Fall 11-17-2014

Leaders in Journalism Education: Administrators at ACEJMC Accredited Programs and Non-accredited HBCU Programs Critique the Standards

Jerry Crawford
University of Kansas Main Campus

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/jri

Part of the Education Commons, Journalism Studies Commons, and the Mass Communication Commons

Leaders in Journalism Education: Administrators at ACEJMC Accredited Programs and Non-accredited HBCU Programs Critique the Standards

Keywords
Administrators, accreditation, HBCUs, standards, ACEJMC, journalism

JRI

Leaders in Journalism Education: Administrators at ACEJMC Accredited Programs and Non-accredited HBCU Programs Critique the Standards

Jerry Crawford

Abstract

Administrators of journalism and mass communication units have had to make decisions on how they would lead their units into the future. For over 70 years, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) has been the agency that provided leadership in this endeavor. This study surveyed administrators of programs of accredited and also non-accredited journalism programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), asking them to critique and discuss their thoughts on the nine standards. Nearly unanimously the administrators agreed that accreditation, or as those not accredited stated, "best practices", are essential. The study focused on three Standards: diversity of students and faculty (Standard 3); scholarship: research, creativity, and professional activity (Standard 5) and assessment of learning outcomes (Standard 9). This paper was the result of a 2-year study and included distributing a survey and in-depth interviews.

Introduction

Today, if you were to ask the average American to describe a journalist, you would get answers that may range from a person who writes a blog about politics or a person who uses a smart phone to send pictures of a skirmish in the Middle East. Long before the existence of "citizen journalists" there was the printing press and the "penny press". Many people are not media literate enough to know the source of news and how news is collected. Therefore, people have the tendency to trust what they see and hear from a multitude of available medias. Traditional journalists oftentimes rely heavily on routine sources to cope with time constraints and the ambiguous definition of news. Some researchers argue that traditional journalists' reliance on routines and traditional standards has affected the diversity of available viewpoints (Carpenter, 2008). This statement illustrates why so many in our society have become blasé regarding news consumption. Who should they believe? Many citizen journalists have not been trained to subscribe to the same standards (e.g., objectivity, thoroughness, fairness, accuracy) as journalists who work for news organizations. However, some citizen journalists value the independence of creating articles not based on traditional principles (Carpenter, 2008). Therefore, why is it even important to train journalist, if all they have to do is have access to an audience, large or small, to inform them of 'something, anything'? The reason is, in America, a journalist is important to the fabric of the nation.

What it takes to be natural now, was not taken so lightly in pre-revolutionary war America. Early colonial printers were threatened with loss of life and those printers who were considered loyalists, would suffer from colonialists. Four months before independence was declared, Samuel Loudon, patriot editor of the New York Packet, permitted remuneration rather than republicanism to influence his judgment when he accepted the job of printing a loyalist reply to Tom Paine's Common Sense. His dedication to the principle that both sides should be heard impelled him to advertise both viewpoints (Levy, 1960). The world's first instance of freedom of speech was elevated to a constitutional right in 1776, when Pennsylvania, in its first constitution stated that people had a right to freedom of speech, which included freedom of writing and publishing; therefore the freedom of the press was not to be restrained (Levy, 1960). One of the first colonists to start a news-oriented publication was Sam Adams, a cousin of John Adams. He wrote hundreds of political essays and news articles for the Boston Gazette. Adams created, what some would call a newsgathering and dispensary, similar to the later established Associated Press news service. Adams named his inter-colonial news service the *'Journal of Occurrences'* and it quickly evolved into an important communication network that spread anti-British rhetoric to every corner of the colonies (Streitmatter, 1997). Until the late 1870s, journalism education in the United States was in the hands of professional tradesmen, usually printers. The most famous of these early printers was Benjamin Franklin, who wanted to improve the press by improving the virtue of printers. Franklin felt most printers of this time were endangering democracy by publishing defamatory essays. He wrote: "nothing is more likely to endanger the liberty of the press than the abuse of that liberty by employing it in personal accusation, detraction, and calumny" (Dickson, 2000, p. 1).

Freedom of the press is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly by those given the opportunity to be journalists. The best way to have an informed and ethical journalist is to teach them about the best practices of the profession. These best practices could simply be considered securing and advancing all journalism to adhere to its original and fundamental principles. But do journalists get these skills and canons by simply doing or do they need a solid academic framework of liberal arts to give them a better viewpoint of the world? The purpose of accreditation and setting standards is for all journalism schools to have cornerstones to build a sound structure.

Journalism education has had a varied path toward a cohesive and decisive model. From its early incarnations, journalism educators firmly believed that journalists learned best from being in the field. Others championed the academic strengths of learning in the classroom, using a strong liberal arts curriculum as its backbone. As it will be shown regarding HBCUs, journalism schools, in general, were established in the 1890s and early 1900s. Both sets of entities had their own separate criteria and purpose. For journalism schools, it was thought best to have institutions that would be skill oriented. Many institutions between the years of 1890-1930 became primarily professional schools created to satisfy public demand. These patterns of action followed in most instances until supporters of journalism felt that there should be schools of journalism in their own universities. As a result of the pressures from internal supporters, external initiatives were established, and school of journalism came into existence (Nevins, 1962).

One man saw a way for journalists to have their own school. In Missouri George S. Johns, editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, in 1906 invited a student group to write, edit, and produce a special Sunday section. According to Nevins (1962) the experiment attracted so much attention that Missouri newspapermen called for a school of journalism, and the school was established under the leadership of Dean Walter Williams in 1908. Williams was the architect of

the first stand-alone school of journalism. He was a proponent of the 'learning comes from doing' model. However, as more and more institutions started programs, other models were implemented. Journalism and mass communication education was forged in the twentieth century out of several goals. The recognition of the desirability of educating journalists enlightened by the liberal arts; the nation's needed to understand, deploy, and defend itself from overwhelming publicity. The economic and political influences of skilled practitioners, the scholarly desire to discover the processes, and the effects of human communication attracted students and faculty, as well as a coalition of university and industry supporters (Cohen, 2001).

Accreditation Standards for a New Professional Program

As more colleges and universities started teaching journalism, there became a sense of needing a cohesive and common course of action to educate journalism students. There was a need to relieve concerns of those who wanted to follow traditional academy practices and those who favored the journalism professional model. Could educating journalists serve two masters? Many wondered if journalism was best suited as a training ground or as an academic endeavor. If journalism served as a trade school for the press, skeptics asked could it qualify legitimately as an academic discipline (Sloan, 1990 4). Publisher Joseph Pulitzer wanted his views of journalism education to be the model schools utilized. In discussing Pulitzer views, Sloan (1990) found that Pulitzer wanted the journalist to be more than a mere tradesman, and believed journalism education could be a profession, with responsibility, enlightenment, and prestige. By 1912, there were 32 institutions that were teaching journalism. Dean Walter Williams, again, stepped forward to help mold the future of journalism. He was interested in finding out how each of these schools was teaching journalism. He found that several agencies and associations were being followed by these schools and felt it was time to establish standards for teaching journalism.

The American Association of Teachers of Journalism (AATJ) was founded at what was called the third annual American Conference of Teachers of Journalism in Chicago on November 30, 1912, under the instigation of Willard G. Bleyer of Wisconsin, who became its first president (Dickson, 2000, p. 15). The overall result of this conference was basically an agreement to combine the five associations into one. Later that year, the idea was adopted, which allowed journalism educators to be members of one agency, instead of the five or more other organizations. ATTJ became the Association of American Schools and Departments of Journalism (AASDJ). Through several iterations of agencies and association names, the accrediting group's influence blossomed. In the early 1950s, George E. Simmons, the new president of the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ), queried whether the American Council on Education for Journalism (ACEJ) accreditation process would concentrate on improving professional training only in accredited schools, or would the council oversee journalism training in all the nation's programs offering journalism instruction (Massé and Popovich, 2007).

Within every phase of the changes in names and leadership, there were actual accrediting standards crafted and established. There were still issues, such as establishing a periodic review of the schools and voting on policies on removing schools from accreditation when they failed to meet standards. Massé and Popovich (2007) posited that Simmons' vision was adopted and in 2007 425 programs belonged to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), including 107 accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). AEJMC works to improve journalism

education and provides guidance to all journalism programs through its annual meetings and regional conferences. At one point AASDJ had 17 standards; currently there are nine standards.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Dean Walter Williams', in 1908, established the nation's first stand-alone school of journalism at the University of Missouri and sixty-six years later, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), became the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to establish a journalism program in 1974. However, there was more than a 114-year wait for people of color to have schools that would admit them into a system of higher learning. While the American colonists were advocating for freedom from English control of the press and other basic rights, these rights were for white males, specifically white male landowners. There were whole sections of the populace living in the colonies that were not given the opportunity to learn how to read these powerful messages. American slaves were forbidden to learn to read. The overwhelming ethnicity of slaves in America was from African descent. The process of keeping African slaves and their descendants illiterate continued throughout America's history. The common practice of authorizing literacy throughout the American South was accepted and had a purpose. Those individuals who chose to break or dishonor these laws were ostracized or faced worse consequences.

It was the enactment of these laws that led to the establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) after the American Civil War. The ability of a country to have a literate and informed citizenry provided a more democratic governance and society. HBCUs were founded to allow Blacks to teach Blacks. Their missions, among other things, would be to try to close the literacy gap in America. Although many Historically Black Colleges and Universities were established after the Morrill Act of 1890 provided state-supported, land grant HBCUs, most were established before 1890. The majority of the HBCUs are located in what is considered the South, or southern geographical area of the United States. Historically Black Colleges and Universities were first established in the United States to meet the educational needs of Blacks who were disenfranchised by the predominantly White population of the country. Most public Black colleges in their early years were colleges, in name only. Cheney State University in Pennsylvania is the oldest HBCU, established in 1837, yet it is outside of what would be considered the region that would characterize these institutions. Most began as primary schools and added upper grades and collegiate divisions as students progressed over the years. For example, as late as 1917, Florida Agriculture and Mechanical College (FAMU) enrolled only 12 students at the collegiate level.

HBCUs have not only served as the exclusive avenue of access to higher education for African Americans with its promotion of a participatory philosophy and an open door admissions policy, but it has also provided avenues for student leadership potential and social development. Historically, these universities are under-funded and have had a weaker governance structure than other state supported or private, Predominately White Universities (PWIs). It is also important to note that HBCUs were established for different reasons than traditional schools. Many HBCUs were threatened because they did not have the adequate resources to gain status as an accredited college.

Actually, the public HBCUs were created by the southern state governments for three reasons: to get millions of dollars in federal funds for the development of white land-grant universities, to limit black education to vocational training, and to prevent Blacks from attending white land grant colleges (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Brown and Davis (2001) found that the Southern states were required, by law, to respond to the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth

Amendments, by providing public education for former slaves and other Black Americans. Although unintentional, the Second Morrill Act of 1890 cemented the prevailing doctrine of segregation. It formalized the manifestation of separate but unequal in higher education. The vestiges of this disparate treatment remain evident in most Black colleges to this day. Despite over 100 years of development, Black college conditions remain incongruent with their predominantly White counterparts (Brown & Davis, 2001). It is with this in mind that the original call from the colonists, the one that maintained that their voices should not be shut out of the marketplace of ideas, that HBCUs started units to help shape and control media images of people of color.

HBCUs Start Mass Communication and Journalism Programs

Journalism and mass communication education came late to the more than 104 HBCUs in the United States. Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, founded by Presbyterians, admitted its first students in 1856. During the rest of the nineteenth century, according to Jeter (2002) private institutions were founded by various northern philanthropists and religious denominations; the state institutions established for Blacks generally emphasized a program of study to develop teachers. In the 1970s, funds for mass communication programs at HBCUs came primarily from two sources: Aid for Institutional Development Program and W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The federal government approved HBCU grant proposals and used money from the Aid for Institutional Development Program (commonly referred to as Title III) to fund journalism and mass communication activities. According to Jeter (2002) the W. K. Kellogg Foundation also funded journalism and mass communication program activities at several state HBCUs, several of which are now accredited. The increase in available funding for journalism and mass communication programs coincided with the increase in the number of students who were enrolling at HBCUs. Howard University in Washington, D.C., with a 2011 reported student enrollment of 10,745 is the largest of the 88 four-year universities.

Crawford (2012) found currently that year, there were 49 HBCUs with journalism and mass communications units. These units can be delineated as concentrations, programs, divisions, departments, and schools. These 49 units make it possible for African-Americans to help dispel the images and messages that are generated by the media. The best way for African-Americans to be a part of the media is to produce students and graduates who are taught the theories and techniques used by the media. HBCUs are producing many students who enroll in mass communication and journalism as minor and major courses of study. HBCUs offering degrees in journalism and mass communication are accountable for providing the basic skills and theoretical framework to allow students the ability to compete with students from PWIs for career opportunities.

HBCUs are still important in educating, primarily first-generation African-Americans. As posited by Lemelle (2002), Howard University professor Ralph Bunche, in the 1960s spoke frequently regarding the importance of HBCUs in the African-American community. Young Blacks were looking to the HBCU with high expectations for the education that would prepare them for what they perceived to be a new era of employment opportunities in a rapidly changing world. HBCUs educated not only African Americans in 2013; they are multicultural and diverse in their student population; although, HBCUs predominantly enroll African Americans. The media message strategies taught to students at HBCUs give students a stronger base in seeking careers in the profession. The theoretical frameworks are taught at both HBCUs and PWIs, such as hegemony and marginalized populations, and these are important toward a more diverse representation of scholars and practitioners because they provide details of how and why certain

messages are shown in the media.

Journalism programs in universities have grown in tandem with the professionalization of journalism, so much so that journalism education and professionalization are sometimes treated as synonymous. George (2011) found that journalism was sometimes practiced outside of professional news organizations; pragmatic reasons suggest widening the scope of practical journalism education to include semi-professional and non-professional forms.

Institutional Theory

This two-year study used institutional theory to examine the interaction and decisions HBCU and PWI administrators have in their units. Although most often applied to organizational studies, the theory provided another portal by which to examine the process by which administrators viewed standards and best practices regarding the teaching and assessment of learning in their units. Most theories developed so far about organizations, such as institutional theory used in this study, have a managerial ideology or bias; that have been developed for managerial implications. Few theories have been advanced that are either critical of the managerial biases or attempt to explain the individual side of organizations and how organizations benefit society and people. Critical theories are among the latter, which originate in the works of John Stuart Mill, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, Emanuel Kant, Karl Marx, and Max Weber, and others like Jean Paul Sartre.

Colleges and universities are becoming more like corporations, due to pressures of complexity, financial support from states and national budgets. Institutional theory states that organizations exist in a layered form encompassing the environmental field, the organization, formal and informal groups within the organization, and the individual employees. The degree of conformity, or fit, between the layers determines the degree of organizational stability. However, there is always a measure of diversity, or degrees of freedom, at every level. At the group level, for example, all educational systems witness intergroup struggles for new resources against a fixed budget. Heck (2004) stated that institutional theory is an emergent set of theoretical arguments about the influence of broader sets of societal values, cultural theories, ideologies, and perceptions on organizational structures and practices. Although more often applied to organizational studies, the theory offers an alternative lens through which to view the behavior of actors in policy situations, as well as the behavior of organizations in adopting policy changes. Institutional theory provides an alternative to technical-rational conceptions of organizations. This perspective on organizations flows from a general institutional theory of social organization, which explains that the behavior of actors, both individual and collective, expresses externally enforced institutions rather than internally derived goals (Ogawa & Bossert, 1997, p. 14).

Journalism schools, by their normal make-up, have had to adapt to the current forms of media and technology through the years. However, these units also strive to keep their traditional norms and ethics. The accrediting standards of ACEJMC help to continue these practices. It does show, however, how internal and external forces can tend to make schools adjust their teaching and missions. The administrators' challenge is to make their units as successful as possible. Administrators define success in different ways and institutional theory works because it does not give a template as to what makes the organization a success. Institutional theory differs from traditional adaptation-theoretical perspectives in that it views organizations as readily able to change their structures and strategies to maintain alignment with the changing technical environments (Lewin, Weigelt, & Emery, 2004). A school's organizational field includes, for example, accreditation agencies, teacher training programs,

state boards of education, state legislatures, courts (local, state, and federal), students, parent groups, and textbook producers.

Much of early institutional thought was preoccupied with permanence and unchanging rules, rights and in our study, structures. This fits in well with this study, because it deals with the procedures and standards that journalism and mass communications units must respond to in earning and maintaining ACEJMC accreditation. People form organizations, but the former often act independent from the latter; organizations even control us, dominate society, stifle development or progress, promote growth and change, alter our environmental conditions, and at the same time fulfill our human and societal needs. Farazmand (2002) posits that the role of an organization is multidimensional and dual in nature: it can make possible the progress and fulfillment of human needs, but at the same time it can be a major obstacle to achieving those same goals. Organizations are powerful instruments in governance and promotion of democratic values, therefore enhancing human values.

Colleges become institutionalized through value commitments enforced through socialization and institutionalization, and it is this process that makes organizations as structural expression of rational action. This can be seen in accrediting agencies such as ACEJMC. It develops standards by which it judges the effectiveness of the journalism institutions. Farazmand (2002) said that organizations feel external and internal cultural pressures as they become more professional with standardized norms.

This two-year study's purpose was to examine current perceptions of ACEJMC's standards among administrators of the 109 ACEJMC accredited schools and twenty HBCUs, of which twelve were not accredited. From the inception of journalism programs, administrators have tried to avoid a heavy-handed doctrine of collegiate instruction. However, since 1960, standards have been established and used that have attempted to acknowledge the rights of individual institutions while also developing minimum requirements for all accredited units. These minimum requirements could be called 'best practices' for all journalism programs. Nonetheless, perpetual questions remain.

Based on the literature, this study examined the following research questions:

RQ1: What do administrators of accredited and non-accredited journalism and mass communications programs at PWIs and HBCUs think of the nine ACEJMC accrediting standards as best practices?

RQ2: Are there differences of opinions about ACEJMC standards between administrators at accredited journalism and mass communications programs and non-accredited HBCUs with journalism and mass communications programs?

RQ3: How do administrators at PWI and HBCU journalism and mass communications programs rate the value of accreditation?

Method

A fifty-three-question survey was administered to journalism and mass communications administrations to capture their perceptions of the nine accrediting standards, professional master's program, and the time and investment of accreditation. The survey included five sections: Demographics, Standards Assessment, Professional Master's Program Review, Accreditation Process, and Additional Information. A twenty-five question survey was distributed to twenty purposely chosen HBCU journalism and mass communication administrators of which eight had ACEJMC accreditation; they were asked the same questions. Survey methodology was utilized because, as Babbie (2001) posited, it is an effective way to

study individual attitudes and orientations. Surveys provide a rich and valuable set of data, which allows for better generalizable information. In their book, *Strategic Public Relations Management: Planning and Managing Effective Communication Programs,* Austin and Pinkleton wrote "Survey research provides a more sophisticated means of tracking changes in the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of target audience members, and it is an indispensable tool for practitioners." Both surveys were reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

The surveys were targeted to schools with journalism units. Both surveys were submitted for approval through the University of Kansas' Institutional Review Board (IRB). The second survey, sent to HBCUs also went through additional IRB scrutiny, by being submitted for approval through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) for schools in North Carolina and Louisiana. De Vaus (2002) found that gaining cooperation in an Internet survey involves similar principles to any other sort of survey. Assurances of confidentiality or anonymity were provided. Many people are justifiably suspicious about anonymity on the Internet so the researcher did not promise more than what could be confidently delivered.

The survey was sent with the approval and on behalf of ACEJMC to the 109 administrators of accredited journalism and mass communication programs. ACEJMC provided the list of administrators. The email provided a link of the nine standards (to allow for review) and invited administrators to participate in the study by clicking on a Survey Monkey link. Another important way of achieving reasonable response rates was to follow up with non-responders. Where the sample was recruited through email lists the task of follow-up was fairly straightforward. The second survey was sent to 20 HBCU journalism and mass communications administrators. The email provided a link to the survey and ACEJMC standards, and asked administrators to click on a link or forward the link to someone in their administration who could answer the questions. It should be noted that at several of the HBCUs, some directors of the unit deferred to senior administrators, due to questions regarding budget and faculty personnel decisions. Respondents were given the opportunity to be anonymous.

The Demographic section asked administrators to identify themselves, give the primary focus of the program, and provide the total credit hour requirements. The Standards section asked administrators to rate each standard (good as is; needs MINOR changes; needs MAJOR changes), and followed with an open-ended question asking about suggestions for specific changes. There was also a section that asked about the financial, time/effort value, and six-year cycle of the accreditation process. Respondents were provided an opportunity to explain their answers in this section.

Results

Sixty-eight of one-hundred-nine journalism and mass communications administrators responded to the initial ACEJMC assessment survey, with sixty-six actually completing the survey for a response rate of 60.5 percent. This is well within acceptable response rates for online surveys. Online surveys have been a major part of substantive studies for many years, "research has generally found a moderately high correlation between retrospective self-reports and other benchmark measures" (Greenberg et al., 2005). The targeted schools for this survey represented both accredited and non-accredited journalism and mass communication units. Response rates are measured relative to the size of the sampling frame and therefore are only as good as the sample frame (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002).

Reinardy and Crawford (2013) found that over 50 percent of the ACEJMC accredited institutions self-reported that their units had an equal balance between teaching and research. On average, these accredited schools had an average of 553 enrolled students. It is important to

mention, that four of the sixty-eight accredited schools were HBCUs. These same four schools were included in the second group of surveys, sent to 20 HBCUs, 16 of which were non-accredited. Twenty of the twenty-one HBCU administrators responded to the survey for a response rate of 95.2 percent. On average, the HBCU units had an average of 198 enrolled students. These schools self-reported at a rate of 100% that they consider their units to be more teaching than research focused. This assertion affirms HBCUs' original missions for educating students.

The researcher used descriptive statistics to answer RQ1, which asked administrators to rate the nine accrediting standards. The administrators had a chance to review the standards and rate them as "good as is," "needs MINOR changes," and "needs MAJOR changes." This study was interested in only three of the nine ACEJMC standards – Diversity and Inclusiveness (3); Scholarship: Research, Creativity, and Professional Activity (5); and Assessment of Learning Outcomes (9). Following strict IRB and confidentiality rules, respondents were invited to provide additional information and suggestions for improving each standard. Respondents were also given the opportunity to 'opt in" on providing any personal/unit identifying data or even to self-identify.

In answering RQ1, respondents from both groups agreed that there was a need for standards to serve as best practices. The accredited units actually had only a mild critique of the nine standards as a whole. In fact, Reinardy and Crawford (2013) found on eight of the nine standards, a majority of the respondents rated the standards "good as is" (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. HBCU & Accredited Administrators' critique of ACEJMC Standards

	Good as is (%)	Needs MINOR Changes (%)	Needs MAJOR Changes (%)
Standard 1	86.2	9.2	4.6
Standard 2	32.3	27.7	40
Standard 3	47.7	26.15	26.15
Standard 4	73 2	2.2	4.8
Standard 5	67.7	26.15	6.15
Standard 6	95.3	3.1	1.6
Standard 7	82.8	14.1	3.1
Standard 8	78.1	15.6	6.3
Standard 9	50.8	29.2	20.0

Courtesy Reindardy and Crawford (2013)

All twenty of the HBCU respondents said the standards were needed and served as a source of best practices in educating journalists and future media professionals. The HBCUs, as a group, looked at the standards as a way to gauge their own programs. Many HBCU administrators attend the annual Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) conference. It is through these conferences that the unaccredited units have an opportunity to immerse in the yearly discussions regarding the standards. Of the twenty responses, fourteen (70 percent) stated they had never been accredited but they admitted to trying to have their units follow the standards and found this allowed their students the best opportunities in career aspirations.

RQ2 asked if there were differences of opinions about standards between administrators at ACEJMC accredited programs and those at non-accredited HBCU programs. The survey of

HBCU administrators found an average of 250 students enrolled in their programs. This number has been somewhat steady, since a survey by the Howard University School of Communications in October 1996, which found the average was around 200 enrolled students in communications programs. In, 2010, the Black College Communication Association (BCCA), whose membership, according to the organization's website, consists of administrators at HBCUs with communications programs. BCAA's mission is to identify resources necessary for strengthening communications programs at HBCUs seeking accreditation. Retrieved November 26, 2013, from http://www.bccanews.org/. Efforts like those from BCCA and others have provided the stimulus for HBCUs to compete at all levels and programs with PWIs and larger schools with accredited units.   In answering RQ2, the ACEJMC accredited programs were divided into three groups based on student enrollment. Smaller programs were considered to have 317 or fewer students, medium-sized programs were grouped into categories of 318-556 students and larger programs consisted of student populations of 557 or more students. This study used an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the differences between the perceptions of administrators in the three groups. The smaller group of administrators' was compared to those of the HBCU administrators. The comparison showed a similar viewpoint of Standard 9 (Assessment of Learning Outcomes) by both the smaller accredited group of schools and those of HBCU administrators. They both thought the standard was a good way to determine student learning. However, the larger accredited group disagreed with this appraisal; with 29 percent of the larger school administrators reported needing major changes and only 6 percent of the smaller schools responded needing major changes to the Standard (Reinardy & Crawford 2013).

The Standard that all four groups (small, medium, large and HBCU) agreed, needing major changes was Standard 3 (Diversity and Inclusiveness). The dominant theme of the groups centered on what would be considered, diversity. According to more than one administrator, they appeared to consider diversity as a mere count of how many faculty and students were African American. They felt a need to concentrate more on the inclusion part of Standard 3 and really drilled down to give the Standard stronger roots.

RQ3 asked administrators of ACEJMC-accredited journalism and mass communications programs and administrators at HBCU programs to rate the value of accreditation. On a five-point, Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strong agree*), administrators were asked to give their perceptions on whether the financial investment of accreditation was worth the return and to give their perceptions on whether or not the investment of faculty' time in the accreditation process was worth the return An ANOVA examining the differences between the four groups (small, medium, large and HBCU programs) showed no significant differences in attitudes on either question. In fact, of the twenty HBCU respondents, only three stated they were not going to apply for accreditation in the next five years (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. HBCU Administrators rate the importance of ACEJMC accreditation

Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Other*
14.3	33.3	42.9	9.5

*Other Comments:

The university administration seems eager for us to pursue ACEJMC accreditation, but we are not entirely persuaded. For one thing, we feel that we need more support from the administration before applying. We follow ACEJMC curriculum guidelines as best we can.

According to Reinardy and Crawford (2013) sixty-nine percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the financial investment of accreditation was worth the investment. In regards to the second question concerning faculty's time, according to Reinardy and Crawford (2013) sixty-three percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the financial investment of accreditation was worth faculty's time.

Conclusion

"Journalism education generally had its beginnings in English departments with an emphasis on technique courses -- reporting, news writing, editing, design, photography -- often taught by former journalists" (Hachten, 1998, p. 153). There have been studies that have examined schools of journalism that were accredited and those schools that were not accredited and the differences of students' preparation between these units. However, there have not been any studies that looked specifically at journalism and mass communication programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) accredited programs.

Carter (1995) posited, in this age of accountability and accreditation in journalism and mass communications, faculty and administrators in higher education are constantly asked to justify their very existence. This existence is seen through Institutional Theory. Therefore, institutional environments are seen as requiring conformity and convergence among organizations, causing homogeneity and legitimacy (Lewin, Weigelt, & Emery, 2004). This legitimacy is part of accreditation's transparent nature. Schools of journalism and mass communications, which have earned this accreditation, have volunteered to have their units openly examined and the reports made public in an open forum. Of the current 105 ACEJMC accredited programs, eight are HBCUs institutions.

The purpose of this study was to examine administrator's thoughts regarding the journalism and mass communications accrediting agency, ACEJMC, and its nine Standards. The study looked at both accredited and non-accredited schools, which came from a pool of 16 HBCUs. Reinardy and Crawford (2013) found that there existed a form of journalism dating from the 1929's. ACEJMC traced its roots to 1937 and have since changed both the number of Standards and the focus of these Standards. There are currently nine Standards, which were changed from twelve Standards from an amendment in 2003.

According to Reinardy and Crawford (2013) organizations become institutionalized through value commitments enforced by socialization and institutionalization. Agencies such as ACEJMC develop standards, with the help of its member institutions and media professionals that evaluates the effectiveness of its journalism institutions. Non-accredited institutions have the ability to use the standards as a means of best practices. There were twenty HBCU administrator respondents for this study, of which four were from accredited programs. The majority of the sixteen administrators from non-accredited programs saw a great value in following the Standards in their programs. This study was interested in examining a comparison of HBCU units with accredited programs, using three of the nine standards.

The variable of size of student enrollment was used to create a more accurate comparison between the units at HBCUs (average number 250) and smaller accredited units (317 students and below), however, the study also looked at instances of the entire 105 accredited programs. The Standards this study evaluated were: Standard 3 Diversity and Inclusiveness, Standard 5 Scholarship: Research, Creativity, and Professional Activity, and Standard 9 Assessment of Learning Outcomes. The results of this study showed evident that both accredited programs and

non-accredited HBCU programs had confidence in the standards enforced by ACEJMC. A majority or nearly 70 percent of the total respondents rated these standards "good as is."

Similarly to the beginnings of journalism, accrediting agencies in the early 1900s, pondered on how journalism should be taught, even today's current Standards are not set-in-stone and progress with current professional and educational demands. Accreditation matters and the transparency of the process allow non-accredited units to use the Standards as best practices. This study assuredly had limitations. The surveys were sent via web link and also incorporated ACEJMC language, which may have emboldened some answers. Future research can further expound on this study by adding face-to-face interviews with the administrators and possibly including self-study programs and interviews with faculty, students, and employers.

References

Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc

Austin, E. W., & Pinkleton, B. E. (2001). *Strategic Public Relations Management: Planning and Managing Effective Communication Programs*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Brown, M. C., II, & Davis, J. (2001). The Historically Black College as Social Contract, Social Capital, and Social Equalizer. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Access and Equity in Postsecondary Education* (pp. 31-47). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Brown, M. C., II (Ed.). (2001). *Access and Equity in Postsecondary Education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Carpenter, S. (2008). How Online Citizen Journalism Publications and Online Newspapers Utilize the Objectivity Standard and Rely on External Sources. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 85*(3), 531+.

Carter, G. R. (1995). Books -- Assessing Communication Education: A Handbook for Media, Speech & Theatre Educators Edited by William G. Christ. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 50*(2), 83.

Cohen, J. (2001). Symposium: Journalism and Mass Communication Education at the Crossroads. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 56*(3), 4+.

Cohen, J. (2004). Assessment ... Yours, Mine, and Ours. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 59*(1), 3+.

Crawford, M., Kydd, L., & Riches, C. (Eds.). (1997). *Leadership and Teams in Educational Management*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

De Vaus, D. (2002). *Surveys in Social Research* (5th ed.). St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Dickson, T. (2000). *Mass Media Education in Transition: Preparing for the 21st Century*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Farazmand, A. (2002). *Modern Organizations: Theory and Practice, 2nd ed.,* Westport, CT., Praeger.

George, C. (2011). Beyond Professionalization: A Radical Broadening of Journalism Education. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 66*(3), 258+.

Greenberg, B. S., Eastin, M. S., Skalski, P., Cooper, L., Levy, M., & Lachlan, K. (2005). Comparing Survey and Diary Measures of Internet and Traditional Media Use. *Communication Reports, 18*(1-2), 1+.

Hachten, W. A. (1998). *The Troubles of Journalism: A Critical Look at What's Right and Wrong with the Press*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Heck, R. H. (2004). *Studying Educational and Social Policy: Theoretical Concepts and Research Methods/*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Iggers, J. (1998). *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Jeter, P. (2002). Journalism and Mass Communication Education at HBCUS: History and Current Issues. *Education, 123*(1), 200able 1+.

Kelley, B. (2007). Teaching Journalism. *Communication Research Trends, 26*(2), 3+.

LeMelle, T. J. (2002). The HBCU: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. *Education, 123*(1), 190+.

Levy, L. W. (1960). *Legacy of Suppression: Freedom of Speech and Press in Early American History*. Cambridge, MA: Bleknap Press of Harvard University.

Lewin, A. Y., Weigelt, C. B., & Emery, J. D. (2004). 5: Perspectives on Strategic Change in Organizations. In M. S. Poole & A. H. Van De Ven (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation* (pp. 108-160). New York: Oxford University Press.

MassÈ, M. H., & Popovich, M. N. (2007). Accredited and Nonaccredited Media Writing Programs Are Stagnant, Resistant to Curricular Reform, and Similar. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 62*(2), 142+.

Nevins, A. (1962). *The State Universities and Democracy*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Ogawa, R. T., & Bossert, S. T. (1997). 1: Leadership as an Organizational Quality. In M. Crawford, L. Kydd, & C. Riches (Eds.), *Leadership and Teams in Educational Management* (pp. 9-23). Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Poole, M. S., & Van De Ven, A. H. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reinardy, S., & Crawford, J. (2013). Assessing the Assessors: JMC Administrators Critique the Nine ACEJMC Standards, *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator,* 68(4), 335-347.

Roebuck, J. B., & Murty, K. S. (1993). *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Place in American Higher Education*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Ross, F. G., & Et al. (2007). Final Report of a National Study on Diversity in Journalism and Mass Communication Education, Phase II. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 62*(1), 10+.

Schonlau, M., Fricker, R. D., Jr., & Elliott, M. N. (2002). *Conducting Research Surveys Via E-Mail and the Web*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.

Scott, Robert. (1995). *Institutions and Organizations.* London. SAGE.

Sloan, W. D. (Ed.). (1990). *Makers of the Media Mind: Journalism Educators and Their Ideas*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Streitmatter, R. (1997). *Mightier Than the Sword: How the News Media Have Shaped American History*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

About the Author

Jerry Crawford II, PhD, is an assistant professor and Director of the Multicultural Scholars Program at the University of Kansas' William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications. His research focuses on the accreditation of journalism units, specifically those at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Contact Information: jcrawford@ku.edu