recent graduates, and are looking for an opportunity for additional educational opportunities specifically in the mass communications profession. We believe this statement of purpose should be what guides our program review.

- In order to achieve the above recommendation, we recommend the SJMC consider hiring a marketing communications professional to guide the development of branding for both the undergraduate and graduate programs. This is not something that can be done by faculty on an ad-hoc basis. The process should be undertaken in conjunction with the university's branding initiative.

## **Course Recommendations**

The committee agreed in general we have a solid core series of courses. The committee recommends each course and syllabus should be reworked and updated to clarify the general purpose of the class and especially the course learning objectives. The courses also need to consider the changing environment in mass communications and include the latest developments in communication and marketing. The following is what we discussed as a committee in terms of what we feel the specific courses should in general provide:

### **The MMC Core for the IMC Emphasis and General Program of Study**

#### **Jour 701 – Research Methods in Mass Communication**

The research course for M.M.C. should focus on consumer relations with a focus on marketing research and analysis discussing research for consumer insights, behavior, and consumer understanding; the course should review both primary and secondary research methods and how research is developed and used for both large and small companies, especially in terms of budgets and time. In addition, we also need to take into consideration the needs of M.A. students who will probably be taking the class. We may want to consider two separate courses, depending on the number of students, due to differences in learning outcomes.

#### **Jour 705 – Integrated Communication Principles**

The introductory course should provide focus on the key elements/functions of IMC and develop a basic understanding of how and why IMC is being used today with an emphasis on the IMC process; also include the basic elements of segmentation and branding, image, and identity.

#### **Jour 706 – Media Law**

Because of the change in mass communications due to the recent advances in technology and the introduction of social media into the marketing mix, the course should contain the additional elements of ethics and regulations regarding the use of social and online media with a focus on the legal issues surrounding new media.

Jour 762 – Issues in Mass Communication Management

The course should be structured to present major issues and trends in management such as crisis, reputation, and issues management; the course should also include some basic management principles, including the financial aspects of management, as well as current management trends in social media.

Jour 771 – Media Economics

The course should develop an understanding of basic economic principles as applied in the mass communications industry with a focus on the analysis and overall characteristics of the rapidly changing media and entertainment industries including basic trends in revenues and expenditures.

Jour 777 – Practicum in Mass Communication Management

The practicum should remain as the capstone experience. It is unique in terms of other IMC/MMC programs, and it fits within the basic concept of the degree.

**IMC Emphasis Four Additional Required Graduate Courses for the IMC Emphasis**

Jour 715 – Integrated Communications Strategies

The course should continue the basic introductory material from the principles class with a focus on developing knowledge in the strategic management of an integrated communications campaign; an introduction of researching, planning, implementing and evaluation of IMC programs, including strategies and tactics, preparing the student to develop an IMC campaign.

Jour 725 – Integrated Communications Campaigns

The course focus is on the development of an IMC campaign where students will use the basic principles learned in 705, 715, and 725 to develop an actual IMC campaign; the committee agreed on the basic premise of the campaigns class being for an actual client, the committee did not totally agree on course details. See footnote #1.

MKTG 701 – Marketing Management

As developed by MKTG.

Jour 566 – Public Relations Management or Jour 560 Advertising Management

The Jour 566 course has recently been revised and the new syllabus should be used for graduate-level students.

Jour 526 – Creative Leadership. The course is approved for the new curriculum and was designed to integrate into the M.M.C. program and should replace the Jour 560 option.

**\*Two Additional Graduate Level Elective Courses for The IMC Emphasis**

Additional new course proposal as elective – the committee suggests the development of a course on media planning for graduate students. The course would be designed to create an understanding of how to do media planning, incorporating buying traditional and emerging paid media but also the principles guiding when and which new media to incorporate in a plan—from social (and which social media) as well as online videos, how they are used strategically and guided to go viral, etc. The course could be added to the core or used as an elective.

**General Program of Study Three Directed Electives for the General Program of Study**

MKTG 701 – Marketing Management  
As developed by MKTG.

MGMT 718 – Management of Human Resources  
As developed by MGMT.

MGMT 770 – Organizational Behavior  
As developed by MGMT.

\*Jour 710 – Organizational Communication  
(Can be used in place of MGMT 770 but is currently not offered but it is a course we may want to develop/revise for our own students where the course would have more of an emphasis on the communications industry.)

***\*Three Additional Graduate Level Elective Courses for the General Emphasis***

**Learning Outcomes**

**Learning Outcome 1**

Students will demonstrate professional competence in a specialized area of mass communication, such as strategic communication management or multimedia journalism. Students will show that they understand the principles, processes, strategies, and tactics involved in the profession.

***Measures and Criteria:***

Successful completion of a practicum in a professional setting, concluding with a written practicum paper and/or project portfolio developed by the student.

Successful completion of a practicum in a professional setting, concluding with a satisfactory supervisor evaluation from the student's manager during the practicum.

***Methods:***

Successful completion of a practicum in a professional setting, concluding with a written practicum paper and/or project portfolio developed by the student.

Successful completion of a practicum in a professional setting, concluding with a satisfactory supervisor evaluation from the student's manager during the practicum.

**Learning Outcome 2**

Students will demonstrate effective writing skills. Students' writing should show evidence of clear and critical thinking, and an understanding of proper grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, organization, transition, and tempo.

***Measures and Criteria:***

Students will take a writing exam at the beginning and end of the program. Students must successfully pass the exam, and their writing should improve as a result of the program.

Students must successfully write a paper describing their professional practicum experience. Beyond demonstrating that they have learned professional skills, the paper should show that they have developed effective writing skills throughout the program.

***Methods:***

Students will take a writing exam at the beginning and end of the program. Students must successfully pass the exam, and their writing should improve throughout the course of the program.

Students must successfully write a paper describing their professional practicum experience. Beyond demonstrating that they have learned professional skills, the paper should show that they have developed effective writing skills.

**Learning Outcome 3**

Students will demonstrate a thorough understanding of research and its importance in the fields of journalism and strategic communication. Students should also show knowledge of various research designs and data collection methods, as well as how to report and interpret research results.

***Measures and Criteria:***

Students must successfully complete a master's level course in research methods for mass communication.

Students must successfully complete a comprehensive exam related to research as a portion of the first part of their comprehensive exams.

***Methods:***

Students must successfully complete a master's level course in research methods for mass communication.

Students must successfully complete a comprehensive exam related to research as a portion of the first part of their comprehensive exams.

**Learning Outcome 4**

Students will demonstrate a thorough understanding of management issues related to media and strategic communication. Students will demonstrate familiarity with contemporary issues facing media and communication managers. Students will also show knowledge of how to plan an effective strategic communications campaign and/or manage an effective media-related initiative or organization.

***Measures and Criteria:***

Students must successfully complete a master's level course in management for mass communication.

Students must successfully complete a comprehensive exam related to management as a portion of the first part of their comprehensive exams.

***Methods:***

Students must successfully complete a master's level course in management for mass communication.

Students must successfully complete a comprehensive exam related to management as a portion of the first part of their comprehensive exams.

**Learning Outcome 5**

Students will demonstrate a thorough understanding of mass media law. This knowledge should include an understanding of various areas such as libel, privacy, access to public information, regulation of commercial speech, copyright and related matters, and the philosophical considerations involved in issues related to free speech.

***Measures and Criteria:***

Students must successfully complete a course in mass media law.

Students will successfully complete a comprehensive exam related to mass media law as a portion of the first part of their comprehensive exams.

**Methods:**

Students must successfully complete a course in mass media law.

Students will successfully complete a comprehensive exam related to mass media law as a portion of the first part of their comprehensive exams.

### MMC Program Promotional Activities Calendar

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Activity</b>
August	Info Table at SJMC Welcome Wednesday (last week of August) Email SJMC (seniors and accelerated students about Oct. 1 deadline (social media, digital posts, and Google AdWords as well) Register for PRSSA National Conference Exhibit (in October)
September	Update MMC student spotlights (and doctoral pages) SJMC Resource Promotion Fair SJMC Course Promotion Fair Radford University Graduate Fair (Radford, VA) SC State University Graduate Fair (Orangeburg, SC)
October	Winthrop University Graduate Fair (Rock Hill, SC) Claflin University Graduate Fair (Orangeburg, SC) Furman University Graduate Fair (Greenville, SC) Converse College Graduate Fair (Spartanburg, SC) Homecoming (Date TBD) Parents Weekend Class visits to JOUR 201, 202, 203, 204 (in Oct. or early Nov.)
November	USC Graduate Fair Information Tables on Greene Street Parents Weekend (Date TBD)
<b>Spring</b>	<b>Activity</b>
January	Begin updating MMC track pages on website
February	Info Table @ University of Richmond (Richmond, VA) (?) Virginia Union University Career Fair (Richmond, VA) (?) Update graduate webpages
March	Email SJMC (seniors and accelerated students about May 15 deadline (social media, digital posts, and Google AdWords as well) Class visits to JOUR 201, 202, 203, 204 & JOUR 361(?), 436(?), (others?) SJMC Career Fair PRSA Georgia Conference (Atlanta, GA) USC Aiken Career Fair (Aiken, SC)
April	Info Table in SJMC Atrium
<b>Summer</b>	<b>Activity</b>
	Accelerated MMC info at Incoming Freshman Orientations

**To be added to the calendar:**

- Outreach to Clemson University, Anderson University, USC Sumter, and other USC branch campuses, as well as College of Charleston, Wingate, Coastal Carolina, and UNC Charlotte.

**Responsibilities:**

- Corresponding inquiries
- Advising current and prospective Accelerated students
- Preparing promotional materials
- Traveling for promotion
- Representing graduate programs

**Others:**

- Prepare better promotional materials (flyers, information folders/packets, brochures, banners, etc.: Speak with VisComm Faculty).
- Endorsement from alums and professionals (leaders) about how useful our Master's degree can be in terms of job seeking and professional development: Add them to our webpages.
- Run social events at conferences (just like our SJMC social at AEJMC): Start with the PRSA Georgia Conference.
- Graduate fairs may not be very effective (low turnout... according to Trey).
- Ask undergraduate advisors to give out our graduate/accelerated flyers to advisees.
- Do we go to "graduate" or "career" fairs at other universities? Are they the same?
- Attend other colleges' career fairs at USC (Business School, Social Work, Liberal Arts, HRSM, who else?).
- Contact local organizations (which ones?) and ask them how they can help us with recruitment: Ask Andrea. Do they have internal communication channels, and can we use them to promote our programs?

**Footnote # 1**

The committee agreed on the basic premise of the campaigns class but there is a difference of opinion in terms of the client and client selection. It is recognized that location does play a key role in the selection of a client, but it is felt that location should not limit the selection of a client. The committee agreed students should be knowledgeable in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. However, there is disagreement in terms of client selection where all aspects of IMC can be considered and/or applied in a campaign. The main issue also considers client size in terms of overall resources available to conduct a campaign. We also recognize timing is a concern, but not a major problem, as to when the class is currently scheduled. Again, the committee agrees on the basic concept of the campaigns class as a capstone experience but did not reach an agreement concerning the details of how the class should be presented.