



**PROGRESS REPORT**

DATE: July 17, 2015

TO: John Shepherd  
Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic)

CC: André Plourde  
Dean, Faculty of Public Affairs

FROM: Susan Harada  
Associate Director, School of Journalism and Communication

RE: Cyclical Review, Bachelor of Journalism

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As requested by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance, the Journalism program is providing a response to a number of issues raised following the Cyclical Review.

**1) The addition of technical support to enhance the classroom experience**

Funding for an IT position—a Digital Media Technologist—was approved in the 2014/2015 cycle. The job was posted and a hiring board struck in March 2015. The successful candidate had a start date of April 7, 2015.

**2) Plans to respond to the concern over the admission process for the BJ program in the light of the condition for students to enter second year**

Please see section 4, below.

**3) Plans based on the Journalism’s tenure and promotion criteria to support professional faculty members in career development in a research institution. It is expected that research be conducted to identify how other journalism schools understand the contribution of distinguished, standard setting practitioners and how appropriate career development can contribute effectively to continuous curriculum development in journalism programs.**

The School of Journalism and Communication’s Unit Standards for the application of criteria for Tenure and Promotion were approved by Carleton University in August 2013. In recognition of the fact that professional programs have differing elements of measurement, the Journalism program developed sub-unit standards for Research, Scholarly and/or Creative Work (RSC) that were distinct from those developed by the Communication program.

The new Journalism sub-unit RSC standards were first applied in 2014/2015 in assessing an ultimately successful application for promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor, though have yet to be applied in any application for promotion from Associate to Full Professor. In the past, Journalism faculty members have been promoted based on a combination of professional and scholarly work; however, there is now greater clarity with respect to promotion expectations vis-à-vis specific elements, such as the weight that can be placed on high-quality professional work that has national/international impact. At the present time, the Journalism program does not have any full professors; that has been the case since the remaining full professor retired in June 2014.

Longstanding promotion standards to Associate and Full Professor at Journalism programs in the country are similar to the new standards adopted by Carleton's Journalism program vis-à-vis RSC contributions; they were, in fact, consulted when the standards were being developed. For example, at Ryerson University, the Journalism School's Scholarly, Research and Creative Activities (SRC) measurements include academically- and professionally-oriented output, and do not "place different values on academic and professional publication or production." At the University of King's College, the emphasis is on "academic research *or* professional work" (emphasis added). At the University of British Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, promotion requires sustained scholarly activity that includes "distinguished, creative or professional work."

Faculty members currently enrich curricular development in two ways, based on their ongoing RSC contributions: subject area specializations (such as politics, law, business, science, ethics, history); and, journalism/journalism education and the refinement of professional practice. The curricular review currently underway recognizes the importance of utilizing that expertise to maximize the benefit to students, the School and the Faculty while simultaneously enabling individuals to deepen their RSC contributions externally. Pre-tenure faculty members are supported through a combination of direct mentoring, the regular provision of relevant information (such as internal and external grants) and exposure to unit, faculty and university research culture.

**4) The completion of a strategic plan for the BJ program that encompasses a review of the program's curriculum in the light of the external reviewers' observation that there is a need for the BJ program 'to articulate Carleton's contribution to journalism education in the twenty-first century with degree level expectations that are consistent with emergent professional expectations.' It is the view of the Committee that an important first step in this process will be the BJ program's participation in the pilot project on learning outcomes assessment and the basis this provides for curriculum mapping and annual curriculum review.**

#### *Learning outcomes*

The Bachelor of Journalism program participated in the pilot project on learning outcomes in 2013/2014. With the guidance of the Office of Quality Assurance, learning outcomes and an assessment plan were developed. This foundational work has been invaluable as we work to ensure the program continues to play a leading role in journalism education, nationally and internationally.

### *Program renewal*

There are two strands to Journalism curriculum change. The first strand encompasses ongoing change accommodated through existing courses and special topics, and has been the program's predominant practice in the last decade. This strategy has allowed the program to make multiple timely adaptations to course content. Examples of how the program has stayed not just "consistent with" but in many instances ahead of "emergent professional expectations" include the following: the introduction of social media and online resources and verification techniques in foundational reporting courses; the introduction (some ten years ago) of the *Centretown News* digital edition incorporating audio, video and now social media; the introduction of data collection and visualization storytelling, Search Engine Optimization techniques and mapping in the advanced new media workshop.<sup>1</sup>

The program is cognizant of the fact that it must both lead and follow the present news and information industry when it comes to "emergent professional expectations." We are straddling old approaches and new ways, and must strike the correct balance in order to preserve the integrity of the BJ while pushing it (and our students) forward. As such, the second strand of change is connected to a more fundamental curricular shift that will school our students in the acquisition, analysis and dissemination of knowledge and information in new ways, to prepare them for the evolving professional world of journalism as well as diverse and still-to-be-imagined career paths.

Work on the second strand began at the committee level in September 2014; the committee's general directional recommendations were accepted at the Journalism committee of the whole in April 2015. The committee of the whole is currently working on the details of reimagining the program, with "depth" and "flexibility" the key curricular foci.

### *BJ admissions practice*

In its January 9, 2014 memo, the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance noted its belief that the current BJ admissions practice of admitting more into the first year than can be admitted into second year to be "of an ethically dubious character, and one which undermines the creation and maintenance of a healthy environment for first-year students."

In response, the Journalism program worked with OIRP to gain an understanding of the program impact of any change. According to OIRP data, a smaller cohort admitted on the basis of high school grades "may result in a less qualified BJ2 class."<sup>2</sup>

Even so, the Journalism program recognizes that the time has come to change the admissions practice of admitting a greater number of students than it can adequately accommodate in second year and beyond. The consensus of the committee of the whole is to therefore admit fewer students into the BJI (between 120-130<sup>3</sup>). Continuation in Good Standing into second year would

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<sup>1</sup> Just one example of how the program has set industry pace: two years ago an influential mid-size newspaper created a job for one of our BJ graduates geared to the data storytelling skills he was able to introduce to the newsroom. Prior to his arrival, that particular skill set did not exist at the paper.

<sup>2</sup> OIRP bases its statement on data going back 10 years showing that half of the top two-thirds of students with the highest entrance GPAs (approximately 88% or higher) did not do well enough to go into second year, even when the second-year gate was lowered. On the other hand, one third of the bottom third of the entire cohort (with averages in the mid-eighties) made it into second year, and not necessarily as part of the weakest group to move into BJ2.

<sup>3</sup> A number of variables need to be considered before Journalism can set a firm figure for intake, including the inability to predict whether the current figure of 10-12% of students who qualify for second year but choose to opt out of the BJ will change with a smaller first-year cohort, more focused hands-on instruction in the first year,

be automatic to everyone who meets an updated minimum CGPA to be determined by the Journalism program.

A smaller first-year BJ intake would necessitate the concurrent adjustment of the first-year BJ-Humanities degree intake. While the Journalism program is grateful for the collaboration with Humanities, the new path it intends to carve out in future would entail the resumption of the original agreement to accept 10 students into the BJ-Humanities degree on an annual basis.

#### *New degree program*

Current plans for change will enable new pedagogical offerings while also addressing the reduction in numbers accepted into the BJ and expanding the potential for overall enrolment. The Journalism program proposes to develop a new undergraduate degree program designed to fill the space created where narratives rooted in public affairs meet the new ways in which we engage with technology. Tentatively entitled “Bachelor of Digital Media Production”,<sup>4</sup> it would entail a partnership between Journalism and the School of Information Technology (Carleton’s anchor participant in the joint CU-Algonquin College Bachelor of Information Technology). At this time, the initiative with Journalism has the general support of the School’s Director and faculty, provided it is resourced adequately. The School of Information Technology would develop a series of courses specifically for this standalone degree program.

It would be a unique program aimed at preparing students for the ever-changing world of information in a digital age by providing a course of study that brings elements of digital media, storytelling and design together so that students are equipped to follow a line of enquiry, manage data, develop stories and provide information in a variety of media for digital audiences. The goal would be to produce graduates with strong research, writing and storytelling skills; a fluency in web and interactive media design; the ability to manage databases, produce interactive data visualizations, shoot and edit photos and video and produce stories across a variety of digital platforms in different formats, with a special focus on information for civic engagement and public or professional communication. It is being developed with an eye to maximizing intersections with Journalism and Communication program offerings, while maintaining its own distinct program content and identity.

#### *Broadening Journalism offerings*

Mirroring 21<sup>st</sup> century global information practices, it is the intention of the Journalism program to develop a specific menu of Journalism courses that could draw in students from other disciplines. This is not intended to be a minor; it would open up a selection of lecture-based courses to non-journalism majors. They are the readers/viewers/listeners/collaborators in this evolving journalistic enterprise, and such courses would help them gain an appreciation of why journalism matters in our society. Students who do well and develop an interest in journalism after completing the planned first-year introductory lecture course could apply to transfer into the BJ2, space permitting.

#### *Next steps*

As noted above, the Journalism program committee of the whole is currently working on the second strand of curricular development, while work on the first strand remains ongoing. Further research and development work with respect to the proposed new degree program is also ongoing.

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and presumably a less stressful Journalism environment. The program also needs to ensure it retains a number of transfer student seats.

<sup>4</sup> Please note this is a temporary working title only.