



## Addressing Diversity Across the Communication Curriculum: A Case Study

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### Abstract

Against the backdrop of the summer of 2020 and the nation's reawakening to racial injustice in U.S. society, many academic programs and universities examined their academic practices around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Past research on diversity in journalism and mass communication (JMC) education primarily focused on large programs or assessed the state of diversity between accredited and non-accredited programs. In contrast, this paper presents a case study on how faculty at a medium-size communication program address diversity across the curriculum, particularly in their courses that are not diversity-designated. Using qualitative survey responses and reflexive thematic analysis, this case study shares methods and ideas for incorporating diversity in skills and theoretical courses and in required, specialization, and elective courses. Methods of infusing diversity include addressing course content, specific assignments, working with diverse clients, including work by individuals with diverse backgrounds, and inviting guest speakers with diverse backgrounds.

### Introduction

Following the brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN and the nationwide protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, the country reawakened to racial injustice (Worland, 2020). In response, many colleges and universities took initiatives, such as organizing listening sessions to examine the climate on campus and pedagogical practices around diversity, equity, and inclusion (Forte, 2021; Muhammad & Horton, 2020). Institutions of higher education developed action plans and strategies to create more inclusive curricula for addressing the equity gap (Wood, 2021). Some academic programs explored ideas to address diversity across their curriculum.

This case study examines how a communication

program in a relatively small private institution in the mid-Atlantic region examined how human differences and inclusion in courses that are not specifically about diversity, such as media writing, video production, and the digital media capstone, among others, is being addressed. Two goals of this study are 1) to note methods of infusing diversity across the curriculum and 2) to share an approach to auditing and assessing the progress with diversity in a curriculum (i.e., diversity inclusivity).

The study investigates approaches that could be applicable to a range of journalism and mass communication (JMC) programs. As is common with studies about diversity across the curriculum, much of the previous research in JMC education has fo-

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cused significantly on specifically-designated diversity courses, rather than all courses or has compared the state of diversity education including teaching approaches between accredited and non-accredited programs (Biswas & Izard, 2009; Biswas, Izard & Roshan, 2017; Nelson Laird *et al.*, 2018; Ross & Patton, 2000; Ross *et al.*, 2007). Also, between 2009 and 2021, all recipients of the AEJMC's Equity and Diversity Award were large, accredited programs with more than 500 students and over 17 full-time faculty members (Biswas & Bland, 2022). This study focuses on a smaller, non-accredited program and includes all of the courses in the curriculum, not just those designated as diversity courses.

Like many other departments, the department included in this case study in 2020 created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee, which promptly crafted a diversity statement highlighting the program's commitment to fighting "anti-Black racism and other identity-based prejudices." A part of its statement reads:

We acknowledge structural racism in our institutions and society and are actively engaged in an on-going learning process about discriminatory practices in fields of mass communication and academia. We seek to make tangible change through governance, faculty hiring and development, student recruitment, student leadership development, student engagement, classroom learning, research and creative work, community services, and evaluation of our biases. We will continue to train ourselves and students to be culturally competent and sensitive as well as empathetic in order to work effectively in a multicultural and global society in which mass media plays a critical role.

A program's commitment to diversity is also manifested in its learning aims. Even before the articulation of its DEI statement, in this program, one of the five learning aims was geared toward diversity: "Understand and value individual differences and demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity for working effectively in a diverse and changing world by considering professional ethics and social justice within their professional field and the broader community."

Since the articulation of the DEI statement, the department's DEI committee members have developed a variety of goals and steps to take each academic year in pursuit of the "tangible change" stated in the diversity statement. A key aspect of the effort is to be

transparent and accountable, and to create a culture of continual improvement regarding teaching diversity across its curriculum.

Diversity in this study is broadly defined as human difference (Nelson Laird *et al.*, 2018). Within the context of a communication curriculum, it considers human differences in race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, class, culture, religion, and generation. Against this backdrop, this study used mixed methods—a qualitative online survey and a reflexive thematic analysis of documents and survey responses—to explore a medium-size program's efforts to address diversity through its curriculum and pedagogical approaches, particularly in non-diversity designated courses. This manuscript uses "courses without diversity designation" to refer to non-diversity designated courses.

### Literature Review

**Diversity in JMC Curriculum:** Several past studies have explored the offerings of diversity courses in JMC curricula in the United States. Those studies were largely focused on how diversity was addressed in courses with intentional diversity themes, such as 'gender and media,' 'race, class, gender and media' or 'diversity and media' (Ross & Patton, 2000; Ross *et al.*, 2007; Biswas & Izard, 2009). Two such studies identified that specific JMC courses on diversity significantly cover four major identities; gender, race/ethnicity, culture, and class (Biswas & Izard, 2009; Ross *et al.*, 2007).

Past research assessing diversity education in JMC programs also compared the curricula and pedagogical practices between accredited and non-accredited programs. JMC programs accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) must meet diversity standards and values, and associated competencies (Moody-Ramirez, 2021). In 1984, the ACEJMC adopted multiculturalism as an accreditation standard (Manning-Miller & Dunlap, 2002). Initially, the Council listed the standard of multiculturalism as Standard 12, but in 2003, the accrediting body revised its standards and prioritized a program's initiatives and practices around diversity and inclusiveness and, that year, Standard 12 became Standard 3 (Moody-Ramirez, 2021). A curriculum-related indicator of Standard 3 is: "The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of domestic concerns about gender, race,

ethnicity and sexual orientation. The unit's curriculum includes instruction in issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society" (ACEJMC, n.d.). The accrediting body's Standard 2, which is Curriculum and Instruction, also recognizes the importance of "preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society" (ACEJMC, n.d.). Therefore, over the years, ACEJMC-accredited programs offered more dedicated courses on diversity and integrated diversity content in skills, theoretical and required courses, such as Public Relations Research, Ad Copywriting, and Visual Communication, when compared to non-accredited programs (Biswas, Izzard & Roshan, 2017; Dickson, 1995; Ross *et al.*, 2007). Irrespective of accreditation status, few JMC programs include a designated diversity course as a requirement for their major. When the designated diversity classes are offered, such courses are largely electives and mainly offered at the undergraduate level (Biswas & Izzard, 2009; Biswas, Izzard & Roshan, 2017).

Since the ACEJMC's formulation of the diversity standard in the 1980s, the way JMC programs incorporate diversity in the curricula—in both accredited and non-accredited programs—has broadened (Biswas, Izzard & Roshan, 2017; Ross *et al.*, 2007). Programs offer separate courses on diversity while infusing diversity in other communication courses. About 83 percent of 64 JMC programs examined for one study, both accredited and non-accredited, offered one or more courses on diversity in their curricula (Biswas, Izzard & Roshan, 2017).

**Infusing Diversity Across the Curriculum:** As documented in the research over the last two decades, faculty in JMC programs were teaching diversity through both separate courses on diversity as well as in other required and elective communication courses (Biswas & Izzard, 2009; Dickson, 1995; Izzard, 2008; Martindale, 1993; Ross *et al.*, 2007). While both approaches have been used, according to a recent study, integrating diversity content throughout the curriculum, as opposed to through diversity-designated courses, was the preferred approach to teaching diversity in both accredited and non-accredited programs (Biswas, Izzard, & Roshan, 2017).

A study by Biswas and Izzard (2018) offered a number of specific ideas on how to infuse diversity across a curriculum based on the lessons learned from eight accredited and seven non-accredited JMC programs. Of them, only two programs had fewer than

14 full-time faculty. According to their findings, faculty can incorporate diversity into their courses in multiple ways. Diversity-oriented learning outcomes or aims can be included in syllabi. Some of the content and assessment methods of including diversity are: adopting the Maynard Institute's "Fault Lines" approach that emphasizes intersectionality through assignments in news reporting; a requirement for including diverse populations as sources to a news story or PR/Ad campaign research; exposing students to work by people of color and women; developing partnerships with organizations that serve non-dominant and marginalized groups; creating a service-learning project opportunity in an underserved community; and requiring each course in the curriculum to address diversity issues through at least one module and/or major assignment (Biswas & Izzard, 2018). After examining various approaches to infusing diversity across the curriculum, Biswas and Izzard drew an important conclusion: "Instructors do not need to reinvent the wheel here; infusion of diversity occurs mainly in the planning of course topics and designing of course activities" (p. 12). In another study, specific to journalism education on gender and inequality, Geertsema-Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez (2020) proposed that JMC programs infuse gender and inequality issues in their respective curriculum by "integrating them in classroom discussions, research, presentations, and hands-on activities" (p. 72).

The findings in those studies support the conclusion of studies that looked at diversity in higher education more broadly. For example, Nelson Laird (2011) introduced a model of diversity inclusivity for addressing diversity in non-diversity courses offered in any discipline. Such a model can also inform a program's course-level audit since Nelson Laird (2011) identified nine course elements – purpose/goals, content, foundations/perspectives, instructors, learners, pedagogy, assessment, adjustment, and classroom environment – through which diversity can be addressed (p. 574). Of these four course elements – purpose, perspectives, content, and instructors – can be used for "diverse grounding," whereas the other five course elements, such as classroom environment, multiple assessment techniques, and pedagogical approaches, can be used for "inclusive learning" (Nelson Laird *et al.*, 2018, p.9).

Based on a national survey in 2017 that was built on this diversity inclusivity model, Nelson Laird, Hurtado, and Yuhás (2018) found that a majority of

instructors were using both facets of diversity inclusivity—diverse grounding and inclusive learning—in their courses. Use of a diversity inclusivity approach is higher among those faculty who “experienced oppression due to gender identity, racial/ethnic identity, and sexual orientation” (Nelson Laird *et al.*, 2018, p.14).

Addressing diversity education in the JMC curriculum is a critical issue. Media professionals did not always do a good job in covering issues solely of race, gender or class, and they also often do poorly in covering issues at the intersection of identities (DeMos, 2011). Because journalists and professional communicators will always encounter social problems, such as racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of *isms* (Huerta, 2017; Saleem, 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017), it is important that JMC programs find more ways to talk about, and allow students to think about, diversity. Since multiculturalism is a key awareness for journalism and communication professions (Deuze, 2005), knowledge about diversity cannot be confined into one or two courses. The goal for JMC programs is to prepare future journalists or communicators to “communicate in a sensible and culturally appropriate manner for multicultural and multi-ethnic audiences” (Biswas & Izard, 2018, p. 2).

**A Medium-Size Program Context:** Past research on including diversity in JMC curricula mostly drew lessons from larger JMC programs. Faculty workload tends to be higher in smaller academic units and in teaching-oriented universities than in large programs in research universities. Faculty members in a smaller program frequently teach more courses, advise more students, and serve on more committees (Dennison, 2011; Griffith & Altinay, 2020). Heavier workload can hamper faculty members’ curriculum innovation, such as addressing diversity (Dennison, 2011; Hatcher *et al.*, 2017). However, past research has implied that integrating diversity content in multiple courses over offering a dedicated course on diversity is a preferred approach among academic units with smaller faculty size that serve a relatively larger number of majors (Biswas & Izard, 2018).

This study explores how a medium-sized communication department with fewer than 17 full-time faculty at a private university addresses diversity in its curriculum. According to the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (ASJMC, n.d.), a program is considered medium-size when it has 9 - 17 full-time faculty. The program that was ex-

amined had 16 full-time faculty during the time of this case study. With about 300 declared majors and 50 minors, this program also offers about 30 skills and non-skills (theoretical, seminar or conceptual) courses (when multiple sections of a course are not counted) a semester. As of spring 2022, this program offered four diversity-designated elective courses – Media Ethics, Stereotypes in U.S. Media, Advertising, Culture and Identity, and Media, Culture and Society. None of these courses was required for communication majors.

In such context, this case study examined:

**RQ:** How does a medium-size communication program address diversity in skills and non-skills courses that are not designated specifically as diversity courses?

### Methods

To address the research question, this case study uses a mixed methods approach that includes a qualitative online survey and reflexive thematic analysis of curriculum-related documents, such as syllabi and assignments. A case study like this typically uses multiple methods to examine an issue or a practice in depth through various sources, in this case a department’s curriculum and pedagogical practices around diversity (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Crowe *et al.*, 2011; Yin, 2017).

Case study research focuses on how, what, and why questions in depth (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). Given the broad scope of this study’s research question, open-ended qualitative survey responses and thematic analysis of information in curriculum documents can offer a deeper understanding of a pedagogical practice (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Toeriena & Wilkinson, 2004).

Since the online survey responses did not gather individual faculty member names and since the survey mainly deals with curriculum-related information, no approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was needed to conduct this survey among the faculty members. Researchers of this study were members of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee that developed and administered this course audit survey (i.e., qualitative survey) between November 2021 and February 2022 in their academic unit.

The course audit survey questionnaire consisted of four open-ended questions to gather responses from full-time faculty on how they addressed diversity in undergraduate courses without diversity designation from Fall 2020 through Spring 2022. Past research findings on diversity in JMC curriculum,

as well as the model of diversity inclusivity (Nelson Laird, 2011), informed the development of course audit survey questions (Appendix I). Question 1 focused on course content and assignments on diversity and how much of the course content (such as readings or design examples) was produced by persons of color and other non-dominant identities and directly addressed diversity-related issues. Since full-time faculty teach 3 to 4 courses a semester, they were asked to report how they incorporate diversity-related content in multiple non-diversity courses at the undergraduate level. Question 2 was about backgrounds of guest speakers invited to a non-diversity designated course. This intention of this question was to discover how many of these speakers were from non-dominant identities in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or religion (Appendix I). Question 3 was geared toward the faculty that taught senior capstone classes in which students routinely partner with organizations and companies in the community on a hands-on project. The goal was to identify whether or not they worked with clients managed by people from non-dominant backgrounds or clients that serve underserved communities (such as a minority-owned business, a non-profit supporting low-income immigrants, and so on). Question 4 was about the range of resources used in the class, such as the Diversity Style Guide (Appendix I).

The survey was created with Qualtrics, an online survey software and distributed among full-time communication faculty by email. Eleven out of 16 full-time faculty responded to this survey. In their responses, faculty shared information about how they incorporate diversity in 31 non-diversity communication courses. Of them, 22 were skills courses in which students primarily create content, such as Media Writing, Web I, Video I, Senior Capstone, and nine were non-skills-oriented courses, such as Introduction to Communication, Fundamentals of Ad and PR, Social Media and Culture. Seven of these courses were required for all majors and the rest of the courses were either electives or specialization-specific courses. Faculty participating in the survey had an option to upload their syllabi and assignments. Researchers received nine syllabi and nine assignments from the survey respondents.

This study also uses a reflexive thematic analysis method to identify and then categorize information in curriculum documents, as well as qualitative survey responses, by themes. In addition to 11 qualita-

tive survey responses, a reflexive thematic analysis was conducted over the following: nine syllabi; nine assignment documents; two meeting minutes related to the diversity survey from the program's DEI committee; and a proposal document that was presented to the department's faculty to explain the rationale of this course audit.

The reflexive thematic analysis method, initially developed in 2006, is flexible in terms of the integration of theory (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Themes in a dataset do not need to be derived from a theory. Therefore, this approach is ideal for the wide range of data considered for this case study. Since the purpose of reflexive thematic analysis is to identify patterns or themes in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2021), researchers developed coding categories, such as type of courses, after a close reading of interview responses, as well as the communication program's curriculum and DEI documents. Within each of these category courses, a sub-group of required and elective-specialization courses were also identified. Two past studies that explored the ways to include diversity in non-diversity JMC courses (Biswas & Izard, 2018; Geertsema-Sligh et al., 2020) also informed the theme development for approaches to addressing diversity shared through interview responses, curriculum and DEI committee's documents (i.e., syllabi, assignments, meeting minutes, and a proposal). The final themes concerning the methods of including diversity in courses were content (e.g., readings, lectures, and creative work), assignments (e.g., projects, papers, activities), class clients (e.g., clients who represent underserved groups in society or clients that primarily serve marginalized groups and communities of color), and guest speakers (e.g., women and persons of color). While coding, these themes were identified in a qualitative survey response or a document. Course content, such as readings and creative work created by persons of color and other non-dominant identities, was also considered in the content theme along with other resources on diversity.

### Findings

According to the thematic analysis of the qualitative survey responses, syllabi and course assignments, this study has identified that faculty members in this medium-sized communication program infused diversity in non-diversity designated courses primarily through two methods – assignments and content. Out of 31 courses, diversity was infused through assignments in

25 courses (81%). Similarly, diversity was included in the content of 14 courses (45%) either through readings, including readings authored by persons of color, or examples of work by minority professionals, lectures and class discussion. Two least-used approaches to including diversity were guest speakers and class clients. Instructors of four courses, mainly capstone and a service-learning courses, reported that their class clients serve and represent underserved groups, including communities of color. Three course instructors reported that 50 to 75 percent of their guest speakers were persons of color or women.

Since the course audit survey gathered information about addressing diversity from skills and non-skills-oriented courses, details of the findings – methods of infusing diversity – are organized by the nature of course.

### Infusion of Diversity in Skills Courses

Some of the required and elective or specialization-specific skills courses that incorporate diversity include multiple sections of *Media Writing*, *Multimedia Storytelling*, *Senior Capstone* classes in communication, *Broadcast Journalism*, *Comics Creation*, *Data Visualization*, *Graphics I*, *Public Speaking*, *Radio Storytelling*, *Travel Reporting*, *Mobile Media*, *Video I*, and *Web I*. These courses address diversity in multiple ways – assignments, clients, content (including content created by people with non-dominant identities, as well as content about people of non-dominant identities) and guest speakers.

**Assignments.** About 15 to 20 percent of course assignments in two sections of a *Media Writing* course address diversity. For example, an instructor assigned her *Media Writing* students to write stories for the campus newspaper on the issues related to diversity. Another instructor engaged students in a small group activity on identifying biases in news outlets and popular media.

The practice of incorporating diversity varies from faculty member to faculty member in the *Multimedia Storytelling* course. For example, one faculty member requires her students to cover a topic of inclusion or equity in a long-form interview project. A section of *Multimedia Storytelling* in this communication department is a service-learning class primarily geared toward underserved communities near the university. So, all major assignments in that course address diversity.

In the *Travel Reporting* class, 25 percent of the

final project deals with reflecting on diversity in a majority-minority city. Similarly, students worked on homelessness and mental health for their final project in the *Radio Storytelling* class. This issue addresses the intersection of economic class and mental health issues. In a *Broadcast Journalism* class, students are required to interview individuals with diverse identities for news assignments.

In *Graphics II*, students explore a diversity of voices and how messaging amplifies those voices. Some of the poster topics were: “No more stolen sisters” about the disappearance of Indigenous women; “Stop hair discrimination” about how Black women with natural hair face biases in workplaces when compared to white women, and “My body my choice” on women’s right to choose.

In *Web I*, about 15 percent of the course grade points were allocated for assessing the learning outcomes associated with web accessibility. Students analyze web accessibility on multiple websites. They are also expected to implement web accessibility standards in HTML while creating a website. Creating an accessible website for everyone irrespective of their ability status is an objective of this course. By creating an accessible website, students address a type of diversity (abilities), design inclusion (designing for everyone), and equity (giving everyone a chance to understand the content and engage with the website).

In *Data Visualization*, 25 percent of the total course grade points were allocated for social inequality-themed assignments. For example, students had to write a data story with multiple visualizations on a social inequality issue in the U.S. The primary textbook for the class, *How Charts Lie*, is written by a Hispanic American scholar Dr. Alberto Cairo.

Communication majors in this academic unit, depending on their specialization, are required to enroll in a senior capstone in one of these four areas – digital media, multimedia journalism, public relations, and advertising. Until spring 2021, the program used to offer two digital media capstones – one in *Web and Print Media* and another in *Video Production*. As per the survey responses, four capstone courses incorporated diversity through assignments for clients serving underserved communities of color or marginalized groups or on the issues of diversity.

About 13 percent of the course grade points in the *Digital Media* capstone class in spring 2022 were allocated for assessing the learning outcomes associated with addressing diversity in the client’s deliverables.

By creating accessible digital content, students address a type of diversity (abilities), design of inclusion (designing for everyone) and equity (giving everyone a chance to understand the content and engage with the website). Additionally, students are required to reflect the diversity of social groups/identities (e.g. race, gender, generation) a nonprofit client serves.

In fall 2021, the instructor in the Multimedia Journalism capstone course required all student groups to work on a solutions journalism topic pertaining to equity in a majority-minority city. One group of students chose to highlight two programs that assist young students with college access. These programs successfully helped thousands of low-income and first-generation students achieve their goals of pursuing higher education through direct guidance within urban public high schools.

**Clients.** Four capstone courses between 2020 to 2022 included diversity through partnering with clients working with underserved communities of color or marginalized groups, as well as minority-owned businesses. In one semester, about 80 percent of the clients in a Digital Media capstone class on web and graphics were either managed by a person of color or served underserved communities, primarily communities of color. For example, one client works on the re-entry of recently-released women from the prison into the workforce. This capstone class also partnered with a local food bank that serves lower-income families, as well as with a minority-owned business. Another group in this capstone class created video and graphic design deliverables for the university's gender identity awareness campaign. In spring 2021, the Video capstone class partnered with a community organization that offers entrepreneurial assistance to minority-owned businesses.

**Content.** Students learn about editing for accessibility and inclusion in a Media Writing class. Students explore various tools to make their texts more accessible and inclusive across a broad spectrum of audiences. In a Multimedia Storytelling class, an instructor addresses diversity through lectures and various assignments. Lectures cover how to tell stories of different populations, generations, and backgrounds.

In one semester, 50 percent of the Graphics I course content was focused on diverse identities. In one survey response, a course instructor wrote, "We study designers from the past through the present day and address how their personal, gender, racial, geographical, political, educational, and religious expe-

riences influence their style and messaging." In the Comics Creation course, 20 percent of the course content, including the work of artists of color, is diversity focused. For example, students were asked to create a comic response to the work of a diverse group of comic cartoonists, which included a native artist (Lee Franics IV) and an Asian artist (Thi Bui).

About 5 percent of course content addressed diversity in a Broadcast Journalism course since students are assigned to read articles about diversity in broadcast news and discuss the importance of diverse perspectives in a newsroom.

**Guest Speakers.** One of the goals of the course audit survey was to understand the diversity of the guest speakers, in terms of gender and race, that communication faculty invite to their classrooms, either in-person or virtually. Instructors of three skills courses reported that they invited guest speakers with diverse backgrounds or the identities that were underrepresented in certain communication professions.

In the fall of 2020, 75 percent of the guest speakers of a Multimedia Storytelling class were from non-dominant backgrounds. Guest speakers included a Korean American, a Dominican American, and an Egyptian American. In another section of a Multimedia Storytelling class, the instructor invited mostly the alumni as guest speakers. Of them, two speakers were Black and one was Asian. In spring 2021, the instructor of the Digital Media capstone invited a female web developer to share her journey in the male-dominated field of web development.

### **Infusion of Diversity in Non-Skills Oriented Courses**

Some of the required and elective or specialization-specific courses that incorporate diversity are Introduction to Communication, Fundamentals of Ad and PR, Entertainment, Media, and Politics, Social Media and Culture, Health Communication, Communication Research, PR Case Studies and History of Graphics. These courses address diversity primarily through assignments and content including readings.

**Assignments.** One of the four response papers in Introduction to Communication focuses on identity displayed on television and its impact on attitudes. For example, students are required to watch an original sitcom or melodrama and discuss the program in terms of which groups are represented and which groups are left out. Likewise, in the History of Graphics, students had to select a designer representing an

underrepresented group and create a persuasive presentation about why this designer should be included in future editions of a textbook. For the final project in *Fundamentals of Ad & PR*, students have an option to explore diverse identities in a communication campaign project.

The *Social Media & Culture* course addresses diversity primarily through various assignments and class discussions. For example, in a fandom or fan culture assignment, students are required to discuss how the demographic information they find plays into the impact of a fan culture. For example, if students notice that the fans seem to be mostly women and girls who are under 25, does that seem to have an impact on the dynamics of fandom? If the fans are mostly wealthy and white, does that have an impact? If the fans are mostly LGBTQ, does that have an impact? The challenge is to understand a crucial element that impacts a fan community.

A course entitled *PR Case Studies* covers international communication issues. In it, students engage in discussions about how communication styles differ around the world and how they can bridge common differences through “careful consideration of rhetoric and cultural communication styles.” In one assignment called the *Syrian Team Project*, a team engages in a role-playing exercise in which students break into small groups, form communication teams, and tackle a case study dealing with global public relations and advertising media issues.

**Content.** In the *Introduction to Communication*, 25 percent of the case studies deal with diversity related to gender, intersectionality, and visual representation of non-dominant identities. About 8 percent of the course readings focused on diversity. A textbook chapter is devoted to community journalism representing African Americans, immigrants, women and labor communities. This course also introduces *Critical Race Theory* and racial integration in the newsrooms in the 1960s. About 25 percent of significant historical and current professionals in communication industries highlighted in the textbook come from diverse backgrounds.

In *Fundamentals of Ad & PR*, the diversity element is most salient in classroom discussions about target audiences, campaigns for cause advocacy, and gender/race/ethnic representations in advertising. *Health Communication* covers a number of diversity topics throughout the course. Health disparities, health equity, vulnerable populations, health literacy,

intercultural communication and health justice are core concepts of this course.

Fifteen percent of course content in the *Entertainment, Media and Politics* class dwells on diversity, such as “politics, music, and identity,” “gender and comedy,” and “lack of diversity in late night comedy.” Ten percent of the course content in the *Social Media and Culture* course focuses on human differences, such as fan activism around equity and racial justice issues. The instructor of the *Social Media and Culture* course also intentionally includes articles by non-white authors in each of the seven modules.

### **Discussion**

From the findings it is evident that faculty in this program include diversity in various types of non-diversity designated communication courses – required, electives, and specialization – in multiple methods, such as content, assignments, class clients, and guest speakers. Of these four methods, instructors of this program dominantly rely on assignments and content to address diversity in non-diversity designated courses. Assignments are the most frequent method of incorporating diversity in this communication program, perhaps because the program offers a large number of skills-oriented and applied courses. In some cases, an activity or assignment will follow engagement with diversity-oriented content. For example, after learning how to make writing accessible, students demonstrated that lesson through an activity or a project. These methods of infusing diversity in non-diversity courses align with the suggestions in past research on addressing diversity across the curriculum both inside and outside the JMC academic community (Biswas & Izard, 2018; Geertsema et al., 2020; Laird, 2011). In fact, communication faculty used both facets of the diversity inclusivity model (Nelson Laird, 2011) — diverse grounding (e.g., content, perspectives) and inclusive learning (e.g., assessment/assignments) — to incorporate diversity.

The practice of diversity inclusivity in course design has a significant implication for students’ diversity learning outcomes. Students’ repeated exposure to diverse identities and human differences in required and some specialization courses could have a significant impact on the students to successfully participate in a diverse world.

This communication program has a plan to conduct a course audit survey on diversity among its faculty annually. The qualitative survey in the academ-



ic year 2021-22 will act as a benchmark for faculty members' future endeavors with teaching diversity. Continuation of course audit surveys annually will allow faculty to review what they have done already and identify what else they could do to include diversity-related substance in their courses in the upcoming years. The course audit survey revealed a varying level of infusion of diversity in different courses. Perhaps, the instructor who included diversity in 5 to 10 percent of course content may consider inviting guest speakers with diverse backgrounds, as well as including more work by persons of color. Therefore, an annual course audit or self-reflection on teaching diversity could be useful for multiple reasons.

### Conclusions

The findings of this study can offer ideas for including diversity across the curriculum for faculty teaching at medium-sized and smaller JMC programs with limited resources in terms of faculty size and limited funding for professional development on teaching diversity. These teaching ideas of addressing diversity, such as assignments, content, clients, and guest speakers, can offer guidance to medium-size and smaller JMC programs that have been looking for reference points or ideas on diversity curriculum since the summer of 2020 that reminded the entire nation of systemic racism in society including in the places of higher education.

Past research on JMC curricula did not offer course-specific insights on infusing diversity. However, education researchers outside the JMC community have developed a course inclusivity model and identified the ways diversity can be addressed through various course elements, such as assignments, content, perspectives, or foundations (Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011; Nelson Laird *et al.*, 2018). This case study shared the methods of addressing diversity and examples of course-level diversity inclusivity in both skills and non-skills-oriented courses. Findings of this study offer instructors ideas on how to include diversity in their non-diversity courses. Also, past research on diversity courses in JMC curricula did not explore the diversity of content creators, such as authors, designers, and journalists to whom students were exposed. The survey conducted for this study sought to understand the backgrounds, such as ethnic/racial, gender identities of textbook or article authors, designers and media or communication practitioners.

Additionally, JMC programs can find the idea of routine course auditing through qualitative surveys among faculty useful (Appendix I). Such course auditing can help a program develop a curriculum map with a focus on diversity. How a program can address diversity across the curriculum can be a long-term goal for an academic unit. Conducting a course audit annually could allow faculty to reflect and collectively address diversity in the curriculum through the exchange of ideas and examples.

By conducting a curriculum audit, faculty members can consider how their individual courses contribute to the departmental learning aim of teaching students to work in a diverse world and how and where those efforts can be deepened. It also provides the department a holistic understanding of how its curriculum as a whole is addressing that learning aim. The curriculum audit provides a baseline about the presence of diversity in the departmental curriculum and a roadmap for the further diffusion of diversity issues over time.

This study has some limitations. It did not consider to what extent faculty workload in a medium-size program might have affected their efforts to address diversity in their courses. A future study and course audit survey will add this dimension or question how faculty workload can affect the extent to which they can address diversity in non-diversity courses. Additionally, in line with the diversity inclusivity model (Nelson Laird, 2011), a future study will explore the association of faculty and course characteristics and the extent of course-level diversity inclusivity.

Finally, while the course audit has established a baseline to understand where diversity-related elements are included broadly across the curriculum beyond diversity-designated courses, the program has not developed a mechanism to measure the impact on student outcomes. The program understands where diversity issues appear across the curriculum; it cannot be determined how effective the diversity education is. Developing the baseline –identifying where diversity concerns are addressed in the curriculum – is the critical first step to implementing a continuous improvement process for diversity education in the JMC curriculum.

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## Appendix I

### Qualitative Survey created with Qualtrics

This course auditing is aligned with the Communication Department's DEI statement where we pledge to train our students with skills to work effectively in a multicultural and global society. Therefore, the department's DEI committee is interested to know if and how you have addressed diversity in your courses through assignments, readings/course materials, specific course modules in your courses that are not diversity-designated (non-D courses). We would also like you to roughly estimate what percentage of your course addresses diversity, equity and inclusion.

In the context of this audit, the scope of "diversity" is very broad, which includes all human differences including but not limited to race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, generation/age, geography, religions, abilities, ideologies, justice issues and location.

If you do not have any specific content, assignments, methods and so on that are directly related to diversity, equity and inclusion, that is fine. The goal of the audit is to develop a department-wide baseline, a starting point so to speak. In other words, we want to find out where we are as a department now so we can begin to chart a course to where we want to get to.

**Q. 1:** Share examples of how you address diversity in your non-D communication courses in AY 2020-22. Examples can be an assignment, a course module, a course topic, learning objective(s), and an assessment rubric reflective of diversity learning outcome(s). There is an upload option for you to upload a document in support of your narrative in the response below.

Please use a separate row for each non-D course to include an example of how you address diversity, equity and inclusion. If you would like to add information about more than 4 courses, include them in one document (Word or PDF) in the upload option for "Course 4 and More." If you feel like you don't directly address diversity, equity and inclusion issues and concerns in a specific class, that is fine. Just say none (the expectation is that DEI is not being addressed in a significant number of courses. There is no judgement here.)

**Course 1** (In your entry below, please include a) course name, b) course number, c) what percentage of your course content and/or assignments addresses diversity, d) provide examples of assignments and/or course content, and e) how much of your course content is produced by members of typically underrepresented groups such as women, people of color

and other non-dominant identities?)

Upload a related document for Course 1

Drop files or click here to upload

**Course 2** (In your entry below, please include a) course name, b) course number, c) what percentage of your course content and/or assignments addresses diversity, d) provide examples of assignments and/or course content, and e) how much of your course content is produced by members of typically underrepresented groups such as women, people of color and other non-dominant identities?)

Upload a related document for Course 2

Drop files or click here to upload

**Course 3** (In your entry below, please include a) course name, b) course number, c) what percentage of your course content and/or assignments addresses diversity, d) provide examples of assignments and/or course content, and e) how much of your course content is produced by members of typically underrepresented groups such as women, people of color and other non-dominant identities?)

Upload a related document for Course 3

Drop files or click here to upload

**Course 4** (In your entry below, please include a) course name, b) course number, c) what percentage of your course content and/or assignments addresses diversity, d) provide examples of assignments and/or course content, and e) how much of your course content is produced by members of typically underrepresented groups such as women, people of color and other non-dominant identities?)

Upload a related document for Course 4

Drop files or click here to upload

**Course 5 and more** (add a word or PDF document here with information for 4th or more courses).

Drop files or click here to upload

**Q2:** If you have brought in guest speakers in your classes in AY 2020 - 22, please respond to this question. In your response below, include information about diversity of guest speakers in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and/or religion).

**Q3:** If you have taught a capstone class in AY2020 - 22, please respond to this question. In your response, include information about diversity among clients and who they serve (in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and/or religion).

**Q4:** Please list all teaching resources on diversity you use or are aware of that can be used in multiple CM courses or all sections of a required CM course (e.g., DiversityStyleGuide.Com can be included in all CM writing courses along with AP Stylebook).