JMS Curriculum Revision FAQ

Curriculum Committee
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies
UNLV
February 2016

1. Why is JMS revising its curriculum?

Principally for two reasons:

- The media world is rapidly evolving in many respects, including methods of gathering, analyzing, and disseminating information, as well as financial models for supporting journalism. Schools across the country are reexamining their curricula.

- Some JMS students have had trouble getting into the classes they need to complete their degrees. The current curriculum requires students to take 10 courses plus an internship. Since the economic downturn, the size of the JMS full-time faculty has dropped from 14 (plus one emeritus) to 10, and some of the required classes have had waitlists.

In May 2015, at a time when JMS was already reassessing its curriculum, the School underwent an external review, a periodic requirement for UNLV programs. The review was conducted by Marianne Barrett, Arizona State University Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication; and Dorothy M. Bland, University of North Texas Mayborn School of Journalism. They submitted their report on May 8, 2015. The Las Vegas Review-Journal published articles about the review on July 6 (“Review: UNLV Journalism School Needs Overhaul”) and December 3, 2015 (“Changes Coming for UNLV’s Troubled Journalism School”). KNPR, local TV stations, and the website Mediashift also covered the review.

2. What did the external review say about the JMS graduation rate?

The review included one particularly unfavorable statistic about JMS. For the fall 2007 cohort, the review gave a six-year graduation rate of 25.6 percent for JMS, compared to 44.2 percent across UNLV. News coverage emphasized this finding.

The figures are misleading, because they fail to take account of the fact that many students change majors before graduation. Some begin and end as JMS majors; others shift from different majors to JMS; still others shift from JMS to different majors. According to the most recent data, the six-year graduation rate for new full-time freshmen at UNLV is 40.5 percent. Of new full-time freshmen who declared an initial major in JMS, 44.6 percent graduated within six years.

Although it misstated the JMS graduation rate, we believe that the external review’s recommendations for improving the School are largely well-founded.
3. What did the external review recommend?

To help students graduate in a timely manner, the review recommended:

- increasing the number of advisers;
- simplifying the requirements for completing a JMS degree;
- offering required courses more frequently or with larger enrollments.

As to the substance of the JMS curriculum, the review also recommended:

- offering more integrated marketing communication (IMC) classes;
- offering more classes on new media technologies;
- placing greater emphasis on skills and less on theory;
- adapting the curriculum more readily to changing technologies and job requirements.

The review advanced recommendations beyond the curriculum too, including:

- greater faculty diversity, reflecting the demographics of the region and those of the student body;
- more faculty members with professional backgrounds who can teach skills classes;
- more systematic engagement with alumni;
- enhanced community engagement.

4. How was the new curriculum developed?

The JMS Curriculum Committee conducted extensive research. Committee members consulted:

- other schools and departments at UNLV;
- other programs in the region, including the Reynolds School of Journalism, University of Nevada, Reno; the Journalism and Media Studies Program, College of Southern Nevada; the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University; the School of Journalism, University of Arizona; School of Communications, Brigham Young University; and the School of Journalism and Media Studies, San Diego State University;
- current journalism majors at UNLV;
- JMS alumni;
- local professionals in print, broadcasting, IMC, and social media;
- the GCUA Director of Advising.

Generally speaking, students, alumni, and local media professionals favored additional skills courses, including social media and multimedia, and a greater use of media professionals in the classroom. For example, Tom Gorman, executive editor of the Las
*Vegas Sun*, listed interviewing, writing, media ethics, media law, technology trends, and social media as very important topics for the JMS curriculum; data analysis, graphics, HTML coding, and media effects as somewhat important. Asked what sort of instructors JMS ought to hire, he recommended a generalist reporter and a journalist specializing in the online presentation of news.

The Curriculum Committee drafted a proposal for a revised curriculum in late 2015. It altered the required pre-major courses (i.e., courses required for admission to the major) as well as core courses (i.e., courses required for completion of a JMS degree). In response to feedback from colleagues, the Dean of the Greenspun College, and others, the committee continued refining the proposal.

The JMS faculty adopted the new curriculum on February 26, 2016.

5. **What is the timetable for implementing the new curriculum?**

Elements of the new curriculum will be introduced in existing classes in fall 2016. The new graduation requirements will apply to students entering the program in spring 2017 and thereafter. The new pre-major classes will be offered every semester starting in spring 2017 (JOUR 117, 118, 217) and fall 2017 (JOUR 218).

6. **How does the proposed curriculum address concerns raised in the external review?**

- It reduces the number of required courses from ten to seven, which will enable students to complete their requirements more quickly and choose a greater number of JMS electives in areas that especially interest them.

- It modifies the pre-major courses so as to focus more sharply on the fundamentals of understanding and using the media. (Although they are aligned on the chart below, the current and proposed pre-major courses differ substantially.)

- It gives the pre-major courses broad names and descriptions, so that their content can easily be modified to reflect the shifting media landscape. Although the framework is durable, substance can been changed more nimbly than is now the case.

- By removing three more theoretical upper-division classes from requirements for the major, it frees up faculty members to develop and teach more electives focusing on IMC, new technologies, and professional skills.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current UNLV JMS</th>
<th>Proposed UNLV JMS</th>
<th>Course structure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>pre-major</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>JOUR 101: Critical Analysis of the Mass Media</td>
<td>JOUR 117: Media: Foundations</td>
<td>One lecture, one lab per week. Approx. 100-student lecture by faculty member; 4*25 student labs by GTA</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOUR 102: News Reporting and Writing</td>
<td>JOUR 118: Media: Writing and Data</td>
<td>5*20 writing-intensive student sections taught by FTIs; faculty member could teach one or more sections and manage rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOUR 100: Introduction to Journalism and Media Studies</td>
<td>JOUR 217: Media: Audiovisual</td>
<td>One lecture, one lab per week. Approx. 100-student lecture by instructor; 4*25 student labs by GTA</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOUR 218: Media: Compelling Design</td>
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<td>One lecture, one lab per week. Approx. 100-student lecture by instructor; 4*25 student labs by GTA</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current UNLV JMS</th>
<th>Proposed UNLV JMS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>core</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>JOUR 305: Media Ethics</td>
<td>JOUR 305: Media Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOUR 401: The First Amendment and Society</td>
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<td>JOUR 413: Journalism History</td>
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<td>JOUR 435: Media Research</td>
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<td>JOUR 475: Global Media</td>
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<td>JOUR 485: Media and Society</td>
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<td>JOUR 499: Professional Internship</td>
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JOUR 117 and 118 will have no prerequisites. JOUR 217 will have the prerequisite of JOUR 117. JOUR 218 will have the prerequisites of JOUR 117 and 118.
Here is what the first two years would look like for a new student:

**First semester**
- GSC 100
- JOUR 117
- ENG 101
- MATH 120 (ideally, but most likely MATH 95/96)
- Social Science (ENV)

**Second semester**
- JOUR 118
- JOUR 217
- US/NV Constitution (PUA)
- ENG 102
- MATH
- Science (no lab)

**Third semester**
- GSC 300
- Multicultural elective
- JOUR 218 (includes entrance exam)
- PHI 102
- Social Science elective

**Fourth semester**
- International
- JOUR 305
- Physical Science with Lab
- Outside Area class
- Social Science elective

We expect that the UNLV Registrar would amend the course articulation guide to allow students wishing to transfer from any NSHE institution with JOUR 100, JOUR 101, or JOUR 102 to receive credit for JOUR 117, JOUR 118, or JOUR 217, respectively. We also envision transfers who have taken JOUR 107, JOUR 108, JOUR 207, or JOUR 208 at UNR to receive credit for JOUR 117, JOUR 218, JOUR 118, or JOUR 217, respectively. NSHE transfers who have not taken JOUR 108 will be required to take JOUR 218 (with successful completion of the entrance exam) before being formally admitted to the major.

### 7. How does the proposed curriculum differ from UNR's?

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<th>UNR Journalism</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>pre-major</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>JOUR 118: Media: Writing and Data</td>
<td>JOUR 108: All Things Media: Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOUR 217: Media: Audiovisual</td>
<td>JOUR 207: All Things Media: Words and Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOUR 218: Media: Compelling Design</td>
<td>JOUR 208: All Things Media: Sounds and Images</td>
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Although the faculty initially considered adopting the Reno curriculum, we have developed a distinctive proposal. The pre-major requirements differ both in emphasis and in sequence. We envision the design class as the culmination of the four pre-major classes, for example, whereas UNR has students take design early, as their second class.

(The three required core classes for UNLV match the UNR requirements—Media Ethics, First Amendment and Society, and Professional Internship—but those are typical requirements across journalism programs.)

Although adopting the UNR curriculum intact would have made it easier for students to transfer between the two schools, we believe that our proposal better matches the needs of our students and the opportunities available in Las Vegas, including

- students’ interests, such as sports journalism and entertainment journalism;
- distinctive features of the Las Vegas media market, such as the importance of the tourism industry, nearby national parks, and the media promoting them;
- opportunities to invite prestigious guest speakers who visit Las Vegas for conventions and other events;
- major annual media-related tradeshows and conventions such as the Consumer Electronics Show, the National Association of Broadcasters, and photography events such as WPPI.
- opportunities to collaborate across the UNLV campus, such as partnerships with the medical school on science journalism, with Black Mountain Institute on advanced writing classes, and with the Brookings Institution on coverage of issues facing the West.

Some of these topics, such as sports journalism, are already part of the UNLV curriculum. We will also include some of these topics in the pre-major courses and the core courses, and we will explore the possibility of developing new upper-level electives.

We note too that class sizes will differ. Labs in the introductory classes at UNR are capped at 18. Owing to limited resources, ours will be capped at 20 (JOUR 117, 118, 218).

8. How are KUNV and UNLV-TV integrated into the proposed curriculum?

- The new pre-major courses will place more emphasis on audio than before, especially JOUR 217. Radio station personnel will play a role in the class, which is expected to draw more students to advanced audio classes thereafter.
- Starting in fall 2016, JMS will offer three advanced audio classes using the facilities of KUNV. Currently only one is offered.
- A new class on sports broadcasting has been launched this semester.
- Among the new electives under consideration is a class on television production.
- Two members of the UNLV-TV professional staff have begun teaching classes.
9. Beyond the required courses, how will the curriculum change?

- We will develop new electives over the years to come, particularly courses focusing on IMC, new media technologies, and skills. A class on drones and privacy, taught in collaboration with the law school, is already being offered as an X-course.

- In multiple votes, the faculty has supported the reimplementation of the entrance exam (to be given to students upon completion of pre-core courses), with successful completion required for admission to the major (along with earning a C or better in the pre-core classes). At this point, the exam has yet to be implemented because it needed to be proposed to the university’s curriculum committee as a program change. Since the new pre-core will be going through the program change process, the Curriculum Committee would like to add the entrance examination to the pre-core proposal. The exam will cover grammar, usage, and AP style. It will be administered at the end of the second week of classes in JOUR 218 (which most students will be taking in the first semester of their sophomore year). Students who do not pass the examination on the first attempt will be encouraged to enroll in a mini-semester remedial course on AP style and then will be given a second opportunity to take the examination, ideally around midterms. Those not passing the second attempt will be encouraged to continue with self-study and possibly tutoring and given a third and final attempt during the final exam for JOUR 218.

- We are exploring the possibility of establishing areas of concentration, such as broadcasting, print journalism, and IMC, each with particular course requirements. Additional specialized areas might build on the School’s uniqueness, such as gaming journalism, medical journalism, Spanish-language journalism, social media/emerging technologies, and sports journalism/IMC. Although students would not be required to complete course work for areas of concentration, those who did would have the fact noted on their transcripts, which might enhance their appeal to potential employers.

10. How will the new curriculum affect students already in the program?

The Curriculum Committee has developed two alternative plans for advancing students through the program during the transition. JMS faculty will choose one of the approaches, and we will announce it to students along with the new curriculum.

11. How will the new curriculum address diversity?

We hope to hire more instructors who come from diverse backgrounds and who bring diverse professional experiences. Although most of our majors are female, only three of the ten full-time faculty members are women, and one of them is retiring after the spring semester. We currently have no African Americans or Hispanics on the faculty. Identifying, hiring, and training such instructors will require support for fast-paced and transparent processes and competitive salaries.
12. **How will the new curriculum affect student fees?**

The Curriculum Committee conducted a survey of journalism undergraduate students in JOUR 100 and JOUR 101 about proposed fee increases from $30 for each of the current three courses to $50 for each the new four courses. Of the 31 students who responded, 20 percent agreed, 23 percent were undecided, and 57 percent disagreed. Comments indicated that students were unhappy with recent tuition increases ("We already pay enough money to attend UNLV, why have us pay more?") and hadn’t seen the value for the current fees ("In my pre-core classes (I’ve taken all 3) we have not used any special type of equipment."). Several students were supportive (for example, "I really appreciate that you are trying to better the Journalism major with more informative and specific classes. I 100% support this idea!").

The responses suggest that the goals for the fees must be clearly justified, that alternate sources for fees should be explored, and that a careful rollout campaign would help smooth the introduction of new fees, if they are needed.

13. **How will the new curriculum address problems in maintaining and replacing studio equipment?**

The new 100- and 200- level courses will rely substantially on consumer-level technologies, such as using web resources and mobile phone apps for audio recording and photography.

The upper-level courses, however, will continue to rely on costly professional-grade equipment, much of which is at or beyond its lifecycle. Other universities and schools have approached this problem through fund-raising, negotiations with venders interested in mentoring students, leasing, overall program fees, partnerships, and shifting production facility costs to the university level.

14. **What other changes are being made to address concerns raised in the external review?**

- To alleviate bottlenecks, we have temporarily increased the size of some required courses. For example, the class on research methods has been increased from 25 to 45 students, and the First Amendment class has been increased from 30 to 75 students. At the same time, we have resisted enlarging most skills classes, particularly writing classes. Writing is the fundamental skill by which JMS graduates will be judged in the workplace, and we want to ensure that students get the individualized guidance and feedback they need.

- The GUA Advising Center has hired additional personnel.

- In response to the external review and to ensure leadership continuity, the faculty voted unanimously to recommend that the Director appoint an assistant director. The Director has agreed to consider doing so, and he has asked for candidates to come forward.
• The faculty unanimously elected an interim Director, who will take office after the current Director’s term expires in summer 2016 and serve until a new permanent Director is hired.

15. What other opportunities may exist for enhancing the role of JMS?

• Many GUA units contribute to the university core (e.g., Public Administration offers a class that meets the U.S. and Nevada Constitution requirement, and Communication Studies offers a class on public speaking/presentation skills). At this time, the only JMS contribution to the core is JOUR 475 “Global Media,” which satisfies the university requirement for international studies. We would like to explore the possibility of using JOUR 117 “Media: Foundations” to satisfy the university’s critical-thinking requirement, and JOUR 401 “The First Amendment and Society” to satisfy the Constitution requirement. JOUR 218 “Media: Design” also has cross-disciplinary potential.

• We are launching a series of talks by authors, journalists, and academics in spring 2016 and exploring opportunities for larger events, including a panel on a ProPublica investigative journalism project in spring 2016 and a panel on the future of journalism in fall 2016.

• JOUR 484 “Mass Media and Political Communication” in fall 2016 will focus on the presidential candidates’ debate in Las Vegas, with guest speakers from the campaigns as well as the national media.

• We are exploring collaborations with Nevada Humanities, starting with programs commemorating the centennial of the Pulitzer Prizes in 2016.

• JMS supports GCUA’s emerging emphasis on data analysis by focusing on data journalism and data visualization in the new curriculum.

• Collaborations with Black Mountain Institute are in development, including events, visiting authors, and classes.

• Courses such as JOUR 429X “Drones and Privacy” and JOUR 450/JMS 789 “Media, Technology, and Society” are relevant to UNLV’s broader focus on STEM initiatives, as is faculty involvement with technology firms (e.g., Banjo and SYN Shop) and events (e.g., Maker Faire).

16. How is the School of Journalism contributing to UNLV’s Top Tier efforts?

At the request of the Provost, Vice Provost, and Dean, the faculty reviewed recent and planned activities in terms of four of the five action plan areas of UNLV’s Top Tier Plan.

• Academic Health Center
  • Changes to the core allow the School to make progress on developing areas of concentration, one of which, with adequate interest and resources, could be a specialization in medical/science journalism/JMC.
• KUNV Radio and UNLV-TV have established a close working relationship with the Dean of the Medical School to explore new radio/television programs that have a potential to benefit the Las Vegas area.

• Community Partnerships
  
  • The School has partnerships with many community and industry organizations, including the Nevada Broadcasters Association, the Public Relations Society of America, the American Advertising Federation, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the Nevada Association of Hispanic Journalists. The School sponsors an annual mentor-matching program, which pairs members of many of these organizations with students.

  • The Hank Greenspun School of Journalism Internship Program is one of the most robust on the UNLV campus.
    
    • Each academic year, almost 100 students serve internships with established media outlets and marketing companies and departments across the United States. Our interns have unique opportunities to grow their professional skills in some of the most diverse media and IMC environments in the world. From multilingual media outlets to world-class hotel venues and internationally known conventions and events, our students get unique access and opportunities to work with outstanding professionals and gain experiences to set them on paths to lead the future of our industry.

    • Approximately 12 percent of students receive full- or part-time positions with the companies they serve. Many other students subsequently find employment through contacts established in the professional environment.

    • Recent internships include all local media organizations, R&R Partners, Kirvin Doak, Wendoh Media, Scripps Howard, Late Night with Conan O'Brien, and the Ellen Degeneres Show. (For a more comprehensive list, see Appendix 1.)

• KUNV Radio and UNLV-TV expertise and efforts support a variety of community events and not-for-profit organizations frequently throughout the year.

  • Public service announcements, interviews, short features, and live appearances highlight the ways the School engages directly with residents of the Las Vegas Valley.

  • The UNLV-TV team launched a new weekly show, The Rebel Report, in February, featuring an interview with UNLV Football coach, Tony Sanchez. The production is largely run by students under the supervision of former Fox5 sports anchor, Jon Castagnino.

• We cosponsored the Data Journalism Workshop with the Las Vegas Review-Journal and the Las Vegas Society of Professional Journalists in February 2016.
• The School hosted a showing of *Frame by Frame*, a documentary on journalism in Afghanistan, with more than 50 members of the academic and media communities in attendance.

• *Studio G*, the School's student-run news program, produced live streaming coverage of the past two presidential elections as well as the most recent midterm elections.

• Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

• Faculty members have presented research at regional, national, and international conferences; received prestigious grants and awards; and published articles, book chapters, and books. Faculty members have also shared their research with a general audience by publishing newspaper and magazine articles and photo essays, talking with local and national media, and addressing community organizations. (For additional details of faculty research, student mentoring, and community engagement, see Appendix 2.)

• Student Achievement

• The annual National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) competition is incorporated into one of the JMS program courses. Students spend the semester developing the plan, creating a plans book, and perfecting their pitch for regional and (we hope) national competition. NSAC Alumni have gone on to successful careers in the public relations, advertising, and media industries in Las Vegas and around the country. UNLV is in one of the most competitive regions (UNR is in a different region). Our students compete with teams from UCLA, UCSD, USC, Chapman University, Mount St. Mary's, Cal State Fullerton, and UC Irvine.

  • The team developed an innovative strategic marketing communications campaign for Pizza Hut in spring 2015. The campaign included comprehensive primary and secondary research with the primary target market, a redesigned consumer rewards program and mobile ordering app, as well as event-based and guerilla marketing tactics. The 2015 team was edged out of the top three by a mere two points.

  • The 2014 team developed a campaign for Mary Kay cosmetics and placed second in the region (behind UCLA).

  • The 2013 team won the region for their Glidden paint campaign and placed sixth nationally (UNR was 17th).

• JMS graduates have been accepted to top-quality graduate programs, including the London School of Economics, Cornell University, and the University of Maryland.

• (For additional examples, see Appendix 3.)
17. What does JMS need in order to implement the proposed curriculum?

- Above all, additional personnel
  - JMS will be severely shorthanded in 2016-2017 without additional hires, particularly those with professional experience in journalism and IMC.
    - Together, they teach five classes.
  - The Dean has announced plans for a national search for a new JMS Director, who is expected to assume the position in fall 2017. The interim director’s course releases will eliminate another two or three classes.
  - Put simply, unless we add faculty members, we will not be able to fully implement the proposed curriculum in the 2016-2017 academic year. In fact, we will not be able to teach courses now on the books, including basic writing classes. Students will face substantial hurdles to completing their degrees.
  - To alleviate the problem, the Dean told us on February 8, 2016, that he had requested funding for
    - two visiting professors
    - three Faculty in Residence (FIRs)
  - We need to begin the process for filling these positions immediately.
  - In filling the positions, we hope to enhance the diversity of the JMS faculty in terms of demographics and in terms of professional backgrounds, as the external review recommended.

- Authorization of course fees for the new pre-core classes (under way)
- Release time for faculty developing the new courses. The Dean indicated on December 10, 2015, that this could be arranged.
- Use of the auditorium or similar room with good AV resources, size, and proximity.
- In light of the new pre-major design class and the technology-related electives under development, funding for Adobe CC or another suite of tools for all lab computers as well as support for an IT person to train students and troubleshoot problems.
Appendix 1: Community Partnerships

JMS Internships (Partial List)

**Broadcast**
- Entravision
- iHeartMedia
- *Ellen Degeneres Show*
- *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*
- KLAS TV 8
- KTNV TV 13
- KVVU TV 5
- Las Vegas Chinese News Network
- Lotus Broadcasting

**Print Journalism**
- 702West
- Elevation Publishing
- Greenspun Media Group
- In Club Media
- *Las Vegas Review Journal*
- Scripps Howard
- *Vegas Seven*
- Wendoh Media
- Y Communications
- R&R Partners
- SK+G

**Integrated Marketing Communication**
- BRAINTrust Marketing
- Cox Communication
- Forsee Consulting
- Forte PR
- Kirvin Doak
- Life is Beautiful Festival
- Live Nation
- Magnetic Public Relations
- Preferred PR