

Date: September 8, 2025

To: Dean Wallace

From: Dr. Beth Ribarsky, Director of the School of Communication and Media

RE: SCM Tested Experience Policy

The School of Communication and Media is supplying documentation for qualified “tested experience” for potential faculty members, instructors, and adjunct faculty.

In the discipline of communication, excellence can be demonstrated through both academic achievement and applied professional practice. While a terminal degree has traditionally been the standard credential, tested professional experience (e.g. public relations, journalism, organizational consultants) offers an equally valid form of expertise, particularly in practice-driven fields. This rationale for its pertinence to the School of Communication and Media is driven by several rationale:

- **Applied Relevance**
Communication careers rely on applied skills—such as public speaking, media production, conflict management, and organizational leadership—that are often best demonstrated through real-world practice rather than academic coursework alone.
- **Evidence of Mastery**
Tested experience, verified through leadership roles, awards, industry recognition, or demonstrated impact, provides tangible proof of expertise comparable to scholarly research or creative work.
- **Alignment with Standards**
Accrediting bodies in other professional fields outside of communication (e.g., business, public administration) already recognize professional experience as equivalent to academic credentials.
- **Broadening Access and Diversity**
Limiting recognition to terminal degrees excludes accomplished professionals who bring vital, practice-based perspectives. Recognizing tested experience expands access, fosters equity, and keeps programs aligned with industry needs.

By valuing both terminal degrees and tested professional experience, the School of Communication and Media ensures our program remains rigorous, relevant, and inclusive—strengthening both student preparation and the field of communication – while ensuring we have faculty available to teach essential courses.

SCM proposes potential faculty members, instructors and adjunct instructors who may be qualified to teach courses within the program have the following appropriate "tested experience."

- Minimum of a master's degree in disciplines equivalent or adjacent to journalism, communication, or other closely related fields.
- Minimum of three years of professional, paid work or experience post-master's degree in a career related to journalism, communication, or other closely related fields.



Elizabeth Ribarsky
Director of the School of Communication and Media



Miriam Wallace
Dean of the College of Public Affairs and Education

Dear Dean Wallace,

Between 9/3 and 9/8, the School of Communication and Media participated in an anonymous vote using Google Forms regarding the proposed School of Communication and Media tested experience policy. This policy is meant to verify an individual's qualifications to teach classes as an instructor, professor, or adjunct beyond degree requirements, such as professional experience. SCM voted a unanimous 7-0 in favor of this document (see below).

Sincerely,



Dr. Beth Ribarsky
Director of School of Communication and Media

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Approved:

