

December 16, 2015

Chancellor Robert Witt
The University of Alabama System
401 Queen City Avenue
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401

Dear Chancellor Witt:

I am pleased to endorse the recommendations from Interim Provost Kevin Whitaker and Dean Mark Nelson of the College of Communication & Information Sciences to merge the Department of Journalism and the Department of Telecommunication and Film to create the Department of Journalism & Creative Media. This merger will best serve the education mission of the units and the college in responding to larger disciplinary and professional trends. This merger will also enhance recruiting and prestige by providing clearer branding. I strongly support this merger. If you concur, I would appreciate your forwarding this request to the members of the Board of Trustees for their consideration.

Sincerely,



Stuart R. Bell
President

Enclosure

c: Interim Provost Kevin Whitaker
Dean Mark Nelson



December 16, 2015

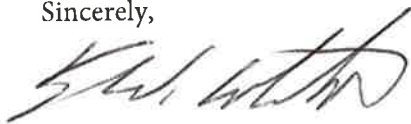
President Stuart R. Bell
The University of Alabama
203 Rose Administration Building
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0100

Dear President Bell:

I join Dean Mark Nelson in recommending the administrative merger between the Department of Journalism and the Department of Telecommunication & Film in the College of Communication & Information Sciences at The University of Alabama to create the Department of Journalism & Creative Media. Dean Nelson believes, and I concur, that coming together under a new name will best serve the education mission of the units and the college in responding to larger disciplinary and professional trends. The merger will also provide clearer branding to enhance recruiting and prestige.

If you approve this merger, I would appreciate your forwarding this request to the Chancellor at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Kevin Whitaker
Interim Provost

Enclosure

c: Dean Mark Nelson

The University of Alabama

Resolution

Approving an administrative merger between the Department of Journalism and the Department of Telecommunication & Film in the College of Communication & Information Sciences at UA

WHEREAS, the College of Communication & Information Sciences began a strategic planning process during the summer of 2014 after Dean Mark Nelson took office; and

WHEREAS, during that process the faculty of the Department of Journalism and the Department of Telecommunication & Film determined that coming together under a new name would best serve the educational mission of the units and the college in responding to larger disciplinary and professional trends; and

WHEREAS, the identified reasons to implement the merger included:

- Core learning outcomes of degree programs in both departments demonstrate considerable overlap
- Technical literacy and journalistic writing experience are necessary for graduates of both departments
- Professional newsrooms and industry necessitate skills originating from both departments
- Discipline-specific accreditation requires closer collaboration between electronic and print news
- ~50% of Telecommunication & Film undergraduate majors are in the electronic news sequence
- Students commonly express confusion in selecting a major department when interested in news
- Students entering the professional media landscape need to be platform agnostic to be successful
- The existing departments share significant research strengths in various genres, particularly sports
- Telecommunication is an outmoded term that hinders placement of graduates
- Scheduling and curricular efficiencies in similar coursework need to be realized; and

WHEREAS, the expected positive outcomes of the merger include:

- Clearer branding to enhance recruiting and prestige

- Greater research collaboration using multiple methodologies
- Shared resource allocation, including significant technology equipment
- Improved capacity of graduates to successfully acquire jobs in the rapidly changing media landscape
- Enhanced ability to further leverage the Digital Media Center for experiential learning opportunities
- Maintenance of discipline-specific accreditation
- Realized efficiencies in course offerings and scheduling that maximize student credit hour production
- Increased capacity for cross-training and team-teaching
- Strengthened ability to develop cross-discipline media management and analytics courses; and

WHEREAS, this combination of units, initiated due to disciplinary connections, does not represent a typical merger situation driven by fiscal necessity; and

WHEREAS, no faculty, staff, or academic degrees will be eliminated as a function of this decision; and

WHEREAS, policies and procedures listed in Appendix N of the UA Faculty Handbook were followed, resulting in campus approval of the proposed merger; and

WHEREAS, the College of Communication & Information Sciences has selected the Department of Journalism & Creative Media as the name for the merged unit;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by The Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama that the Department of Journalism and the Department of Telecommunication & Film in the College of Communication & Information Sciences at The University of Alabama be administratively merged into the Department of Journalism & Creative Media.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be spread upon the permanent minutes of the Board and that copies be presented to Mark D. Nelson, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Communication & Information Sciences, and to other appropriate University officials.

The College of Communication & Information Sciences

proposes an administrative merger between

The Department of Journalism and The Department of Telecommunication & Film

to become

The Department of Journalism & Creative Media

Background

The College of Communication & Information Sciences began a strategic planning process during the summer of 2014 after Dean Mark Nelson took office. One of multiple primary outcomes identified from the strategic planning process throughout the 2014-2015 academic year was an administrative merger between The Department of Journalism and The Department of Telecommunication & Film. The faculty determined that coming together under a new name would best serve the educational mission of the units and the college in responding to larger disciplinary and professional trends.

This combination of units, initiated due to disciplinary connections, does not represent a typical merger situation driven by fiscal necessity. Particularly, no faculty, staff, or academic degrees will be eliminated as a function of this decision; however, the college followed the process outlined in Appendix N of the UA Faculty Handbook to ensure due diligence, resulting in campus approval of the proposed merger without any significant negative feedback.

At the beginning of the process, a group of faculty from both departments and representatives from industry was identified to facilitate the merger, tasked with developing a name that mutually represented the existing departments, reviewing peer institutions who recently underwent similar alterations, overseeing the logistical details of the merger, and exploring curricular connections that exist to reframe the existing degree programs to synthesize disciplinary connections.

Impetus for Change

The strategic planning process identified multiple reasons to implement the administrative merger, including:

- Core learning outcomes of degree programs in both departments demonstrate considerable overlap
- Technical literacy and journalistic writing experience are necessary for graduates of both departments
- Professional newsrooms and industry necessitate skills originating from both departments
- Discipline-specific accreditation requires closer collaboration between electronic and print news
- ~50% of Telecommunication & Film undergraduate majors are in the electronic news sequence
- Students commonly express confusion in selecting a major department when interested in news
- Students entering the professional media landscape need to be platform agnostic to be successful
- The existing departments share significant research strengths in various genres, particularly sports
- Telecommunication is an outmoded term that hinders placement of graduates
- Scheduling and curricular efficiencies in similar coursework need to be realized

Positive Outcomes

Implementation of the administrative merger between units will result in multiple positive effects, including:

- Clearer branding to enhance recruiting and prestige
- Greater research collaboration using multiple methodologies

- Shared resource allocation, including significant technology equipment
- Improved capacity of graduates to successfully acquire jobs in the rapidly changing media landscape
- Enhanced ability to further leverage the Digital Media Center for experiential learning opportunities
- Maintenance of discipline-specific accreditation
- Realized efficiencies in course offerings and scheduling that maximize student credit hour production
- Increased capacity for cross-training and team-teaching
- Strengthened ability to develop cross-discipline media management and analytics courses

Instructional/Degree Implications

Each department currently has one undergraduate and one graduate degree program. The proposal calls for the existing undergraduate degree programs to remain distinct in altered forms. Modifications to the degree program titles and curricula, which are currently under discussion by the faculty merger committee, will be submitted moving forward. These adjustments will keep a strong foundation in the existing courses and requirements while promoting ways to provide common foundational knowledge to students in both degree programs.

It is anticipated that the adjusted curricula will share entry level courses across the two degree programs. Additionally, all currently enrolled students at the point in time the curricula are altered would be able to complete their original requirements. Growth in faculty members will not be necessary solely as a result of the merger or curricular changes; however, the improvements in branding will likely result in increased enrollments over time, thereby necessitating additional resources.

There are no anticipated changes to the graduate degree programs as a function of the merger; however, there is a separate plan to consider expanding the existing MA in Journalism to distance learning students over the next academic year.

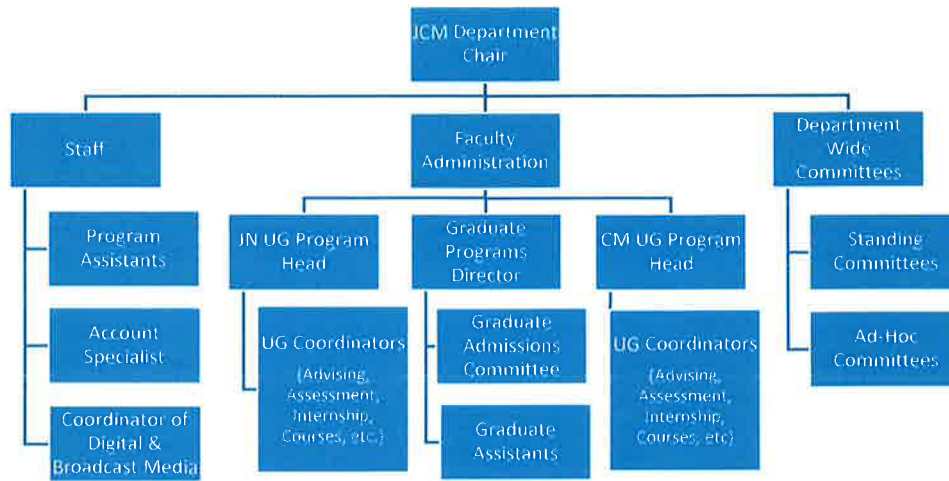
Timeline

The proposal requests that a single Department of Journalism & Creative Media be officially recognized as of the beginning of the fall 2016 semester. Discussions with various campus offices impacted by the change have begun to account for the impact and facilitate necessary resultant changes. The faculty merger committee will identify ways for the degree programs to share courses and elements of the existing curricula during the 2016-2017 academic year. The committee aims to present the full curriculum alterations and degree program title changes for campus, system, BOT, and ACHE review over the next academic year to be implemented effective fall 2017.

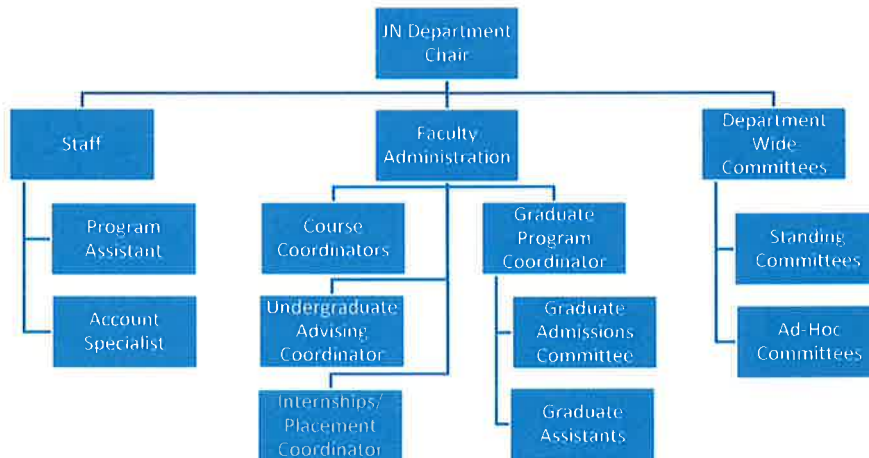
Organizational Changes

Due to departmental similarities and the lack of personnel reduction, organizational changes will be minimal. The unified department will have one department chair who will oversee four staff members, including two program assistants that will share the increased workload from a larger department. Both departments had positions specific to their unit that will now serve a larger contingent of faculty and students, particularly an Account Specialist, which Telecommunication & Film did not have, and a Coordinator of Digital & Broadcast Media, which Journalism did not have. Details of necessary changes in faculty administrative structures, including standing and ad-hoc committees, will be finalized by the faculty merger committee in consultation with the new department chair. Faculty structures have been similar across the departments historically, but it is anticipated that a faculty program head for each undergraduate degree program will be developed to oversee appointed coordinators. Current and tentative organizational structures can be found below.

Tentative Department of Journalism & Creative Media Organizational Chart



Current Department of Journalism Organizational Chart



Current Department of Telecommunication & Film Organizational Chart

