

# Report of ACEJMC Evaluation

## Undergraduate program 2025–2026

Name of Institution: Pennsylvania State University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Neeli Bendapudi, president

Name of Unit: Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications

Name and Title of Administrator: Denise Bortree, interim dean

Date of 2025-2026 Accrediting Visit: Nov. 2-5, 2025

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Oct. 28-31, 2018

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

### **Recommendation by 2025-2026 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation**

*Prepared and submitted by:*

#### **Team Chair**

Name and Title: Jennifer Sizemore, founder/principal

Organization/School: Matter – Storytelling for Good LLC

**Signature**



#### **Team Member**

Jenny Buschhorn, Associate Professor:

Organization/School: American Advertising Federation and Texas State University

**Signature**



#### **Team Member**

Name and Title: Diana Martinelli, Ph.D., Widmeyer Professor

Organization/School: Reed School of Media and Communications, West Virginia University

**Signature**



**Team Member**

Name and Title: Amy Simons, Professor of Professional Practice and John A. Walsh Faculty Fellow

Organization/School: Missouri School of Journalism, University of Missouri

**Signature**



**Team Member**

Name and Title: Keonte Coleman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Organization/School: S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

**Signature**



**Team Member**

Name and Title: Andrew Alexander, Board Chair

Organization/School: Foothills Forum


*Andrew Alexander*

**Team Member**

Name and Title: Brian S. Butler, Ph.D., Dean

Organization/School: College of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Alabama

**Signature**



**Team Member**

Name and Title: T. Kenn Gaither, Ph.D., Dean

Organization/School: School of Communications, Elon University

**Signature**



# PART I: General Information

**Name of Institution:** Penn State University

**Name of Unit:** Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications

**Year of Visit:** 2025

**1. Check regional association by which the institution now is accredited.**

Higher Learning Commission

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

New England Commission on Higher Education

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on Colleges

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

**2. Indicate the institution's type of control; check more than one if necessary.**

Private

Public

Other (specify)

**3. Provide assurance that the institution has legal authorization to provide education beyond the secondary level. It is not necessary to include entire authorizing documents. Public institutions may cite legislative acts; private institutions may cite charters or other authorizing documents.**

On April 1, 1863, the Pennsylvania General Assembly designated Penn State as the land-grant college of the Commonwealth.

**4. Has the journalism/mass communications unit been evaluated previously by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications?**

Yes

No

If yes, give the date of the last full accrediting visit. If there was a revisit, give the date of the last full visit and the date of the revisit: October 28-31, 2018

**5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? 1948**

**6. Insert here the unit's mission statement. Statement should give date of adoption and/or last revision.**

To prepare students to take their place in an information-rich society and in the professions as active, critical and ethical participants. Our activities promote effective, responsible use of communications media and technologies by individuals, organizations, industries and government.

*-- Revision adopted: 2020*

**7. What are the type and length of terms?**

Fall and Spring semesters of 15 weeks each plus final exam week. Summer sessions vary in length from 4 to 12 weeks.

Number of weeks in a semester: 15

Number of weeks in a quarter: n/a

Number of weeks in summer sessions: multiple sessions of 4, 6 & 12 weeks each  
Number of weeks in intersessions: n/a

**8. Check the programs offered in journalism/mass communications:**

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Ph.D. degree

**9. List the specific undergraduate degrees as well as the majors or sequences being reviewed by ACEJMC.**

Communications (*Pre-Major status*)

Advertising/Public Relations Advertising Option

Advertising/Public Relations Public Relations Option

Digital Journalism and Media\*

Film Production

Journalism Broadcast Option

Journalism Digital and Print Option

Journalism Photojournalism Option

Media Studies Film and Television Studies Option

Media Studies International Communications Option (phasing out)

Media Studies Media Effects Option

Media Studies Society and Culture Option

Strategic Communications\*

Telecommunications and Media Industries

\*Indicate online degrees.

**10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree:**

**(Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)**

120 semester credit hours

**11. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience.**

(Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)

50 hours equal 1 credit hour.

100 hours equal to 2 credit hours.

150 hours equal 3 credit hours.

- The internship credit is listed as COMM 495.
- A student may earn up to 6 internship credits toward the 120 credits needed to graduate.
  - Any one internship cannot exceed 3 credits even if the student logs in more than 150 hours.
  - Up to 3 credits may be used as a major requirement based on major requirements. All other internship credits above 3 credits earned would fall into the student's electives.

**12. List each professional journalism or mass communications sequence or specialty offered and give the name of the person in charge. Add lines as needed.**

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge
Communications (Pre-Major status) .....	Dr. Juliet Pinto, Acting Associate Dean
Advertising/Public Relations Advertising Option.....	Dr. Fuyuan Shen, Dept. Head
Advertising/Public Relations Public Relations Option.....	Dr. Fuyuan Shen, Dept. Head
Digital Journalism and Media* .....	John Affleck, Dept. Head
Film Production.....	Dr. Matt Jordan, Dept. Head
Journalism Broadcast Option .....	John Affleck, Dept. Head
Journalism Digital and Print Option .....	John Affleck, Dept. Head
Journalism Photojournalism Option.....	John Affleck, Dept. Head
Media Studies Film and Television Studies Option .....	Dr. Matt Jordan, Dept. Head
Media Studies International Communications Option** ..	Dr. Matt Jordan, Dept. Head
Media Studies Media Effects Option .....	Dr. Matt Jordan, Dept. Head
Media Studies Society and Culture Option .....	Dr. Matt Jordan, Dept. Head
Strategic Communications* .....	Dr. Fuyuan Shen, Dept. Head
Telecommunications and Media Industries.....	Dr. Krishna Jayakar, Dept. Head

\*Online major

\*\*Option phasing out

**13. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution:**

74,347

14. Number of undergraduate majors in the accredited unit, by sequence. (If the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total). Give the semester and academic year represented. Add lines as needed.

**Name of Sequence or Specialty**

**Fall 2024 Undergraduate majors**

Communications (Pre-Major status)	1,05
.....	
4 Advertising/Public Relations Advertising Option.....	316
Advertising/Public Relations Public Relations Option.....	251
Digital Journalism and Media* .....	71
Film Production.....	140
Journalism Broadcast Option .....	261
Journalism Digital and Print Option .....	146
Journalism Photojournalism Option.....	24
Media Studies Film and Television Studies Option .....	18
Media Studies International Communications Option .....	14
Media Studies Media Effects Option .....	40
Media Studies Society and Culture Option .....	22
Strategic Communications* .....	45
Telecommunications and Media Industries.....	395
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Total undergraduate enrollments .....	2,797*

\*Small differences in numbers are a consequence of when the data was pulled.

15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and for the preceding term. Submit two semesters with the self-study and update the list as needed for spring 2026 visits. Include a separate list for online skills courses, which also must meet the 20-1 ratio. (The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)

Number	Number	Course Title	Spring 2025	Fall 2025
242	1	Basic Video/Filmmaking	19	18
242	2	Basic Video/Filmmaking	19	18
242	3	Basic Video/Filmmaking	15	16
260W	1	News Writing and Reporting	20	18
260W	2	News Writing and Reporting	19	19
260W	3	News Writing and Reporting	19	20
260W	4	News Writing and Reporting	19	17
260W	5	News Writing and Reporting	18	20
260W	6	News Writing and Reporting	20	19
260W	7	News Writing and Reporting	20	17

260W	8	News Writing and Reporting	20	18
260W	9	News Writing and Reporting	20	18
260W	10	News Writing and Reporting	20	19
260W	11	News Writing and Reporting	Not offered	19
260W	12	News Writing and Reporting	Not offered	16
260W	13	News Writing and Reporting	Not offered	18
260W	14	News Writing and Reporting	Not offered	18
260W	15	News Writing and Reporting	Not offered	16
269	1	Photojournalism	18	10
269	2	Photojournalism	17	15
282	1	Intro to Video Field Production	20	20
282	2	Intro to Video Field Production	18	18
282	3	Intro to Video Field Production	Not offered	19
282	4	Intro to Video Field Production	Not offered	10
283	1	Intro to Multicamera Production	Not offered	14
283	2	Intro to Multicamera Production	8	Not offered
283	3	Intro to Multicamera Production	18	Not offered
337	1	Intermediate Documentary Production	16	14
337	2	Intermediate Documentary Production	16	Not offered
338	1	Intermediate Narrative Production	20	16
338	2	Intermediate Narrative Production	Not offered	19
339	1	Intermediate Alternative Production	20	12
340	1	Intrm. Cinematography & Editing Tech.	16	17
340	2	Intrm. Cinematography & Editing Tech.	15	19
342	1	Idea Development & Media Writing	17	17
342	2	Idea Development & Media Writing	17	17

Number	Number	Course Title	Spring 2025	Fall 2025
346	1	Writing for the Screen	17	15
360	1	Audio News Production	12	12
360	2	Audio News Production	12	8
360	3	Audio News Production	12	11
360	4	Audio News Production	12	12
360	5	Audio News Production	12	Not offered
360	6	Audio News Production	11	11
360	7	Audio News Production	12	11
374	1	Audio Production	19	18
400	1	In the Game: TV Sports Magazine	14	Not offered
402	1	International Reporting ( <i>Spring only</i> )	11	Not offered
437	1	Advanced Doc Production ( <i>Spring only</i> )	4	Not offered
437A	1	Advanced Doc Abroad ( <i>Spring only</i> )	13	Not offered
438	1	Advanced Narrative Production	16	16
439	1	Advanced Alternative Production	Not offered	16
440	1	Advanced Tech Topics	21*	20
444	1	Advanced Post-Production Techniques	19	15
446	1	Writing for the Screen II	9	Not offered
448	1	Advanced Group Production I	Not offered	16
448	2	Advanced Group Production I	Not offered	16
449	1	Advanced Group Production II	18	Not offered
449	2	Advanced Group Production II	18	Not offered
460	1	Reporting Methods	21*	15
460	2	Reporting Methods	8	16
460	3	Reporting Methods	18	12
462	1	Feature Writing	Not offered	17
462	2	Feature Writing	17	17
465	1	Television Reporting	14	18
465	2	Television Reporting	18	12
465	3	Television Reporting	20	19
465	4	Television Reporting	Not offered	19
466	1	Public Affairs Broadcasting	6	Not offered
467	1	News Editing	16	18
467	2	News Editing	18	12
467	3	News Editing	Not offered	16
469	1	Photography for the Mass Media	11	Not offered

\*Course enrolled over the 20-student cap due to unexpected demand by graduating seniors.

Number	Number	Course Title	Spring 2025	Fall 2025
471	1	Public Relations Methods	19	20
471	2	Public Relations Methods	19	20
471	3	Public Relations Methods	Not offered	20

471	4	Public Relations Methods	Not offered	20
471	5	Public Relations Methods	Not offered	20
480	1	Television News	18	16
480	2	Television News	Not offered	14
481	1	Advanced Multimedia	14	9
481	2	Advanced Multimedia	Not offered	8

\*Course enrolled over the 20-student cap due to unexpected demand by graduating seniors.

**16. Total expenditures planned by the accredited unit for the 2025–26 academic year:**

\$26,971,500

**Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:**

\$9,089,401

**17. List name and rank of all full-time faculty in the accredited unit. (Full-time faculty refers to those defined as such by the university.) Identify those not teaching because of leaves, sabbaticals, etc.**

**Fall 2025 Departmental Faculty Advertising/Public Relations**

Lee Ahern, Associate Professor

Michelle Baker, Associate Teaching Professor

Mark Birschbach, Assistant Teaching Professor

Denise Bortree, Professor and Interim Dean

Colleen Connolly-Ahern, Associate Professor

Frank Dardis, Associate Professor

Yujin Heo, Assistant Professor

Stephanie Madden\*, Associate Professor

Steve Manuel, Associate Teaching Professor

Renea Nichols, Associate Teaching Professor

Holly Overton, Associate Professor

William Overton, Assistant Teaching Professor

Rachelle Pavelko, Assistant Teaching Professor

Mark Ronquillo, Professor of Practice

Fuyuan Shen, Professor and Department Head

Heather Shoenberger, Associate Professor

Ronald Smith, Assistant Teaching Professor

Stephanie Thomas, Assistant Teaching Professor

Dave Wozniak, Assistant Teaching Professor

Tara Wyckoff, Associate Teaching Professor

Bill Zimmerman, Assistant Teaching Professor

\*on sabbatical Fall 2025

## **Film Production and Media Studies**

Catharine Axley, Assistant Professor  
Cory Barker, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Rod Bingaman, Associate Teaching Professor  
Thomas Camden, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Jo Dumas, Associate Teaching Professor  
Homero Gil De Zuniga, Professor  
Pearl Gluck, Associate Professor  
Kevin Hagopian, Teaching Professor  
Matthew Jordan, Professor and Department Head  
Sara Liao, Assistant Professor  
Martin Marinos, Assistant Professor  
Matt McAllister, Professor

Mary Oliver, Professor  
Anthony Olorunnisola, Professor and Associate Dean  
of Graduate Programs and Research  
Michelle Rodino-Colocino, Associate Professor  
Gustavo Rosa, Assistant Professor  
Michael Schmierbach, Professor  
Maura Shea, Associate Teaching Professor and  
Associate Department Head  
Christofer Skurka, Assistant Professor  
S. Shyam Sundar, Professor  
Jim Westrick, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Marni Zelnick, Associate Teaching Professor

## **Journalism**

Gary Abdullah, Assistant Dean of Diversity  
and Inclusion  
John Affleck, Professor and Department Head  
Whitney Chirdon, Lecturer  
Boaz Dvir, Associate Professor  
Russell Frank, Associate Professor  
David Joachim, Professor of Practice  
Shannon Kennan, Teaching Professor  
Steve Kraycik, Associate Teaching Professor  
Simon Licen, Associate Professor  
Marea Mannion, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Maggie Messitt, Professor of Practice

Walter Middlebrook, Professor of Practice  
Kathleen O'Toole, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Shaheen Pasha, Associate Teaching Professor  
John Pedygraft, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Jamey Perry, Assistant Dean of Academic Services  
Juliet Pinto, Associate Professor and Acting Associate  
Dean for Academic Affairs  
Patrick Plaisance, Professor  
Amy Sanders, Professor  
Mila Sanina, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Cynthia Simmons, Associate Teaching Professor  
Neda Toloui Semnani, Assistant Teaching Professor

## **Telecommunications**

Christopher Ali, Professor  
Jiyoung Cha, Associate Professor  
Benjamin Cramer, Teaching Professor  
Tom Davidson, Professor of Practice  
Linda Feltman, Lecturer  
Catie Grant, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Bill Hallman, Assistant Teaching Professor  
Anne Hoag, Associate Professor

Matthew Jackson, Associate Professor  
Krishna Jayakar, Professor and Department Head  
Robert Martin, Assistant Dean of Internships  
and Placement  
Sascha Meinrath, Associate Teaching Professor  
Andrea Miller, Assistant Professor  
Scott Myrick, Assistant Teaching Professor  
David Norloff, Associate Teaching Professor

**18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2025. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2025. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2026, also provide the spring 2026 adjunct list in the updated information.)**

### Fall 2025 Part-time Faculty

Temilade Adeeko	Chris Maurer
Ahmed Al Rawi	Carmina Perez
Karlin Andersen Tuttle	Mikayla Pevac
David Aneckstein	Giancarlo Pitocco
Wilhelmina Antwi	Stephen Reighard
Doug Barkey	Jeffrey Rice
Yasemin Beykont	Samantha Ruland
Jeffrey Brown	Steve Sampsell
Zheng Cui	Melissa Selverian
Emily Danczyk	Stacie Shain
Suleman Din	Brian Shoenfelt
Carlina DiRusso	Diana Sisson
James Dugan	Audrey Snyder
James Espy	Erika Solis
Kevin Freet	Matt Solovey
Nicole Fuentes	Jenna Spinelle
Andy Grant	Leon Valsechi
James Greenhaw	Joshua Vaughn
Jenna Grzeslo	Barry Wade
Jingyi Guo	Adrienne Waterston
Danielle Harris	Jaclyn Wechtenhiser
Peixin Hua	Brittany Welch
Eunchae Jang	Courtney Witmer
Travis Johnson	Yunan Wu
Whitney Justice	Daniel Yesenosky
Zachary Kelly	Evelyn Yin
Eunseo Lee	Will Yurman
Hui Min Lee	Michael Zelazny
Karyn Lewis	
Anna Lindsey	
James Lingwall	
Rex Martin	

### Spring 2025 Part-time Faculty

Ahmed Al Rawi	Jill Mott
Karlin Andersen Tuttle	Haley Nelson
David Aneckstein	Carmina Perez
Roland Ballester	Mikayla Pevac
Doug Barkey	Giancarlo Pitocco
Spencer Bennett	Michael Poorman
Yasemin Beykont	Joel Ranck
Lauren Boyer	Stephen Reighard
Jeffrey Brown	Jeffrey Rice
Whitney Chirdon	Samantha Ruland
Cole Cullen	Loryn Rumsey
Adrienne Darrah	Steve Sampsell
Carlina DiRusso	Melissa Selverian
James Dugan	Deepak Sethi
Andy Elder	Stacie Shain
Sara Erlichman	Diana Sisson
James Espy	Audrey Snyder
Kevin Freet	Erika Solis
Nicole Fuentes	Matt Solovey
Andy Grant	Jenna Spinelle
James Greenhaw	Matthew Swayne
Jenna Grzeslo	Peter Terpstra
Danielle Harris	Brian Tripp
Travis Johnson	Leon Valsechi
Zachary Kelly	Joshua Vaughn
Adriana Lacy	Barry Wade
Eunseo Lee	Adrienne Waterston
Karyn Lewis	Jaclyn Wechtenhiser
Anna Lindsey	Brittany Welch
James Lingwall	Courtney Witmer
Rex Martin	Daniel Yesenosky
Christopher Maurer	Will Yurman
Joshua Mcauliffe	Michael Zelazny

**19. For each of the last two academic years, please give the total number of graduates from the unit.**

**2024-25** academic year: 881

**2023-24** academic year: 888

## **PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration**

The Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications is centrally located on the University Park campus at The Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania. Penn State is an R1, land-grant university with 24 campuses serving the Commonwealth, with a total enrollment of 90,000 in the last academic year. The University Park complex is home to about 50,000 of those students. The campus is graced by historic buildings, huge old trees, wide promenades, public art and vast green lawns.

The university is a “state-related university with private characteristics,” which according to the self-study, means that it is an independent institution that receives public funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is part of the state’s system of higher education. Like Temple University and the University of Pittsburgh, it is not a state-owned university, but it is not fully private either; the state appoints some members of its board of trustees, but the university is not under direct control of the state and manages its own day-to-day operations.

The college has a long and storied history, beginning with the first journalism writing course, offered in 1911. The Department of Journalism was established in 1929 in the School of the Liberal Arts, and in 1948 the program became nationally accredited. The department became the School of Communications in 1985 and was promoted to the College of Communications in 1995. In 2017, the college was renamed after a \$30 million gift from Donald Bellisario, a 1961 alumnus.

Bellisario College is one of 12 academic colleges at the university, and is the sixth largest college by enrollment, with 2,664 undergraduate students in the most recent academic year. It has approximately 80 full-time faculty. The college is organized into four departments that offer a total of seven majors – two of which are online-only.

Part of the Bellisario gift is designated for student scholarships and faculty and program support. The unit granted \$1.9 million in scholarships in 2024-25. Transformationally, the gift also helped to fund a new media center in a renovated historic building across the street from the college’s administrative building, in the center of campus, steps away from Old Main, the historic administrative home of the provost and president. The college’s enrollment continues to grow even while similar programs across the country are struggling to maintain their majors, and new accounting rules at the university mean its budget is also increasing.

The college’s short-term goals and plans are guided by its five-year strategic plan, which aligns with the university’s plan. Leadership has historically been stable; when the most recent dean left in 2025 to take a university presidency, she had been only the fourth dean of the college. The unit is currently led by an interim dean while a national search is conducted.

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**(a) The unit has a written mission statement and a written strategic long-range plan that provides vision and direction for its future, meaningful short-term measurements,**

**identifies needs and resources for its mission and goals and is supported by university administration outside the unit.**

Bellisario College's comprehensive mission is forward-looking and as such makes room for the ongoing evolution of programs and goals. It is: "To prepare students to take their place in an information-rich society and in the professions as active, critical and ethical participants. Our activities promote effective, responsible use of communications media and technologies by individuals, organizations, industries and government."

Both the college's mission and its strategic plan align with the university's plan. Penn State requires all units to have five-year plans, with annual progress reports, that align with the university's five-year strategic plan. The college is transitioning between its 2020-25 plan and the next plan, 2025-30, which is slated to be complete in January 2026.

College administrators agree that strategic planning is always approached as a participatory, top-down/bottom-up process that clearly connects planning to budgeting. The university has four high-level goals (enhancing student success; growing interdisciplinary research excellence; fostering diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging; increasing land-grant impact), and proposed strategies for achieving those goals at the unit level were generated by four working groups made up of faculty/staff, in parallel with the college's executive committee.

The goals outlined in the plan are clear guideposts for the college's decision-making. While the dean is ultimately responsible for driving plan-based results and ensuring funds are allocated toward ensuring goals can be met, she also holds her leadership responsible for making progress on specific areas of the plan. This manifests in a variety of ways. For example:

**Goal:** Become an exemplar for outcomes-driven learning

**Outcome:** The associate dean for academic affairs established a faculty mentoring program and launched a weekly newsletter and monthly idea- and best-practice-exchange meetings. Teaching Tuesday is now a part of the culture.

**Goal:** Position the college as a thought-leader on ethical decision-making for the academy and professions.

**Outcome:** The Davis Chair in Ethical Leadership was given resources to establish and maintain an international symposium engaging scholars from around the world on media ethics.

Despite being grounded in its strategic plan, the unit is nimble in the face of rapidly changing industries. Some examples:

1. Added in year three of the plan: "Continue to invest in News Lab, designed to strengthen local reporting across the Commonwealth." This change focused more resources on the News Lab, making it a priority for the college's investments.
2. Added around year three: "Expand relationships with colleges, institutes and units across campus." A surge of interest in sustainability collaborations across the university and the college were the impetus behind this response.

3. Added in the second year: “Create and launch a program that shares best practices for teaching excellence in the Bellisario College.” Non-tenure-line teaching faculty raised a concern about limited teaching resources and training, so the college developed the “Teaching Tuesdays” program, including a weekly newsletter and monthly lunch-and-learns.

The unit’s mission statement and strategic plan are posted on its website.

**(b) The unit’s administration provides effective leadership within the unit and effectively represents it in dealings with university administration outside the unit and constituencies external to the university.**

**Characterize in depth the leadership of the unit as an agent for progress, advocate for the unit’s fields of study within the university and aggressive connector with alumni.**

The prior dean was seen as an innovative force of nature who tirelessly advocated for the college both within and outside of the university. She set the bar for her faculty, holding impactful positions that contributed to the academy as well as the health of the university. Alumni also can’t say enough about her outreach efforts and her open door to their ideas and involvement.

“She was the first call people made for a chair or member of a search committee,” one cross-campus collaborator said.

The provost cited the college’s leadership in pronouncing it “a crown jewel,” and “really premier.”

“That the former dean became a president speaks a lot,” the provost said. “She will be a hard act to follow.”

One more: “The dean was beloved,” said a faculty member. “Plus, she was homegrown.”

The interim dean earns praise for enthusiastically keeping the program moving forward on the same footing while leading collaboratively as a national search for the previous dean’s successor unfolds.

“She has a good working relationship with peers across campus,” said the leader of a campus partner. “She is great to work with.”

“She knows the ropes and is holding the ship afloat,” a faculty member said.

**What significant achievements can be attributed to the leader?**

The previous leader oversaw the implementation of the transformational Bellisario gift, including the renovation/construction of a new media center, new course and program offerings springing from that new space, continued growth in student body and faculty, and consistently high retention and graduation numbers.

As an interim dean for mere months, the current leader can't be evaluated on significant accomplishments at this point, but faculty praise her for her steady hand.

“She has modeled what we loved about (the previous dean),” a faculty member said. “She has managed to keep up the energy and tamp down on the anxiety.”

### **Has the leader built partnerships within the university?**

The college has multiple partnerships across the university, including the new Center for Socially Responsible AI, which is based at and whose director is co-hired with the College of Information Sciences and Technology. The founding director is from the (accredited) Media Studies department of the college.

Just a few examples of other key partnerships within the university include:

**World Campus**, to which Bellisario came for an idea for its first online class when World Campus was still begging for participants. The college also stepped forward to partner with Information Sciences and Technology and Arts and Architecture on an online Bachelor of Design degree. Two of the college's majors are offered online-only through World Campus. The vice provost is a two-time Bellisario alum.

**Strategic Communications**, the university's comms department. “Our first call for interns is to Bellisario every semester, and often it doesn't have to go further,” a Strategic Communications administrator said. “They are a fantastic source of talent, and the lines of communication are wide open.”

**Library**. The dedicated librarian for the college holds office hours for faculty and staff alike. “They are so dedicated, and so appreciative of what the library can do for them,” he said.

**Center for Penn State Entrepreneurship** loves to pair college students with students from engineering and other “maker” majors. Increasingly, they are mentoring content creators from the college who are hoping to turn their 100k-plus followers into real businesses upon graduation.

**WPSU**, the NPR station currently affiliated with Penn State, can't rave enough about the students the college sends to them for internships. Those students often go on to jobs in bigger and bigger markets. “They have actually made Development's job easier because those donors love to see students succeed,” said one of the station's managers.

### **Is the leader seen as a strong advocate for equitable opportunities and broad participation?**

Faculty and students alike seem united on one thing: Bellisario College is a collaborative, safe and inclusive place to be.

“I definitely feel safe here,” said a student as heads nodded in unison around the room. “The staff is a big part of that, and (the assistant dean of diversity and inclusion) is the biggest.”

“People lift each other up at this college,” said another student.

Faculty concur. “This is the safest place to work on campus,” said one faculty member, crediting the previous dean’s open-door approach that made the building feel like “a place for everyone.”

### **Is faculty and student representation of persons with limited representation in the field of journalism and media communication improving?**

The college continues to prioritize outreach to and inclusion of people from underrepresented groups. These efforts are reflected in both the student body and the faculty.

### **Do scholars and professionals work collaboratively?**

There is a remarkable collegiality among the faculty and staff and between tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty.

“There is a genuinely collegial setting here,” said one faculty member. “It has a lot to do with our leadership. We’re not Balkanized. Part of our culture is access to leadership.”

“No one is standing on ceremony here,” said another full-tenure faculty member. “It is a joy.”

This sentiment was repeated again and again. Every member of the site team reported that every interview yielded some version of:

“It is generally extremely collegial – we mingle quite a bit,” said a senior faculty member. “Everyone knows it’s not a zero-sum gain because everyone is well-resourced; it’s not a trade-off; we are all codependent in good ways.”

### **Is creativity in curriculum, teaching and research sought and rewarded?**

Creativity is highly prized in both teaching and research, and those innovations are reflected in curriculum changes the faculty are empowered to propose and pursue.

“We are both encouraged and rewarded for creative thinking,” is a representative faculty sentiment.

### **Is the leader driving forward the curriculum (while respecting faculty governance and required process) to keep up with a rapidly changing media world?**

The college's curriculum is up-to-date and in many ways cutting edge (see Standard 2). Faculty report that the previous leader was constantly consulting faculty, maintaining an open door and organizing small groups to work through new ideas – and that all took place in an atmosphere of respect for faculty governance and process.

“In many ways, we know we can chart our own destiny,” according to a faculty member.

**(c) The unit annually updates its data on the ACEJMC searchable database website (<https://lookup.acejmc.org>).**

The unit updates its data on the ACEJMC website.

**(d) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention and graduation data and posts them annually in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its websites.**

The unit's retention and graduation data are analyzed, current and posted on its website.

**On indicators (e), (f) and (g) the site team should make sure the unit operates within accepted academic norms and need only report in detail on extraordinary situations, cases or variances from policy.**

**(e) The unit has policies and procedures for substantive faculty governance that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum.**

Shared governance in the college is outlined in the College Faculty Organization and Operating Guidelines, which is approved by the Faculty Senate. Policymaking begins in both standing committees, of which there are 11, and ad-hoc committees. It is formalized through the college's executive committee, composed of the department heads, the directors of development, finance, operations, information technology, outreach and instructional design, college communications, recruitment, the HR partner and the assistant and associate deans. Members and the dean bring policy-related items to the committee for discussion and approval.

**(f) The institution and/or the unit defines and uses a process for selecting and evaluating its administrators.**

Penn State sets university-wide policy concerning the selection and evaluation of administrators. In short, the evaluation policy requires that all deans, associate deans, assistant deans, and department heads be periodically reviewed, in addition to their annual evaluations. Reviews take place every five years, typically.

The dean selection policy stems from the provost's office, where a search committee chair is appointed and other committee members are faculty and staff from the college while advisory

boards and alumni groups are also included. The president makes the final decision. The process to hire associate deans looks like a standard faculty hire, though the dean may opt for an internal rather than a national search.

**(g) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.**

Academic complaints: Students are required to first try to resolve the issue with the course instructor. The student may then consult the department head, before further consultation with the associate dean. The process becomes formal when a written complaint is filed with the associate dean, who must respond in a reasonable period of time.

Faculty complaints: These are first addressed in discussions among the parties. The department head, assistant and associate deans, and the dean, may all be consulted. If all that fails, the parties work through the university's Ombudsman process. If that doesn't create resolution, the formal process begins with a petition to the Committee and Faculty Rights and Responsibilities. A Hearing Board is the last step, followed by the university president making the final decision.

Staff complaints: Most are settled in discussions with the supervisor, though staff may go through HR. If it is a discrimination complaint, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access may be involved.

**SUMMARY:**

While the college is in the midst of a national search to replace its longstanding dean, that dean left behind a legacy of accountability that permeates the attitudes, actions, policies and processes of the entire college. Every expectation is that this tradition will continue, both under the current interim leader and the next dean. Innovation, involvement and collaboration seem to be features of the Bellisario College's DNA. This period of transition – with a new provost and an ongoing search for a new dean – will be critical for Bellisario College.

**Overall evaluation compliance/non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

Discussions of indicators b, c and f should describe and evaluate individual academic sequences in the unit.

**(a) Students in the unit complete academic requirements for a baccalaureate degree that meet the liberal arts and sciences/general education requirements of the institution. Programs may identify classes within the unit that contribute to a liberal arts and social sciences perspective for graduates from the unit.**

The college – and university – have a system in place to ensure that students graduate with a degree that is grounded in a strong, well-balanced liberal arts and sciences education. All majors in the college have four requirement areas:

- General education (40 credits required)
- Bachelor of Arts (12-24 credits, including a foreign language requirement)
- Electives (varies by student based on major and number of credits needed for the degree)
- Major

Of the 120 credits needed to earn a degree, Bellisario College requires majors to have between 25-39 credit hours in Communications. This leaves most students typically earning 70-80 credits in general education, Bachelor of Arts and electives steeped in the liberal arts and sciences curriculum.

On occasion, students may combine their BA degrees with a BS degree in another discipline. These students may be at the low end of the 66-70 credits in liberal arts.

**(b) The unit provides a balance between theoretical and conceptual courses, professional skills courses, and courses that integrate theory and skills to achieve the range of student values and competencies listed by the Council.**

The college has five residential degrees under review for re-accreditation. Two online degrees are being reviewed, both for the first time.

All students graduate with at least 120 hours. Depending on the student's major, between 69 and 104 hours are taken outside the college.

Each of the majors offers a blend of skills and theory, which address each of the 10 ACEJMC values and competencies. In addition, since the last review period, the college has added a one-credit, first-year seminar and a course related to diversity in the media for all students.

The college now requires an ethics course for all majors except for Ad/PR, which has an ethics course offered as an elective that is now being reviewed by the Faculty Senate as a requirement, and Film Production, which continues to deliver via modules in other courses.

The major requirements are as follows:

### **Advertising/Public Relations**

All Advertising/Public Relations majors are required to take Basic News Writing Skills (COMM 160), Introductory Microeconomic Analysis and Policy (ECON 102), Introductory Psychology (PSYCH 100) and Elementary Statistics (STAT 200).

Advertising Option: Students choosing the advertising option also take Introduction to Advertising (COMM 320), Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations (COMM 420), Advertising Creative Strategies (COM 421W), Advertising Media Planning (COMM 422) and Advertising Campaigns (COMM 424)

Public Relations Option: Students choosing the PR option take News Writing and Reporting (COMM 260W), Public Relations (COMM 370), Digital Public Relations (COMM 372), Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations (COMM 420), Public Relations Media and Methods (COM 471) and Public Relations Campaigns (COMM 473).

In addition to these required courses, students in all options take six additional courses selected from the Advertising/Public Relations courses and other relevant COMM courses.

### **Digital Journalism and Media**

The online Digital Journalism and Media degree is offered via the World Campus. The degree requires 120 credits, 40 in the major.

All students must take Basic News Writing Skills (COMM 160), Survey of Electronic Media and Telecommunications (COMM 180), News Writing and Reporting (COMM 260W), Photojournalism (COMM 269), Principles of Journalism (COMM 271) and Introduction to Telecommunication Technologies (COMM 280).

Students must also take three credits, respectively, in law, data and production/writing and 12 additional credits in other journalism-related skills courses.

### **Film Production**

Film students need 33 hours in their major. These include the required courses: The Art of the Cinema (COMM 150N/Q), Basic Video/Filmmaking (COMM 242), Film History for Filmmakers (COMM 333), Intermediate Cinematography and Editing Techniques (COMM 340) and Idea Development and Media Writing (COMM 342W).

Film Production students fill out their course selections with 18 credits of film-related electives. It should be noted that the courses the unit uses to assess learning outcomes in law and ethics are in this category of elective courses rather than any required course.

### **Journalism**

The Journalism major provides students with the critical thinking skills, professional, ethical, and legal skills.

All Journalism students begin their major by taking 19 credits of required courses. These are: Basic News Writing Skills (COMM 160), News Writing and Reporting (COMM 260W), Principles of Journalism (COMM 271), Law of Mass Communications (COMM 403) and News Media Ethics (COMM 409).

Journalism students are also required to take a university-approved minor, typically 18 hours. Besides the minor, Journalism students choose one of the following options:

*Broadcast Option:* Students in the Broadcast Option take an additional six credits from a menu of 10 skills courses and six credits from a menu of 13 theory courses. The broadcast capstone course, Centre County Report (COMM 480), which is made available on-air and online in State College, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and various other cities within the commonwealth.

*Digital and Print Option:* Students in the Print and Digital Option must also take Reporting Methods (COMM 460W), News Editing and Evaluation (COMM 467) plus six credits from a menu of 11 skills courses and six credits from a menu of 13 theory courses.

*Photojournalism Option:* Students in the Photojournalism Option must also take Photojournalism (COMM 269), Photography for the Mass Media (COMM 469) plus six credits from a menu of 11 skills courses and six credits from a menu of 13 theory courses.

### **Media Studies**

All Media Studies majors begin their study taking 21 required credits: The Mass Media and Society (COMM 100N), Gender, Diversity and the Media (COMM 205), Introduction to Multimedia Production (COMM 270), Research Literacy and Media (COMM 304), Introduction to Critical Studies of Media (COMM 305), Political Economy of Communications (COMM 405) and Media, Politics and Civic Life. (COMM 413W).

*Film and Television Studies Option:* Students in this option must also take the following three courses: The Art of the Cinema (COMM 150N), Basic Video/Filmmaking (COMM 242) and Film History and Theory (COMM 250).

*Media Effects Option:* Students in this option must also take two COMM courses and one PSYCH class: Introduction to Media Effects Cinema (COMM 118), Media Effects: Theory and Research (COMM 418) and Introductory Psychology (PSYCH 100).

*Society and Culture Option:* Students taking the Society and Culture Option must take Cultural Aspects of the Mass Media (COMM 411).

All Media Studies majors take an additional 18 credits. These come from a variety of electives including sports courses, film courses, digital games courses, ethics, etc.

### **Strategic Communications**

The online Strategic Communications degree is offered via the World Campus. The degree requires 120 credits, 35 in the major.

All students take the following courses, combining for 29 credits: Basic News Writing Skills (COMM 160), Writing for Media (COMM 230W), Principles of Strategic Communications (COMM 428A), Strategic Communications Law (COMM 428B), Strategic Communications in a Global Environment (428C), Research and Analytics (COMM 428D), Social Media Strategies (COMM 428E), Introductory Microeconomics Analysis and Policy (ECON 103), Introductory Psychology (PSYCH 100) and Elementary Statistics (STAT 200).

The remaining six credits are electives including corporate communications, law and ethics.

### **Telecommunications and Media Industries**

All Telecommunications and Media Industries students have a 10-hour core requirement. This includes Basic News Writing (COMM 160), Survey of Electronic Media & Telecommunications (COMM 180).

Telecommunications and Media Industries students do not have options like other majors but instead select courses from prescribed lists. These include:

*Professional Courses:* 12 credits from courses such as Intro to Video Field Production (COMM 282), Audio Production (COMM 374), Brand Storytelling (COMM 482), and Entrepreneurship in the Information Age (COMM 493).

*Social Aspects:* 3 credits from courses such as Media and Democracy (COMM 110), Women, Minorities and the Media (COMM 205) and Political Economy of Communications (COMM 405).

*Law:* Students choose from one of three law courses: Law of Mass Communications (COMM 403/H), Telecommunications Law (COMM 404) or Internet Law and Policy (COMM 492).

In addition, Telecommunications and Media Industries students choose from one capstone course: either Telecommunications Ethics (COMM 486W), Advanced Telecommunications Management and Leadership (COMM 487W) or Advanced Telecommunications Topics (COMM 489W)

The mix of theoretical/conceptual courses and skills courses instruct majors in the 10 ACEJMC professional values and competencies. Below is the college's Student Learning Assessment Matrix that maps the values and competencies to specific coursework. The unit has a robust assessment plan, addressed in Standard 3.

<b>Value or Competency</b>	<b>AD</b>	<b>DGJRM</b>	<b>FILM</b>	<b>JOURN</b>	<b>MEDIA</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>STRCM</b>	<b>TELCM</b>
Freedom of Expression	320	230W, 260W, 403, 409, 492	339, 437, 438, 439, 445, 448, 449	260W, 402, 403, 460W	205, 405, 410, 479	370	428B	404, 492
History, Professions	320	180, 271, 280, 403, 492	333, 445	260W, 271, 403	250, 333, 410	370	428A	180, 380, 404, 487W
Cultural Diversity	375, 420, 422, 426	269, 271, 409	346, 440, 445, 446	205, 269, 271, 409, 465	204, 410, 419, 452	375, 420, 471, 473	230W, 428C	282, 283
<b>Value or Competency</b>	<b>AD</b>	<b>DGJRM</b>	<b>FILM</b>	<b>JOURN</b>	<b>MEDIA</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>STRCM</b>	<b>TELCM</b>
Images & Information	268,320, 420, 424, 427	269, 271, 282, 364, 469	337, 338, 339, 340, 440	297, 271, 360, 465, 469, 480, 481	250, 270, 32X*, 333, 410, 411, 413, 451, 452, 454, 455	268, 370, 420, 471, 473	428D, 428E	282, 283
Writing	421, 425, 468	228, 260, 460, 467	342W, 346, 446	260W, 360, 403, 460W, 465, 467	205, 250, 410, 411, 413, 451	471, 473	230W, 428B, 428C, 428D	487W, 489W
Ethics	375, 417, 420, 427	271, 409	337, 338, 437, 438	409	205, 304, 418	375, 417, 420, 471, 473	428B, 428D	180, 486
Critical Thinking/ Research	420, 422	310, 403, 467	346, 437, 438, 439, 440, 443, 444, 445, 446, 448, 449	403, 460W, 462, 467	205, 250, 304, 32X*, 333, 410, 411, 413, 418, 451, 452, 454, 455	375, 471, 473	428C, 428D, 428E	486, 487W, 489W
Numerical/ Statistical	420, 422	260, 310, 364, 467	340, 440, 443	260W, 271	304, 32x*, 413, 418	420, 473	428D	310, 380, 487W
Critically Evaluate Information	421, 424, 450	467	437, 438, 439, 440, 445, 448, 449	260W, 269, 460W, 467	205, 250, 304, 32X*, 333, 405, 410, 411, 413, 418, 419, 455	372, 471, 473	428D, 428E	486, 487W, 489W
Tools & Technology	268, 421, 422, 424	180, 269, 280, 364, 469	340, 440, 444, 448, 449	269, 271, 360, 465, 469	242, 270, 304, 418	268, 372, 471, 473	428A, 428D, 428E	280, 282, 283

\*32X includes four courses in various areas of Media Effects.

**(c) Instruction, whether on-site or online, synchronous or asynchronous, is demanding and current, and is responsive to professional expectations of digital and technological media competencies.**

Faculty members regularly attend workshops and visit media organizations to ensure that instruction is current and relevant. In fall 2024, the unit launched a course titled “Generative Artificial Intelligence for All” in collaboration with the Computer Sciences department in the College of Engineering. The course was one of the first AI courses offered at the university and attracted students from across campus.

Each department has a designated curriculum coordinator responsible for curriculum mapping and ensuring that learning objectives are appropriate to each course. Courses with multiple sections use a flipped classroom model to ensure students receive identical information through the Canvas learning management system. For example, in News Writing (COMM 260W), students across all sections complete a standard online learning module ahead of in-seat class periods. Individual faculty teach the small face-to-face sections where students practice writing and receive individual instruction. The coordinator regularly uses Microsoft Teams to share lesson plans and fresh examples and to streamline communication among the instructors of all 15 sections.

Additionally, the college hired a full-time instructional designer in late 2021. This person reports directly to the college’s Director of eLearning but supports faculty teaching across modalities. Faculty report having trust in her and seek her out for support in using the Canvas platform and to incorporate additional educational technologies in their courses. One of her biggest priorities during the 2025-2026 academic year is preparing the college for major changes coming to federal digital accessibility regulations going into effect in spring 2026, targeting full compliance in at least 30 courses by June 1, 2026, per university benchmarks.

In meetings with students, the majority spoke very highly about the quality of instruction. It is both demanding and current with a focus on helping students gain skills for a digital world. Online students who responded to email queries confirmed this. One wrote, "Penn State courses hold you to a high academic standard; readings are comprehensive and assignments are analytical/designed to test your progress. You can’t really skate by."

*Ad/PR:* Students praised the teamwork and collaborative projects required in the major, which they recognized mimics the professional world. Required courses outside the college include microeconomics and statistics. Students are also required to take research methods and complete Page Center modules on ethics as part of their curriculum. They find the courses challenging and relevant to their professional paths.

*Film Production:* While students are generally quite pleased with the type and level of instruction offered, there was a desire to have some restructuring of the sequence of coursework to begin hands-on work earlier in their program. Currently, students produce a film and then take a screenwriting course. Some who spoke to the site team would rather be introduced to skills

progressively and build upon them as they matriculate. Students also noted that there can be a “race” to register for the most popular hands-on courses.

*Journalism:* Students in Journalism describe a hands-on educational experience that offers access to individualized instruction and builds skills to a mastery level during the course of their program. They spoke highly of their faculty, noting their professional experiences and competency in the classroom. While some students appreciated the exceptional opportunities to cover Penn State athletics, others wished there was more emphasis on instruction in covering hard news.

*Media Studies:* Students applauded the mix of teaching techniques that connect complex mass communication theory with real-world examples. Instruction is described as interactive and engaging. Students supplement the heavily theoretical coursework with hands-on experiences through extra-curricular activities.

*Telecommunications and Media Industries:* Faculty have impressed students with their commitment to keeping course examples current, describing their classes during the 2024 election cycle as “ripped from the headlines,” with great care given to creating context around concepts. In a major focused on emerging technologies, students noted that their professors don’t shy away from low-tech teaching tools such as paper and pencil to engage various learning styles. Some students said it was hard for them to find their niche, and indicated a desire for tracks within Telecom, like other Bellasario majors, to help them focus their degree program.

Various other efforts are also underway to provide students with opportunities to augment their course offerings. While still in early stages, the college is experimenting with badges and microcredentials to help students bolster specialized skills and be able to document that work to potential employers.

**(d) The unit demonstrates efforts to connect faculty and administrators to the professions they represent, with a specific understanding of the changing skills needed to be successful in the workplace.**

There is a strong commitment among faculty and administrators to connect and maintain relationships with those in the professions they represent. Each year, they invite industry professionals to interact with students and talk with faculty about industry trends and curriculum development. These visits range in length from a full semester to a single class period or club meeting, both in-person and online using Zoom. During the fall 2025 semester, the college welcomed three professionals-in-residence to teach for the full semester, two in the Journalism department. Semester-long residencies are at the invitation of the dean and can be renewed for up to a full academic year. Faculty travel to newsrooms, agencies and technology companies – as well as attend workshops – to maintain recency in their knowledge.

Specific departments have programs designed to meet individual needs.

*Ad/PR:* The department is also hosting a professional-in-residence this semester. The department also has its own Ad/PR Network Board. Members engage with faculty and visit each spring to deliver guest lectures and mentor students. Faculty have made visits to companies such as CBS/Paramount+, Weber Shandwick and FBC and participated in workshops such as Adobe Max in Miami.

*Digital Journalism and Media:* While some Digital Journalism and Media courses are taught by full-time faculty from the Journalism and Telecom departments, many instructors of the courses in this World Campus degree are adjunct instructors who are still working full-time in industry roles or are full-time roles at other institutions.

*Film Production:* Faculty stay engaged with the industry through ongoing relationships with alumni. The annual Films and Friends event in New York City is a themed panel to connect current students with alumni for jobs and internships. The unit hopes to expand this series to Los Angeles in the future.

*Journalism:* Among the various ways the Journalism Department stays in touch with the profession is through partnerships which provide student-created content to professional media outlets such as newscasts for WPSU-TV and coverage of the Little League World Series and 2024 Paralympics for the Associated Press. Dozens of journalists visited Journalism classes during the 2024-2025 academic year, including those from publications such as *The Athletic*, *PennLive* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. The Penn State chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists went to *USA Today* and the White House briefing room in 2025. It is routine for faculty to attend conferences. In 2024-2025, a sampling of those attended include the Hearst Journalism Awards, Online News Association, Investigative Reporters and Editors and the National Association of Black Journalists. In addition, the faculty helped organize and attended the first-ever Keystone News Media Summit.

*Media Studies:* Faculty in Media Studies primarily conduct research. They remain connected and current through attendance at conferences such as ICA, AEJMC and IAMCR.

*Strategic Communications:* While some Strategic Communications courses are taught by full-time faculty from the Ad/PR department, many instructors of the courses in this World Campus degree are adjunct instructors who are still working full-time in industry roles or are full-time roles at other institutions.

*Telecommunications and Media Industries:* Three endowed chairs foster connections to industry constituencies through links to their funding organizations. They regularly engage with regulatory and professional networks through invited talks, media appearances and consulting. They also regularly attend professional meetings, such as the National Association of Broadcasters, OTT-X, the Knight Foundation and the National Cable Telecommunications Association. Through organizations such as CommAgency, T&MI faculty connect students to the local business community.

**(e) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses. Except for campaigns courses, the ratio in skills and laboratory sections, whether on-site or online, should not exceed 20-1.**

Almost all student-faculty classroom ratios were within the 20-1 requirement of ACEJMC. The two classes that exceeded that ratio were at 21-1, and the unit explained that it was necessary to overenroll those two classes to ensure students graduated on time. Students said they were able to access their required classes at the times they needed to graduate on their anticipated schedule.

**(f) The unit advocates and encourages opportunities for internship and other professional experiences outside the classroom and supervises and evaluates them when it awards academic credit. Units may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed six semester credits (or nine quarter hours).**

**When students take courses for internship credit at appropriate professional organizations, the unit must show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit's faculty and professionals.**

**Students may take up to nine semester credits (or their equivalent) at professional media outlets owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.**

While an internship is not required, students are encouraged to take at least one internship before they graduate. In student meetings, it was evident that students had multiple internships (for credit/not for credit) to be prepared for the workplace when they graduate. Students may fulfill up to six credits toward their degree through internship (three credits toward their professional course section and three credits toward elective credits).

The unit has an Office of Internships and Career Placement that maintains a bank of approximately 4,700 internship sites. Approved sites must offer an opportunity that matches the skill set and course work of the student; matches the interests of the student; has an internship supervisor to oversee the student's work who is able to provide the proper support to help the student grow professionally; and provide the student with the opportunity to gain practical skills and tangible hands-on experience within the specific area of communications.

Students approved for internship credit enroll in the COMM 495 course, administered through the Canvas learning management system. Students file a weekly journal entry that is reviewed by staff and the assistant dean and manager of internships review a mid-term evaluation and final critique of each student at the conclusion of their internship.

*Advertising/Public Relations:* Ad/PR students can experience working in an agency by joining the Comm Agency, the college's in-house Ad/PR agency. Under the guidance of a full-time faculty member, students work for constituents in the Penn State University community. Advertising/Public Relations students have also had internships at major and secondary media

markets, including positions at Red Knot Communications, Victory Public Relations and W2 Communications.

*Film/Production:* Film/Production students have numerous opportunities to work in the film industry such as spending a semester in the college's Hollywood program. In addition, students have completed internships at outlets such as Warner Bros. Discovery, MAKE/FILMS, Amasia Entertainment and Eclectic Pictures.

*Journalism:* Journalism students work or intern at locations including the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, C-Net, WTAJ, WIVB, WBOC, etc. In addition, they gain practical skills through their courses and participation in student media outlets.

*Media Studies:* The Media Studies major has a variety of options, and students have many different experiences depending on their individual direction. One student reported having an internship with a local homecare business, ACS Home Care, which brought her on to establish a social media presence and redesign portions of its website. Others describe supplementing their coursework through participation in extracurricular activities.

*Strategic Communications:* World Campus students have the opportunity to complete internships should they choose, though it is rare. More than one student in the major indicated that completing an internship didn't fit in with the demands on their schedule.

*Telecommunications:* Telecommunications students are required to finish their major with a capstone course that is squarely based in enriching their practical skills and job readiness. Recent students have interned or worked for Penn State Athletics, the Lancaster Stormers baseball team and the National Association for Media Literacy Education.

## **SUMMARY:**

The college offers five majors in residence and two online that offer students a degree grounded in a strong, well-balanced liberal arts and sciences education. The curriculum is robust and courses rigorous, giving students the theoretical foundation and hands-on experience they need to be job-ready upon graduation. Curriculum is constantly under review, allowing flexibility to experiment with new technologies and adapt to rapidly changing conditions. The college's agility has made it a leader on campus in the area of AI.

## **Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**(a) The unit has a written assessment plan that has been implemented, is up to date and addresses contemporary curricular issues, including instruction related to the rapidly changing digital media world. The unit posts its assessment plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.**

The college has a written Student Learning Assessment (SLA) Plan that was last updated in spring 2024. The plan has been reviewed and approved by the university's Office of Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research (OPAIR). The assessment system is overseen by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, with day-to-day coordination by the Undergraduate Education Coordinator.

The college demonstrates transparency in posting assessment and accreditation information on its website. From the Bellisario College homepage, users can click "About," where "ACEJMC Accreditation" is prominently displayed in the college overview section. This links to a dedicated accreditation page providing access to the full self-study PDF and individual webpages for each standard. Each standard page includes links to supporting documentation such as detailed plans, measures, matrices, rubrics, timelines, surveys and annual SLA reports. The documentation is accessible within two clicks.

The college appointed a new Director of Curriculum and Assessment in 2025, about one month before the site visit. The director previously served as the Advertising/Public Relations department assessment coordinator for two and a half years, the longest-standing coordinator among the four departments. Her promotion from within demonstrates the college's recognition of proven expertise in assessment coordination. The new role ensures dedicated conversations about closing the loop, learning objective development and measurement, course mapping to competencies, and assessment integration into new course creation. The director works collaboratively with the Undergraduate Education Coordinator.

The 2018 site team report noted parts of the assessment system were “unnecessarily complicated.” The college responded with several structural changes. The assessment team created uniform Student Learning Assessment (SLA) reports for use across all departments, directly addressing the 2018 recommendation for standardized reporting templates. The standardization is visible in departmental response reports from 2019-2024, which now follow consistent formats for data presentation and action plan documentation. The college also condensed its course mapping matrix from more than 120 courses to 80 distinct courses to streamline the assessment process. Faculty interviews confirmed the standardized templates have simplified the reporting process by providing clear structures for addressing assessment findings and documenting closing-the-loop actions.

The college simplified its assessment rotation from evaluating all 10 ACEJMC competencies annually to a 4-3-3 rotation cycle. Under the current system, Year 1 assesses four competencies, Year 2 assesses three competencies, and Year 3 assesses three competencies. The three-year

cycle repeats, ensuring each competency is assessed twice per six-year accreditation cycle. This rotation reduces annual assessment burden while maintaining comprehensive coverage of all competencies.

The college moved all assessment materials online, improving organization and tracking. An online platform for professional reviewers now allows participation from national and international evaluators rather than limiting reviews to local professionals. This expands access to alumni from various disciplines across the country, with reviewers matched to specific competencies based on their industry expertise.

The college created assessment coordinator positions in each of the departments since the 2018 visit. While Advertising/Public Relations had a coordinator before other programs, the other departments added coordinators more recently. The current visit represents the second full year with the coordinator structure across all five departments. These faculty-held positions coordinate assessment within specific programs, work with faculty to identify courses and assignments, collect student work samples, and serve as liaisons between departments and the college assessment team. The distributed leadership structure improves faculty buy-in and sustainability while ensuring alignment with program-specific goals.

The college addresses contemporary curricular issues through multiple channels. College-wide Think-Ins bring faculty together for strategic sessions on single topics, with recent sessions addressing AI and academic integrity alongside assessment and closing the loop. Teaching Tuesdays IRL (In Real Life), monthly voluntary workshops facilitated by university and external experts, cover topics including creating effective learning objectives, course mapping to competencies, making Canvas more accessible to different learners, and supporting students with disabilities. These sessions draw approximately 30 participants per session plus Zoom attendees, with three to four sessions per semester.

**(b) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the "Professional Values and Competencies" of the Council. (See Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction.)**

The college's goals for student learning are drawn directly from the 10 ACEJMC professional values and competencies. These goals are stated in the Student Learning Assessment Plan. The college has developed an assessment matrix mapping these 10 competencies to specific courses across all five departments; this matrix includes over 80 distinct courses.

A review of 45 syllabi representing courses across this matrix reveals documentation variations between the matrix mapping and the learning objectives explicitly stated in course syllabi. While the assessment matrix provides a comprehensive framework for competency coverage, syllabi documentation does not consistently reflect this mapping in formal learning objectives statements.

Courses mapped to conceptual competencies, particularly freedom of expression (9 courses reviewed), communication history (4 courses), and ethics (1 course), may not always include

explicit learning objectives for those competencies in their syllabi. Assessment leaders acknowledged during interviews that updating all syllabi remains an ongoing process. While a large percentage of faculty have updated syllabi to include clear learning objectives, the college continues providing training and guidance to bring each course syllabus into alignment. The college has held volunteer training and information sessions led by university assessment teams and discussed syllabi requirements during faculty-wide and departmental meetings where assessment coordinators lead discussions. Assessment coordinators have been assigned the responsibility for reviewing syllabi to ensure alignment with learning objectives and appropriate connection to the course matrix.

The college is in its second semester of using Simple Syllabus, a digital tool integrated into the learning management system. Assessment coordinators noted that faculty may have mistakenly placed items in wrong template locations during the transition to the new system. The coordinators remain responsible for checking syllabi to meet standards going forward. Once fully adopted, the software will allow for more efficient standardization while faculty maintain control over course-specific content.

The unit acknowledges that some competency connections reflect intentional curricular design rather than oversight. Faculty report that topics like First Amendment principles receive coverage across disciplines but may be given varying emphasis depending on program focus. In Film and Media Studies, for example, connections between conceptual ACEJMC competencies and course objectives may be loose by disciplinary design, as faculty address relevant concepts without necessarily formalizing them in measurable learning objectives. Film production faculty reframed the "First Amendment" competency to focus on "freedom of expression" recognizing that traditional First Amendment framing does not apply to fictional narrative filmmaking. The freedom of expression framework proves more relevant to artistic expression, censorship, rating systems and creative control within the film production discipline.

Programs have developed systematic approaches to integrating ethics and law competencies throughout their curricula. The Advertising/Public Relations program integrates ethics and law through modules distributed across required courses, systematically dividing Arthur W. Page Center Public Relations Training modules across multiple classes. The department created a new course, COMM 375 Ethics and Strategic Decision Making, which has been piloted for several years and is currently in the approval process to become a required course for Advertising and PR majors. Film production integrates ethics and law modules into required capstone courses through case studies. Documentary capstone courses (COMM 337, COMM 437, COMM 437A) and narrative capstone courses (COMM 438, COMM 448) include ethics and legal modules. COMM 443 Advanced Producing discusses legal frameworks. Production courses systematically cover securing permits, working with unions, understanding contracts, setting up LLCs, distribution deals and location permissions. The film program created case studies specifically to align with ethics competency assessment.

Skills-based competencies (writing, critical thinking, digital/technical tools) generally show stronger syllabus alignment, with explicit learning objectives matching mapped competencies. Cultural proficiency shows mixed results, with some courses demonstrating strong alignment while others rely on classroom discussion to address diversity concepts.

Syllabi formatting varies across the curriculum, with some programs embedding goals within course descriptions rather than distinct learning objectives sections. Faculty described how they communicate competency building through course materials, assignments and classroom discussion beyond formal syllabi statements.

Students interviewed during the site visit demonstrated awareness of ACEJMC competency development across their coursework, particularly regarding skills-based competencies. Professional evaluators receive training online, which explains what to assess and emphasizes providing detailed comments. Evaluators are matched to specific competencies based on their industry expertise. They can ask administration or faculty questions for clarification during the review process.

**(c) The unit has a written assessment plan that uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess student learning.**

The college employs two primary direct measures and multiple indirect measures.

**Direct Measures:**

The first direct measure is professional team evaluation of student work. This involves faculty-led teams with professionals (including alumni listed in the 2023-24 SLA report) who evaluate student work samples drawn from courses across the curriculum. Each department secures three to four professional reviewers annually. These professionals review four to five student samples per competency for the three to four competencies assessed that year under the 4-3-3 rotation cycle. The assessment process utilizes standardized rubrics to evaluate student work against the competencies. Professional evaluators complete online training that explains what to assess and emphasizes providing detailed comments. Reviewers are given three to four weeks to complete their evaluations. The Assessment Advisory Committee and professionals sign off on agreement with overall sentiments before finalizing reports. The online platform enables recruitment of evaluators from across the country rather than limiting participation to local professionals, expanding access to alumni working in various disciplines and geographic regions.

The second direct measure is the Survey of Internship Supervisors. The internship supervisor survey instrument, which asks supervisors to rate students on a 5-point scale across the 10 competencies, is included in the assessment plan appendices. Approximately 284 internship supervisors provided evaluations in 2023-24. The 82.1% response rate represents supervisors from media organizations across multiple sectors. Average scores (2017-2024) are consistently high (4.26-4.96).

The assessment and curriculum team is actively evaluating whether additional direct measures are needed. The team emphasizes practicality and purpose in this evaluation, with assessment leaders noting they do not want to create new measures simply for the sake of having additional measures. The team is waiting to review the current site team report recommendations before proceeding with any changes. Options evaluated include portfolio assessment, which presents challenges because Media Studies students do not graduate with portfolios and would create an inequitable assessment structure across programs. The team also considered pre-post testing but

determined this approach does not align with the college's educational philosophy and presents multiple implementation issues.

**Indirect Measures:**

Multiple indirect measures are used, with key data publicly available on the "College Facts" webpage.

Retention rates consistently outperform university rates (95% first-year retention for 2023 cohort). Graduation rates consistently outperform university rates (84.3% four-year rate for 2020 cohort). Student performance in national competitions provides another indicator, with numerous recent awards including Hearst, Tellys, CMA Pinnacles and Emmys.

The college has developed a systematic culture of bringing alumni back to mentor students working on prestigious competitions. Journalism and Advertising/Public Relations created this alumni mentorship approach, with former Hearst, PRSAA and AAF winners providing specific guidance on strengthening submissions. This creates a sustainable pipeline where competition winners become mentors for current students, who then win competitions and become future mentors. Alumni who serve as competition mentors often also serve as professional assessment evaluators, providing multiple touchpoints for professional engagement in student learning.

The college administers an annual graduation survey each spring to measure student perception of learning across all 10 ACEJMC competencies. Survey completion is required for graduation (students must complete it to receive their name card for commencement), ensuring comprehensive participation. Students rate their improvement on a four-point scale from "Did not improve" to "Greatly improved."

Results from 2020-2025 demonstrate consistent performance across all competencies, with college-wide averages ranging from 3.08 to 3.58. Most competencies score above 3.2, indicating students perceive strong learning gains. The survey provides detailed breakdowns by department, revealing program-specific strengths. For example, journalism students consistently rate freedom of expression learning highest (3.28-3.43 range), while advertising/public relations students show strongest gains in writing and ethical principles (3.57-3.65 range).

The data collection method eliminates non-response bias through mandatory completion, though the requirement could potentially inflate scores. However, the detailed departmental variations and multi-year consistency suggest students provide differentiated feedback rather than uniformly positive responses. The college tracks trends over time, with most competencies showing stable or improving trajectories across the five-year review period.

These metrics inform assessment and curriculum decisions through the annual SLA cycle. Retention and graduation data provide context for program effectiveness, while competition success validates curricular rigor. The combination of direct and indirect measures allows the college to triangulate findings and identify areas for improvement across multiple data sources.

**(d) At least one direct and/or indirect measure should include journalism and mass communication professionals engaged in assessment data collection.**

Journalism and mass communication professionals are engaged through direct measures.

### **Direct Measure - Professional Team Evaluation**

Working professionals, including alumni, annually evaluate student work samples. The 2023-24 reviewer list includes professionals from organizations across media sectors. Assessment teams consist almost entirely of alumni or college board members, maintaining connections between current professional practice and academic assessment. The college occasionally invites unaffiliated professionals when specific expertise is needed, though this occurs rarely.

Each department secures three to four professional reviewers annually, with the Director of Alumni Relations, helping identify appropriate alumni for assessment cycles. These reviewers evaluate four to five student samples per competency for the three to four competencies assessed that year. Professional evaluators leverage the college's alumni network, which includes graduates working across media sectors and geographic regions.

### **Direct Measure - Internship Supervisor Evaluations**

The 82.1% response rate represents supervisors from media organizations across multiple sectors, including traditional news outlets, digital agencies, corporate communications and entertainment industry organizations. The Assistant Dean for Internships and Career Placement runs these surveys and shares feedback from HR professionals with faculty, playing an integral role in closing the loop by connecting employer perspectives with curricular decisions.

### **Indirect Measures with Professional Involvement**

Alumni board members participate in annual assessment reviews and provide industry perspective on curriculum relevance. Alumni who serve as competition mentors often also serve as professional assessment evaluators, creating multiple engagement points. The systematic alumni mentorship culture for national competitions brings working professionals back to campus regularly, maintaining ongoing connections between current industry practice and student learning.

**(e) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction. There is substantial, concrete evidence of "closing the loop." Multiple examples of "closing the loop" are evident.**

The college demonstrates substantial, concrete evidence of "closing the loop" through a formal system of checks and balances.

#### **Assessment Process Structure:**

The Coordinator for Undergraduate Education leads an eight-step annual assessment process:

**Step 1 - Planning:** The coordinator creates an annual schedule identifying which competencies will be assessed under the 4-3-3 rotation. The schedule is shared with department chairs and assessment coordinators.

**Step 2 - Course/Assignment Identification:** Assessment coordinators work with programs to identify specific courses and assignments aligned with the competencies being assessed that year.

**Step 3 - Student Work Collection:** Assessment coordinators collect student work samples and submit them to the Coordinator for Undergraduate Education.

**Step 4 - Professional Review:** The coordinator sends materials to relevant professionals matched to specific competencies. Professionals receive standardized rubrics, training, time for review and the opportunity to ask faculty questions for clarification.

**Step 5 - Collaborative Feedback Discussion:** Professionals and assessment coordinators meet to discuss findings and develop recommendations.

**Step 6 - Administrative Review:** The feedback report is provided simultaneously to the dean and department chairs.

**Step 7 - Departmental Action Plans:** Department chairs must submit formal written responses addressing all feedback with specific action plans after discussing the report with their department faculty.

**Step 8 - Final Reporting:** The complete assessment report with departmental responses is compiled and submitted to the dean.

The Assessment Advisory Committee tracks recommendations from professional reviewers across three-year periods, showing how issues are addressed over time. Department chairs must sign off on planned responses, and the following year chairs report on implemented actions to close the loop. The reporting flow ensures accountability, with original assessment reports going to the dean, department chairs and the Assessment Advisory Committee. Chairs must provide actionable items from their departments in response to all direct and indirect measure findings.

**Data Collection and Reporting:**

Data is collected throughout the year. An annual SLA report summarizing findings is distributed to the dean and department heads in the spring. Department heads consult with faculty and submit written responses detailing planned improvements. Key aggregate data are publicly reported annually. Annual SLA reports (2018-19 through 2023-24) are linked online.

All of these activities ensure that the college “closes the loop.” Here are some examples:

**Concrete Examples of Closing the Loop:**

The college provided evidence across multiple years (2019-2024) and departments of using assessment findings to inform specific curriculum changes, course revisions, pedagogical adjustments and program requirements. Plans are clearly articulated in response to findings, and subsequent reports often reference implementation of prior plans. This demonstrates a consistent culture of using assessment for improvement.

**Curriculum Structure:** Adding/developing required courses (COMM 375 Ethics & Strategy, COMM 205 Gender & Diversity, capstone COMM 428F, COMM 182 Language of Video,

COMM 297 Audience Development, Math for Media); revising course sequences (Film Writing); creating minors (DMTA, Social Justice).

**Course Content Revision:** Strengthening specific content areas (qualitative research in COMM 420; digital media in COMM 422; strategy across Ad/PR; ethics in COMM 420, 304, 100N, 486W; diversity/history in COMM 205; global free speech in COMM 428C; source credibility in COMM 428C; free speech/privacy in COMM 484; multicultural history review for COMM 280/483/489W; film history integration in COMM 333/upper-level film).

**Targeted Program Improvements:** Film production coordinators identify how to close the loop based on assessment data. The program created more targeted measures and case studies, developing ethics case studies specifically for production students after assessment revealed the need for clearer ethics scenarios relevant to film production contexts. The Advertising/Public Relations department started examining how concepts cascade through the curriculum, focusing on the student journey through coursework. The ADPR department reviews data internally to address findings, with the Assistant Dean for Career Services running surveys and internship evaluations and sharing feedback from HR professionals with faculty to inform curriculum decisions.

**Diversity-Specific Actions:** Assessment feedback specifically concerning cultural proficiency led to actions like planning/implementing COMM 205 as a requirement across majors; revising research methods (COMM 420) to better address diverse audiences; exploring DEI advocacy assignments (PR); developing a Page Center module on communication law addressing diversity implications (PR); adding a DEI module to COMM 180 (Telecom); revamping COMM 304 (Media Studies) to include ethical considerations related to populations in research; planning faculty sessions on diversity (Journalism). Reviewers noted concerns in some cycles about surface-level engagement needing to be addressed.

**Pedagogy/Assignments:** Implementing new assignment types or techniques (multi-platform writing in COMM 260W/271; professional formats like executive summaries/slide decks in Strategic Communication; FOIA training/badging in Journalism; Page Center modules in PR; standardized COMM 205 content; refining assignment instructions for clarity in Media Studies; adding budget/schedule examples in Film; incorporating peer feedback/critique in PR/Film/Strategic Communication; integrating Writing Center use in Film).

**Skills Emphasis:** Enhancing instruction on specific skills (writing mechanics/AP Style in COMM 160/260W/467; presentation skills in Ad/PR; generating insights in PR; broadcast writing style/context in Journalism; visual theory in Telecom; numeracy/data visualization across programs).

**Technology Integration:** Adding new courses for specific technology (iPhone Journalism, Social Media Journalism); ensuring coverage of industry tools (Excel, Simmons, Muck Rack, Google Analytics, Salesforce); restructuring COMM 269 photo sequence; discussing ethical AI use.

**Faculty/Resources:** Hiring faculty with specific expertise informed by assessment (Journalism); reminding/notifying instructors of specific emphases needed (credible sources, writing quality).

## **College-Wide Improvement Initiatives Driven by Assessment:**

**Teaching Tuesdays IRL:** Monthly voluntary workshops bring a cross-section of faculty together (graduate students to full professors) for expert-facilitated sessions from within the university and external sources. Topics include creating effective learning objectives, course mapping to competencies, making Canvas more accessible to different learners, and supporting students with disabilities. Approximately 30 participants attend in person per session, with additional Zoom attendees. Three to four sessions occur per semester. Faculty sign up, read newsletters and write blog entries about their learning. These workshops indirectly help increase graduation and retention rates by improving teaching effectiveness.

**Think-Ins:** College-wide strategic sessions started by the former dean focus on single topics for brainstorming across departments. These work sessions are designed to lead to tangible action items. Recent topics included assessment and closing the loop (examining what closing the loop looks like within programs and across the college), AI and academic integrity, and student belonging. One concrete outcome: Faculty expressed wanting easier ways to have coffee with students; the dean responded by strategically placing coffee machines throughout the building.

**Welcoming Initiatives:** Programs like Pizza with Professors and Donut Office Hours create a "big school resources with small school feel" environment, contributing to the college's strong retention rates.

### **Institutional Recognition:**

The college's assessment expertise has gained university-wide recognition. In 2025, Penn State named six faculty members as "Assessment Champions" across the entire university, with two recipients from the Bellisario College: the Undergraduate Education Coordinator and newly appointed Director of Curriculum and Assessment. This recognition acknowledges the college's assessment leadership and validates the quality of its systematic approach to measuring student learning.

### **SUMMARY:**

The college meets all five indicators for Standard 3. Penn State has systematically addressed the 2018 site team's concerns about assessment system complexity through several concrete improvements. The unit implemented a simplified three-year assessment rotation schedule, created standardized reporting templates across all five departments and established assessment coordinator positions in each department. Faculty interviews confirmed the standardized templates have simplified the reporting process by providing frameworks for addressing assessment findings and documenting closing-the-loop actions.

### **Overall evaluation, compliance/noncompliance:**

#### **COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II — Standard 4: Advancing a Culturally Proficient Workforce**

**(a) The unit has a written plan, implemented and discussed annually, that promotes a standards-based and inclusive curriculum and fosters a culturally proficient faculty, staff, and student population. The program embraces differences and offers a supportive climate for learning, working, and collaborating, and it assesses progress toward the achievement of the plan. The plan includes the unit’s definition of equal opportunity and standards-based success. It identifies current populations and groups with limited representation in the field of journalism and media communication and focuses on identifying opportunities to broaden intellectual and ideological diversity, ensuring all individuals are treated with fairness and dignity.**

The college's diversity plan is embedded in its strategic plan. This plan is publicly accessible and was updated and reaffirmed in 2024. It includes the goal that graduates “can demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society” and to “consistently attract, retain and graduate a student population that reflects diversity in the Commonwealth.”

The college's statement on diversity, equity and inclusive excellence, which was adopted in 2022, serves as the unit's definition of its values. Progress is actively assessed by the Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, which includes faculty, staff and students and is co-chaired by the dean and the Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion. This structure demonstrates a clear review, discussion and implementation process that shapes curricula, policy and practice.

The formal goals and plans reflect an underlying shared value of inclusion. As one faculty member commented: “The college is very participatory about all the details – there is a lot of diligence and dedication throughout, we are so serious about helping out our minority communities. We are diverse but collegial.”

**(b) The unit’s curriculum develops skilled and culturally proficient communicators capable of collaborating through multicultural teams and understanding global perspectives. Curriculum instruction addresses a wide range of issues and viewpoints relevant to media communications in an interconnected world.**

The curriculum is intentionally structured to foster cultural proficiency and global perspectives. Instruction on constructive engagement with diverse perspectives is not limited to a single course. This includes coverage in popular general education courses, major required courses and electives. A significant curriculum change resulting from the college's diversity goals is that COMM 205 (Gender, Diversity and the Media) is required of all students in the college starting in Fall 2025.

The college also provides high-impact global and domestic learning opportunities focused on developing culturally proficient communicators through embedded-travel and other specialized courses related to all majors. The International Reporting course takes students to global destinations, including Turkey, Estonia and Kazakhstan. Similarly, the “Inside-Out” class, taught

by a founder of the Prison Journalism Project, provides direct, collaborative experience with marginalized populations.

Students reported that instances of working with diverse audiences and colleagues “come up naturally all the time” in many different courses and contexts. “Diversity is not a side project for this school,” a student told the site team. “Our projects train us to be ready for the real world,” the student said, going on to cite the work done to learn the appropriate vocabulary with which to cover the athletes in the 2024 Paris Paralympics, which the college’s students for the Associated Press as part of an embedded-travel class.

**(c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to strengthen all faculty members’ awareness of the value of social and societal dynamics, plus fairness and accessibility in preparing students to embrace a variety of perspectives. The unit takes proactive steps to recruit and retain faculty and staff who bring professional expertise and varied perspectives, including from groups with limited representation in the fields of journalism and media communication, to enrich the educational experience.**

The college demonstrates clear, proactive and innovative efforts to solicit applications from, recruit and support faculty and staff with a range of professional expertise and perspectives. Overall retention and awareness of these issues among the faculty is supported by regular workshops and awards celebrating inclusion efforts. Search committee chairs and members participate in a session each year focused on raising awareness of equitable recruiting and hiring practices to ensure the inclusion of all qualified candidates. Recruitment efforts are robust including broad-based and targeted advertising and personal outreach to a wide variety of candidates. These efforts have yielded measurable results, with the number of individuals from underrepresented groups in the hiring pool (28 for 5 positions to 74 for 11 positions) and among the hired faculty (0 for 5 positions to 3 for 11 positions) increasing from 2022-23 to 2024-25.

They have established programs to bring faculty and professionals with a range of backgrounds and identities into the college as visiting experts. These include a faculty exchange with the School of Global Journalism and Communication at Morgan State University, the Donald P. Bellisario Professional-in-Residence program and an extensive array of visiting speakers and panelists.

**(d) In alignment with the institution’s mission, the unit demonstrates efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate students from all backgrounds, reflecting the institution's commitment to preparing individuals for professional success in a global society.**

The college’s student recruitment and retention efforts are data-driven and demonstrably effective. The Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion participates in all college recruitment efforts, including both general recruiting events, such as Spend a Summer Day and Spend a Fall Day, ongoing campus visit programs, and events such as “¡Vámonos a Penn State!”, focused on recruitment of individuals from underrepresented groups. These efforts are also backed by significant financial support. The college has awarded \$854,649 in college scholarship funds to students from underrepresented groups, a significant increase from \$461,355 in 2017-18.

Support and retention of all students is supported by a strong advising infrastructure and specific programs, including Peer Mentors and dedicated student organizations, including Bellasario Alliance of Multicultural Students (BAMS) and the National Association of Black Journalists-Penn State chapter. Multiple students, faculty and administrative leaders indicated that the Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion's personal interactions, extensive connections across campus and involvement in college decision making are instrumental in making the college a welcoming, supportive environment for all students.

The college also financially sponsored, organized and provided leadership for numerous events and student organizations, including Women of Color in Hollywood, the Centre Film Festival, and the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Initiative, each of which contribute to celebration of and constructive engagement among students, faculty and community members from different backgrounds.

Their approach has resulted in a student body within Bellasario that represents the population of the state that they serve as well or better than other units in the university, with retention rates for all student populations in Bellasario consistently exceeding campuswide percentages.

**(e) The unit demonstrates it has an inclusive climate of belonging, free of harassment and all forms of discrimination, consistent with applicable laws. The unit accommodates the needs of individuals with disabilities and values the unique contributions of each member of the community, including contributions from historically underrepresented groups, promoting fairness and respect for all.**

The college fosters an inclusive climate through highly visible support systems, programmatic efforts, and regular climate assessment. The Office of Diversity & Inclusion, prominently located near the main advising and dean's offices, provides a welcoming environment for all students, faculty and staff. The Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, who describes his work in terms of "creating a welcoming community and inclusive culture for everyone in the college," is widely known and respected.

An inclusive climate is actively supported through cultural heritage recognition events. The unit provides financial sponsorship and leadership for the Penn State Powwow and State College Pride, demonstrating a public commitment to valuing diverse contributions. This commitment is reflected in formal assessments. The college is in ADA-compliant facilities and actively works closely with university disability support offices to ensure physical and academic accessibility.

The most recent campus climate survey conducted university-wide shows higher levels of satisfaction among Bellasario faculty, staff and students as compared to other colleges in the university. This is reflected in the comments from faculty and students, who consistently report a positive, welcoming and resilient climate at Bellasario. As one faculty member (from Canada) remarked, "in some ways the college feels very Canadian: There is a place for everyone... students come from so many areas of life, and we are meeting them where they are."

**SUMMARY:**

Bellisario College demonstrates a comprehensive commitment to fostering equal opportunity, respecting a range of points of view and providing participatory opportunity for all while educating culturally proficient communicators. This commitment is supported by substantial investments of time, attention and resources throughout the college. The effectiveness of these efforts are supported by quantifiable data in student and faculty recruitment, retention and climate assessments.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:****COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 5: Faculty

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**(a) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for curricula, oversight of courses, research/creative activity and service.**

The site team found ample documentation that full-time faculty have primary responsibility for curricula, oversight of courses, research/creative activity and service.

“We have a lot of control of how we do course realignment,” a faculty member said. This was confirmed repeatedly in faculty and administration interviews.

The percentage of core and required courses across the college taught by full-time faculty exceeds the required 50% minimum. The decrease observed in the most recent year reflects the strategic use of adjunct faculty to support growth in online programs.

#### **Core courses taught by full-time faculty**

2024-25 school year:	62%
2023-24 school year:	66%
2022-23 school year:	66%

Collegiality is strong among faculty members. There were many mentions of sharing of information, cross-departmental course development and consistent discussion of ways to improve student learning and outcomes.

**(b) The unit’s faculty (full- and part-time) are highly qualified and keep their expertise current through professional development opportunities and maintain relationships with professional and scholarly associations.**

There is an appropriate balance of professional and scholarly experience in the college’s faculty. As of fall 2025, the departments had approximately 80 full-time faculty. Of these, 30 held tenure (16 full professors and 14 associate professors).

#### Full-time Faculty Degrees:

Doctorate/MFA	63%
Master’s	27%
Bachelor’s	10%

These professors have an average of 12 years of professional industry experience and average 15 years of teaching experience. Among the full-time faculty, 84% have worked in industry.

Sixty-seven part-time faculty provide students with both professional and teaching experience. These adjuncts have an average of 17 years of professional industry experience and average 10 years of teaching experience; 97% of part-time faculty have worked in industry.

Part-time Faculty Degrees:

Doctorate/MFA	19%
Master's	30%
Bachelor's	51%

The faculty (full- and part-time) are highly qualified and keep their expertise current through professional development opportunities and maintain relationships with professional and scholarly associations. A review of CVs for both full- and part-time faculty members confirmed a highly-qualified group with professional and scholarly connections such as membership, attendance, participation, and leadership in many organizations, including International Communications Association (ICA), National Communication Association (NCA), Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA), National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), Broadcast Education Association (BEA), National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, American Advertising Federation (AAF), and Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

As noted above, the college also incorporates professionals in residence into its programs which allows for up-to-date professional sharing of information, challenges and opportunities within each industry.

Bellisario provides funding for travel to conferences to allow faculty to keep their expertise current and grow professionally via access to professional and scholarly associations, with more financial support often available on request. The college also provides funds to enable faculty to attend national conferences and present their research. “The college supports my yearly attendance at creative technology conferences and training. I never worry about not knowing the latest from Adobe because we go to Adobe Max every year,” said a long-time faculty member.

For the 2024-25 academic year, base travel support was set at \$2,500 per full-time faculty member, administered by the heads of the college’s five departments. Department heads also have discretionary travel funds to award on a case-by-case basis. Faculty consistently said they had never been turned down when seeking support, and new faculty reported generous start-up packages.

Students express satisfaction with the faculty members’ knowledge of current industry practices and connections with industry partners, noting that they are being taught up-to-date skills, tools and strategies relevant to their intended professions.

**(c) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity. Expectations for promotion and tenure are clear.**

The intent behind the tenure and promotion process is to recognize faculty who demonstrate overall excellence. This requires that the balance of the criteria for promotion and tenure in the

three areas of Teaching Ability and Effectiveness; Research, Creative Accomplishments, and Scholarship; and Service to the University, the Public, and the Profession, be consistent with the overall mission of the academic unit. The college endorses this principle and views the promotion and tenure process as an important opportunity to acknowledge excellence and move the college forward to higher levels of quality.

The college expects faculty to exhibit excellence in ongoing research, creative accomplishments and scholarship. Candidates for tenure and promotion must provide clear and consistent evidence of a sustained record of high-quality work that has received external validation and is recognized as impactful by leaders within their specific field.

Tenured and tenure-track faculty are charged with maintaining productivity in teaching, research or creative activities, and service. The requirements to meet such expectations are clearly outlined in the college's promotion and tenure guidelines. However, some post-tenure faculty and newly retitled teaching faculty report that they would like additional communication and clearer guidance regarding expectations for advancement. There appears to be some uncertainty among some teaching faculty who would like more explicit communication and coaching about the promotion process and the steps involved in preparing and applying for advancement.

The college provides robust institutional support for faculty development, including access to resources such as Penn State Faculty Affairs and Faculty FUEL, which assist faculty in advancing their research, creative and professional goals. The Learning Resource Network (LRN) covers topics including compliance, core business skills, project management, business acumen, faculty development, technology, professional growth, and many more.

"I didn't realize a profession could be this supportive until I got here," said a faculty member. "And from a research perspective, I've never felt more seen." Bellisario provides funding to support faculty research conferences, and presentations. As detailed above, funding is provided for faculty to travel for research.

**(d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.**

Faculty are highly active in disseminating their research, creative work and professional expertise across scholarly and professional organizations within each discipline they serve – including top-tier, peer-reviewed journals, books, digital outlets, and juried film festivals. They also share their expertise at scholarly and professional association meetings -- including ICA, NCA, and AEJMC. During the review period, faculty produced 18 scholarly books, four textbooks, 304 refereed conference papers, 423 refereed journal articles and 107 juried creative works, representing a portion of the 1,575 products of scholarship. Faculty members have been recognized by major associations, conferences and publications for their high impact on the communications fields. Faculty understand and appreciate the emphasis placed by the college in this area. One faculty member said, "Research is very important to Penn State. I know my works make an impact and are appreciated by the college and my colleagues."

**(e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship, the quality of education and the scholarly contributions the unit provides.**

Faculty members are highly valued for their contributions across the university in the areas of leadership, innovation and willingness to participate in various campus initiatives. “The college’s faculty is incredibly collaborative,” a leader of another university department said. “Whether it’s launching a new degree or another idea, the relationship is symbiotic.” Their contributions to cross-disciplinary student learning and research initiatives are appreciated. Faculty are recognized as emerging leaders in advancing the university’s AI initiatives and have been selected to lead forward-thinking programs in the provost’s office. The administration expresses strong confidence in the faculty’s talent and capacity to help shape the university of the future at Penn State. “Bellisario has a lot of top-notch people,” the provost said. “They will be a key part of our future, as we navigate AI and everything to come.”

**SUMMARY:**

The site team found strong evidence that the Bellisario College demonstrates excellence in faculty leadership, expertise and collaboration. Full-time faculty maintain primary responsibility for curriculum development, oversight, research and service, with approximately two-thirds of core courses taught by full-time faculty members. Collegiality and collaboration are hallmarks of the college. This is reflected in the development of cross-departmental courses and continuous discussion about improving student outcomes. Both full- and part-time faculty are highly qualified with both groups bringing extensive professional and academic experience. They remain current through professional development, active participation in national organizations and regular conference attendance, all supported by generous institutional funding. The college clearly defines and supports expectations for research, creative and professional activity via defined promotion and tenure processes for both teaching faculty and tenure/tenure-track faculty. Faculty actively disseminate their scholarship through numerous publications, presentations, and creative works achieving broad recognition within their fields. Across the university, Bellisario faculty are respected for their leadership, innovation, dedication and partnership in interdisciplinary initiatives.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

Scholarship, research, creative and professional activities for the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2025. Faculty is all full-time faculty members. Achievements were counted if they occurred in the course of their full-time employment in the college.

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	By Unit* (see row 1 below)	By Individuals				
		Full Professor 16	Associate Professor 14	Assistant Professor 7	Other Faculty * 43	Totals 80
Awards and Honors	201	40	92	21	48	201
Grants Received Internal	19	1	11	4	3	19
Grants Received External	53	11	20	15	7	53
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	18	9	2	4	3	18
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	4	2	1	0	1	4
Books Edited	11	6	5	0	0	11
Book Chapters	94	57	27	7	2	93
Monograph / Reports	1	1	0	0	0	1
Articles in Refereed Journals	423	252	91	50	13	406
Refereed Conference Papers	304	149	94	46	15	304
Invited Academic Papers / Lectures	12	2	10	0	0	12
Encyclopedia Entries	7	3	2	1	1	7
Book Reviews	11	10	0	0	1	11
Articles Non-refereed Publications	33	16	1	10	6	33
Juried Creative Works	107	0	99	3	5	107
Non-juried Creative Works	133	9	98	24	2	133
Interviews	117	77	28	8	4	117
Journal Editing	4	1	2	1	0	4
Panels Invited	41	26	6	3	6	41

\*Co-authored work should be counted as a single publication in the unit totals; however, if, for example, two members of the faculty are co-authors on the same journal article, it would be reported as a publication for both authors. \*\*Includes all full-time faculty who do not hold listed Faculty/Staff Ranks, such as instructors and others on term appointments. Many faculty fall into this category.

## PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**(a) The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.**

The Bellisario College maintains an Office of Academic Services and an Office of Internships and Career Services, both currently led by an acting associate dean for academic affairs, to support students through their educational and budding professional journeys. Formal adviser support includes identification of and assistance with academic, personal and/or financial issues. The college's assistant dean for diversity and inclusion also is available to meet with students through open office hours throughout the week, and students raved about his availability and assistance, stating "he has tissues in his office," and it is a "safe space for them to articulate concerns, fears or problems." Faculty and advisers also send students to him.

Selected upper-class Peer Mentors have been incorporated into the freshman/new student seminar course and they hold regular office hours as well. Television screens throughout Bellisario regularly promote the program, as well as upcoming events, lectures and featured Bellisario alumni.

Student scholarship support increased to \$1.9 million last academic year, providing more than 660 students with a median award of \$2,500—up nearly \$500 from the year before. The success of the college's collective efforts is demonstrated by its high retention and graduation rates, which consistently outpace those of the university at large.

**(b) Professional advisers, and faculty where appropriate, provide students with academic and career advice.**

Seven full-time advisers for on-ground majors comprise the college's Office of Academic Services. They first meet with students during New Student Orientation and continue regular communications and progress meetings throughout students' time in the college. They value transparency with the students, sharing their documented notes of advising meetings with them in follow-up correspondence to ensure accuracy. Four additional advisers work for the university's World Campus and are assigned to Bellisario majors.

On-ground advisers average 32 contact hours with students per week and formally review students' academic progress twice each semester. Students may meet with advisers via scheduled appointments in person or via Zoom and on an ad hoc basis, with advisers available for drop-in meetings four to six hours each Tuesday. Advisers also communicate regularly to students via individual emails or through weekly and specific student cohort listservs. Both on-ground and online students report their advisers are helpful, available and responsive, although some students expressed additional drop-in hours would be helpful. Advising surveys for the on-ground majors show strong satisfaction with adviser interactions and communications, and students echoed as much in student meetings. Additionally, the advising team proactively seeks

out peer observations once a year from advisers in other PSU units to provide additional insights into possible best practices. This fall, the team had the highest incoming freshman advising rankings at the university.

Faculty are available through required office hours or by appointment to mentor students and discuss professional goals and options. The college's three-person staff in the Office of Internships and Career Services meets one-on-one with students, provides professional development workshops and hosts internship/career fairs both on campus and in major regional employment centers, such as Washington, D.C., and New York City. The staff prepares students for the experience through pre-travel meetings and information about the recruiters involved, including whether they are Penn State alumni. The college provides bus transportation to and from these career events for a nominal fee.

Students praise the assistant dean for internship and career placement and his staff, noting they serve as "matchmakers" to connect students with alumni who work in their areas of interest. Faculty report that the office helps ensure solid student resumes and cover letters, limiting the amount of faculty time required to hone them. One said, "The centralized advising and career services at Bellisario makes a huge difference."

As mentioned in Standard 2, the careers office maintains an internship database that includes more than 4,700 internship locations and descriptions, and students appreciate it and the communication, workshops and internship assistance offered by the college. In addition, college seniors and recent alumni receive targeted emails about job leads; all students have access to the university's Nittany Lions Careers website. In the three most recent one-year post-graduation surveys, fewer than 2% of Bellisario alumni reported they were still seeking employment. College alumni and advisory board members also offer mentorship and career advice through guest lectures and visits to campus and provide professional opportunities for Bellisario majors.

**(c) The unit keeps students informed about its policies, activities and requirements.**

Students are kept informed about college activities and requirements through multiple means. Advisers develop a relationship with students beginning in New Student Orientation, where students learn how to electronically access their student records, course registration tools, university and college academic requirements and strategies for academic success. In addition to adviser outreach, the college communicates at least weekly to students through email listservs and also posts information on social media outlets. Students, including those in online majors, confirmed receipt of these messages. The college's many television screens also highlight upcoming events. Even the back of restroom stall doors had fliers that promoted multiple upcoming lectures, events and career-related activities.

**(d) The unit and institution provide extra-curricular activities and opportunities relevant to the curriculum and that help develop the students' professional and intellectual abilities and interests.**

Penn State and the Bellisario College offer a plethora of media- and communications-related extracurricular activities and student organizations applicable to each of the college's on-ground majors. Student groups are plentiful and diverse, with traditional media outlets and wholly online ones available for students to gain experience. Focus areas include those specific to news, women, first-generation students, multicultural topics, sports, politics, film, the university, food and lifestyles.

Professional organizations available to students include National Association of Black Journalists, Public Relations Student Society of America, American Advertising Federation, Society of Professional Journalists, Association of Hispanic Journalists, and Association for Women in Sports Media, among others. Students who wish to start organizations may do so by completing paperwork with the university, which provides financial support. One such example is the ADPR Club, which a student said serves primarily as a networking group for majors to meet alumni and learn about the varied professions available in these fields.

Experiential opportunities include CommAgency, a student-run, faculty-advised production firm that provides video and branded content to campus clients, and the student-run Happy Valley Comm agency, which offers advertising, public relations, social media, event planning and other communication-related services. Independent student media organizations include The Collegian newspaper, which has a dedicated space adjacent to the college's Media Center and shares financial and editorial resources with other student media, including the student-run, web-based CommRadio and Penn State Network Television (PSN-TV), the university's student-run television network that includes the programs 360 Sports, At the Desk, CLTR CNTRL, GameShow101, Nittany Talk, Penn State Sports Night and Penn State Network News. Students also have opportunities through the NPR station WPSU-FM, which is a department of Penn State Outreach, and the independent student radio station, WKPS-FM.

Students who are interested in sports coverage and production may work for the student-run "After the Whistle" broadcast or might pursue one of the dozens of internships available through Penn State Athletics. Valley Magazine, a student-run, faculty advised extracurricular publication of nearly 100 pages is produced twice a year with funding from the university. Students also play a large role in putting on the multi-day Centre Film Festival, which showcases films by both students and filmmakers from around the world. The films are enjoyed by and spark discussion among campus members and those of the larger geographic community. An online major indicated she was a member of the World Campus Student Government Association.

As detailed in Standard 8, the college holds four endowed lecture/seminar series that are offered throughout the academic year, and these are open to Bellisario students and the Penn State community at large. Alumni and other professionals regularly interact with students and guest lecture in classes and at student organization meetings.

**(e) The unit uses retention and graduation data to improve student services, such as advising, and to reduce barriers to student success.**

The Bellisario College's acting associate dean for academic affairs ensures retention and graduation data are shared and posted annually to the college website. These numbers are consistently strong and higher than the overall university's.

**SUMMARY:**

The college's professional advising, peer mentorship program, career services and assistant dean for diversity and inclusion are providing significant support for students throughout their time in Bellisario. Students and faculty laud and appreciate these efforts. Students praise the supportive, "family" feel and are grateful for the hands-on opportunities they receive outside of the classroom. External units on campus avail themselves of student talent through students' extracurricular work and praise their professionalism and drive.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**(a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.**

Two recent developments inform the annual budget. First is the opening of the \$48 million, 35,000-square-foot Bellisario Media Center in fall 2021, followed by a revised university-wide budget model. The new model shifts to a data-driven budgeting model from an incremental approach where funding was based on previous allocations. The incremental model did not take into account enrollment fluctuations in majors and courses, and the unit reports the new model is more responsive to its growth and mission.

As the centerpiece of the college, Bellisario Media Center has become the creative and technological beating heart of the college by also consolidating co-curricular media production, including student organizations, previously housed off campus. The center has lived up to its promise as a dynamic hub in the heart of campus that includes college labs, studios, gathering spaces and offices. “I haven’t died and gone to heaven, so I don’t have anything to compare it to,” said one faculty member with more than two decades of teaching experience at PSU of the Media Center. “Everything is top-notch.”

Outside basic salary increases, the unit saw its first budget increase in more than two decades in 2024-2025. The data-driven budget model, based on headcount and credit-hour production by the academic units, positions the unit well for resource allocation, and budget increases are already scheduled for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027. Under this model, the college has received the largest operating budget increase of any unit at University Park, such that it had to be apportioned across four to five years to efficiently manage growth. The 2024-2025 budget increase of 9.9% and planned 5.3% increase for 2025-2026 places the unit on solid financial footing.

The unit’s enrollment growth is well-suited to the data-driven budget model, which levels resource allocation based on how units serve students. The 2024-2025 annual budget of \$25 million illustrates steady growth in the past three years, with the most significant expenditures related to personnel, including salaries and fringe.

**(b) Resources provided by the institution are adequate to achieve the unit’s mission and are fair in relation to those provided to other units.**

Of the 12 academic colleges at University Park, the college ranks sixth in enrollment and eleventh in both full-time faculty and FY 26 budget allocation.. The unit notes the newly instituted budget model levels the playing field and provides welcomed financial resources to support its students, placing it in an enviable position.

**(c) The unit’s facilities and information resources enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.**

The college is now part of a 55,000-square-foot complex centered in the Carnegie Building and, across the street, the Bellisario Media Center in the renovated Willard Building (Five non-student-facing finance staff are located elsewhere due to office space limitations).

The historic Carnegie Building, which serves as the college administrative center, is near the university’s main libraries. Renovations to historic buildings and the addition of the Bellisario Media Center provide ample resources to accommodate the unit’s student services and largely address the “dispersed space” concerns observed by the 2018-2019 site team. Ongoing unit growth has led to its request for additional office space in the Willard Building.

The college offers a wide array of facilities and information resources to meet current demands. Among its offerings are numerous collaborative spaces, an equipment checkout room, media organization spaces, integrated studios with HD and 4K-ready technology, and spaces for film screenings and production.

All college spaces are ADA compliant and students have access to the Adobe Creative Cloud and Microsoft 365 through university agreements.

**(d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment, or access to equipment, and technical assistance needed to support student learning, curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty**

Since the last accreditation, the Bellisario Media Center launch in the Willard Building has transformed the college by elevating its presence and integrating offerings into a central location. Among the features of the Media Center:

- Screening and Multi-Purpose Rooms
- Various labs, including Innovation, Production, Digital Editing, The News, Newsroom, Broadcast News and Multimedia
- CommAgency, CommRadio and Finishing Suites
- Media Effects Research Lab Suite
- Production, Blackbox, Flex, Broadcast News and Strategic Communications Studios
- Voice Over Booths
- Open Newsroom

The college also operates an equipment room with a check-out system in the Bellisario Media Center to provide equipment for students in production classes. “Alumni say the equipment at Bellisario is better than what they’re using at their jobs,” said one student. The unit regularly invests in technological advancement, including recent additions of a 10-camera remote production fly pack for field production of livestream events.

College technology services work in concert with university services. The Penn State Media Commons provides labs, facilities and basic equipment available to the university community. The unit employs 14 staff members to oversee its facilities, technology and IT services. The unit has a dedicated communications librarian who receives support from a second librarian from another college.

As the unit pushes up against its space limits, it also faces some uncertainty with software needs. Since 2018, the university has provided all students with access to Adobe Creative Cloud software. There is some concern within the unit that university initiatives to trim the number of licenses campuswide for cost-cutting could reallocate software costs to units. While this concern has not come to fruition, the college is wary of the financial implications. The college has taken an active stance to maintain centralized funding for licenses and has a contingency plan in place if licenses are decentralized and funnel down to individual units across campus.

**SUMMARY:**

The Bellisario Media Center has helped cull disparate unit resources into a robust space in tandem with renovations to historic buildings. The result is a more centralized college that brings together classrooms, collaborative spaces, administrative offices and student groups and organizations into a shared physical space. These facility upgrades and the concomitant resources available to faculty, staff and students are national models. How the unit manages its growth and space limitations, in addition to software costs, will require strategic planning and fiscal stewardship, and there is every indication the unit is poised to manage such challenges.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**(a) The unit consults and communicates regularly with its alumni, and actively engages with them, other professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching current and to promote the exchange of ideas.**

The Bellisario College has about 29,000 living alumni. Nearly 60% reside in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, and roughly 10% live in 68 countries outside the United States. The college relies heavily on four boards for engagement with its alumni:

- **Advancement Council.** According to the self-study, its mission is to “exceed annual and long-term fundraising goals through personal support and by working to engage alumni philanthropically.”
- **Advertising/Public Relations Alumni Network Board**, which “focuses on the networking of alumni and professionals in the fields of advertising, public relations, community and media relations, and marketing.”
- **Alumni Society Board**, which interacts with faculty, students and the unit’s leaders to review programs, support fundraising efforts, help obtain internships and post-graduation employment, as well as ensuring “the ongoing recognition of outstanding achievements by faculty, alumni and friends of the College.”
- **Young Alumni Council**, composed of younger college graduates (typically 30 years of age or younger). The council manages programs like networking events for more recent Bellisario graduates and “career preparation webinars” for third- and fourth-year students.

These groups have a combined membership of roughly 50 alumni and affiliated industry professionals. Notably, members of the Alumni Society Board and the Advertising/Public Relations Alumni Network Board help with the unit’s Student Learning Assessment (SLA). According to the self-study report, this “intensive process includes board members’ regular review of student work, followed by face-to-face meetings with department chairs and other faculty representatives in the College to review their findings.”

The site team solicited comments from all members of the four alumni groups, and more than a dozen provided responses that broadly supported assertions in the self-study report. Specifically, all confirmed that the alumni boards meet at least once (and in some cases, twice) on campus each academic year. In addition, many said their boards hold monthly Zoom or conference calls. And several confirmed participating in reviewing student work as part of the Student Learning Assessment.

Numerous respondents praised the unit’s leadership for seeking alumni engagement and input.

In an email, one said the dean of the college during the accreditation cycle, who had recently left to become a university president, was a “superstar” with “unmatched energy” who “always solicited our opinions on how we, as Board members, can best utilize our skills developed

through years of work experience to better serve the College (through) visits to campus to meet with students and other alums, classroom speaking and mentoring.”

Another said that in 2024 his alumni group created a task force quickly (at the dean’s request) to address how AI is being used in advertising and public relations “so that the school can be certain their instructions on AI were aligned to skill expectations in the real world.”

Yet another, a member of the Alumni Society Board, said its Assessment and Faculty Engagement Committee “engages periodically with department heads on how the board can support them throughout the year through classroom visits” and “helping instructors incorporate real world examples and experiences into their learning materials and assignments.”

While comments from alumni board members were overwhelmingly positive, a few suggested areas for improvement. A member of the Alumni Society Board said that “with the exception of a small population of volunteer leaders, I feel that a lot of students and alumni are not aware that the board exists” beyond occasional student networking events and an annual college awards ceremony.

A member of another group said alumni should be more engaged in finding ways to attract and support Bellisario students “who do not come from wealthy or connected families.”

Yet another said, “there is an entire network of former board members who are not activated or engaged once they roll off the board.”

The Alumni Society Board, consisting of about two dozen members, includes committees focused on awards, development, student mentoring, outreach, membership and marketing the college. Alumni Society Board members said committees meet remotely, typically each quarter. Each academic year, the Board hosts a mentoring program for students that includes panels and resume review workshops. The self-study report said attendance is “typically between 100 and 150.”

The college’s alumni boards also periodically host “outreach programs” in cities with large concentrations of Bellisario graduates like New York City, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

In addition, Bellisario confers more than a half dozen awards recognizing alumni for professional achievement or significant contributions to the college.

Numerous students told the site team that Bellisario alumni regularly speak to their classes, either on campus or remotely, and that alumni frequently help them with career guidance.

The college connects with alumni through a series of at least eight LinkedIn groups, with many targeted to specific alumni audiences like advertising and public relations; sports, media and entertainment; broadcasting; film production and “Entrepreneurship & Innovation.” Combined, they have more than 12,620 followers. To a much lesser degree, the college communicates with its alumni through other social media platforms like Facebook (7,000+ followers), Instagram

(6,400+ followers), X (6,800+ followers) as well as fewer numbers of followers on TikTok and Vimeo. All told, it maintains at least 20 sites on seven platforms.

In addition, the college produces *The Communicator*, an annual magazine-style report that is direct-mailed to alumni and the home addresses of current Bellisario students - roughly 30,000 total. It is also available online. The latest edition is a graphically appealing 72-page publication chock-full of stories featuring current and past students, as well as alumni job changes and professional achievements.

**(b) The unit provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice through such activities as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance, and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.**

The Bellisario College has three endowed lectures devoted to professional ethics in specific fields – public relations, advertising and journalism. A fourth endowed lecture is more general, featuring speakers on a variety of communications topics. Together, the lectures have brought to campus an impressive range of experts in academia and industry. All lectures have been open to the public.

Among the multiple awards offered by the college, two examples are:

- The Bart Richards Award for Media Criticism recognizes exemplary work that evaluates news media coverage or commentary about important media developments. Each year since its creation in 1994, the award has honored the work of some of the nation’s best media critics and analysts (both individuals and media watchdog groups). Entries are judged by professional journalists and journalism educators.
- The Foster Award for Integrity in Public Communication is given annually through the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication, a research center at the Bellisario College. The center’s website says honorees are “leading communicators who exhibit integrity in all that they do (and are) recognized for building trust over long careers by ethically and responsibly communicating with the public.” Recipients since the previous site review have included noted public officials and corporate executives as well as leading journalists like former New York Times Executive Editor Dean Baquet, former Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson and broadcast journalists Judy Woodruff, Christiane Amanpour and Lester Holt.

**(c) The unit contributes to its communities through unit-based service projects and events, service learning of its students and civic engagement of its faculty.**

The previous site team report said, “The Bellisario College has multiple faculty members who serve at the highest ranks of leadership in academic associations.” That has remained true during the most recent accreditation cycle. Numerous faculty are members of the Association for

Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), with several holding leadership positions. Others edit or contribute to professional journals, serve on or chair academic committees or act as advisors to associations.

A review of professional and public service activities for faculty shows deep engagement with academic, industry and local civic organizations. Combined, approximately 80 faculty members listed in the self-study report documented current membership on more than 150 boards, committees or task forces. Some also have served as reviewers for research papers submitted to academic journals. A few have served on boards of national organizations, like the National Press Foundation.

**(d) The unit supports scholastic journalism.**

The Bellisario College supports scholastic journalism through several programs.

Each summer, it hosts between 60-80 high school students who attend one of four “media camps” taught by Bellisario instructors. Students live on campus and the five-day programs are taught simultaneously in the Bellisario Media Center. Students may choose between camps offering training in broadcast journalism, visual storytelling, film production or social media and content creation.

The college has partnered with the Pennsylvania School Press Association (PSPA), one of the nation’s oldest scholastic journalism organizations, to offer a one-day “Adviser Workshop” on campus to give high school journalism advisers training in how to lead journalism, yearbook, broadcast and digital media programs.

The college also hosts PSPA’s annual statewide high school journalism competition for students who have advanced from regional contests after submitting entries in 16 categories covering everything from newspaper and yearbook writing and photography, to podcasts and editorial cartooning. Bellisario instructors serve as judges and hold training sessions during the event.

**SUMMARY:**

The Bellisario College’s engagement with its alumni is robust and expansive, ranging from boards that meet regularly to frequent communication through social media and an impressive magazine-style annual report direct-mailed to more than 30,000 graduates and current students. The unit’s faculty and its leaders are active in an array of academic, industry and local civic organizations. The college also supports scholastic journalism by hosting “media camps” and statewide high school journalism competitions.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

## **PART III: Summary by site visit team of the undergraduate program**

### **1) Summarize the strengths and areas for improvement.**

#### **Strengths**

Long history of strong, innovative, empathetic leadership

Current, cutting-edge curriculum complemented by extensive, hands-on extracurricular opportunities

Five distinct yet thriving in-person majors and two relevant online-only majors

State-of-the-art consolidated facilities with top-of-the-line labs, technology and ample equipment

Teaching-centered faculty paired with research-rich yet student-centered faculty with a remarkably collegial relationship

The college was referred to as “the safest place on campus” to be a student or faculty because of its culture of collegiality and psychological safety

Motivated, passionate students who are gaining clarity about what they want to accomplish in “the real world,” and the skills to make it happen

Strong student support services including robust advising and internship/career guidance

Engaged alumni contribute directly to academic quality and student success by providing career mentorship, helping students secure internships and jobs and offering feedback to keep the curriculum current

#### **Areas for improvement**

A need to plan for faculty office space to accommodate the growth that the university mandate for multidisciplinary collaboration will require

Continued focus on gaining leadership in AI instruction and scholarship

### **2) List the standards with which the unit is not in compliance.**

N/A

### **3) In the case of a recommendation for accreditation or reaccreditation, with standard(s) not in compliance, list the deficiencies that need to be addressed.**

N/A

**4) In the case of a recommendation for provisional accreditation, list the deficient standard(s) that should be addressed before the provisional status can be removed.**

N/A

**5) In the case of a recommendation for denial of accreditation, clearly and fully explain the reasons that led to that recommendation.**

N/A

**6) If the unit was previously accredited, summarize noncompliances and significant deficiencies noted in the previous report and subsequent actions.**

The previous site team noted four areas for improvement in the 2018 report:

**“Dispersed space needs that will be met in the near future.”**

The college addressed this weakness with a single mic drop when it opened the Bellisario Media Center, a state-of-the-art facility in the heart of campus and just steps from the Carnegie building – its administrative home. The new center provides both that consolidated space called for by the previous site team and offers new student experiences from engagement with up-to-date media tools and facilities for innovation and learning across a broad range of current media skills.

**“No core requirement that supersedes all majors.”**

A one-credit, first-year seminar is now required for all Bellisario College students, along with a First-Year Lecture event in the fall. The college has also created modules for use across course sections and, beginning in fall 2025, now requires a common course related to diversity in the media industries for all students.

**“No assurance that every student will graduate with a comprehensive knowledge of media law and ethics.”**

While the college insists that its assessment process ensures that students in all majors are prepared regarding law and ethics, and that those subjects are covered in modules in required courses across the majors, the college now requires an ethics course for all majors except for Ad/PR, which has an ethics course offered as an elective that is now being reviewed by the Faculty Senate as a requirement, and Film Production, which continues to deliver via modules in other courses.

**“An unnecessarily complicated direct assessment system.”**

This description of a weakness is a direct quote from the previous report, but from a close reading of the standard in that report, it appears to be a typo; it should instead have called out a “complicated **indirect** assessment system.” This line from that report supports that: “It outlines two direct and **multiple indirect** assessment measurement tools.” Therefore, in the review period, the college streamlined its **indirect** measures after finding there were a couple that weren’t contributing to the overall assessment goals. For example, student focus groups weren’t adding any information that wasn’t already found via surveys and were eliminated as an indirect measure. The unit believes its current lineup of direct and indirect measures is effective, but in

order to be flexible and continue evolving, the director of curriculum and assessment is doing a review of measures used by peer institutions to identify a potential additional direct measure.

**7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting process, and often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the accrediting visit. Summarize the team members' judgment of the self-study.**

The self-study was clean, concise, well organized and easy to read. It provided relevant information with links to documentation and little redundancy. It was a pleasure to read.