PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

The unit has an inclusive program that values domestic and global diversity, and serves and reflects society.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit has a written diversity plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan. The diversity plan should focus on domestic minority groups and, where applicable, international groups. The written plan must include the unit’s definition of diversity and identify the under-represented groups.

The School has had a diversity plan since 2002. That plan has now been updated twice, in 2011 and most recently in Spring 2017. As the point person for diversity efforts, one faculty member is designated as the diversity coordinator and chairs the School diversity committee. The diversity coordinator led the latest update of the diversity plan, which includes seven goals and at least four or five methods for achieving each of the goals. The updated plan begins with highlights noting progress in faculty and student recruitment, programmatic accomplishments related to diversity and survey results on student perceptions of diversity. Both domestic minority and international groups are addressed in the latest diversity plan. The university-wide definition of diversity is included in the School’s diversity plan.

b) The unit’s curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of domestic concerns about gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. The unit’s curriculum includes instruction in issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society.

Students in the School of Journalism complete a curriculum that employs an “infusion” approach to diversity where the topic is handled in the very first course, Principles of Journalism, then followed up in second and third-semester reporting courses reinforced in the Law of the Press course that includes cases on racial climate and gender equity. The curriculum ensures students can bring their education on diverse cultures together by taking a required 400-level course, Ethics and Diversity in the News Media. In the course, students are doing book-length studies on diversity topics. Instruction on issues of diversity and inclusion happens outside of diversity-focused courses. In one editing class, students were observed discussing whether the race of the school’s football coach should be mentioned in a headline. The instructor used the headline-writing dilemma to underscore the importance of having diverse voices in a newsroom when everyday editorial decisions are made. When asked directly by site team members about how diversity is handled in their classes, students said their professors did not shy away from hard or difficult topics.

c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and domestic minority faculty and professional staff and, where feasible, recruits international faculty and professional staff.

While admitting in its self-study that “attracting minority faculty remains challenging,” the School reports some progress since the last accreditation review with the hire of a Latino male. More than half (53 percent) of 17 core faculty members are female and a quarter of the faculty are from minority racial groups. Reflecting international diversity, one faculty member is Arab-American and another is Canadian. When asked to identify areas for improvement, campus partners, students and faculty all acknowledged that the School has more work to do in hiring from racial minority groups.

As for staff hires, the self-study notes the School makes “every effort to recruit and retain a diverse staff.” Investing in staff members who bring diversity is exemplified in one diverse staff member’s
story of receiving professional development funds to attend a grant-writing workshop.

d) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit and retain a student population reflecting the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population it serves, with special attention to recruiting under-represented groups.

Roughly one-third of the undergraduate students in the School are from racial minority groups, fairly close to the percentage of such students in the overall population at University of Arizona. This picture is similar to that painted in the last accreditation review, which found that the school was “unlikely” to match the minority percentage in the state of Arizona where K-12 schools struggle to graduate students, a high percentage of whom English is not their first language.

The School continues its recruitment and retention efforts with a highly successful nearly 40-year-old Journalism Diversity Workshop for Arizona High School Students, co-sponsored by Dow Jones News Fund. Faculty members involved in leading diversity in the School have suggested more outreach to local high schools may help in recruiting a more diverse student population. In the area of retention, the School has designated one faculty member to oversee an intentional strategy to retain students from minority racial groups by providing a framework for community among members of 10 student clubs that include affiliates of the Native American Journalists Association, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, National Association of Black Journalists and Asian American Journalists Association.

e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and all forms of discrimination, in keeping with the acceptable cultural practices of the population it serves, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.

The School has built a culture of inclusiveness, which is communicated in course syllabuses, course content and daily classroom instruction and assignments. Certain faculty have been designated to address issues of accommodations for those in the disabled community and are part of a diversity committee. By himself completing the University’s SafeZone training, the School’s Director leads by example in communicating that the Journalism school is a safe place for all regardless of sexual orientation. Additional training is held internally just for faculty from the Journalism School, most recently conducted by the University’s senior diversity officer.

Faculty members described the School as free of harassment and discrimination. To assess its diversity and inclusion efforts, the School surveyed students in an inclusive excellence self-audit in Fall 2016. About one-fourth of the School’s students responded. Of 99 students who participated, 90 percent “agreed” that the School of Journalism encourages diversity. Eighty-four percent said the School “respects individuals and values their differences.”

SUMMARY:
While having a diversity plan for more than a decade, the School of Journalism has been intentional about updating its strategies in the areas of diversity and inclusion. Before taking a course on Ethics and Diversity at the 400-level, students encounter the diversity-related topics in the curriculum in lower level journalism skills courses. Despite this exposure to diversity in the classroom, students on more than one occasion have indicated that they would like to see a more racially diverse faculty. Faculty and students agree the School has an environment free of harassment and discrimination.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

COMPLIANCE