PROPOSAL FOR CURRICULUM REVISION
UO School of Journalism and Communication (1-9-09)

After a three-year process of curriculum review, the faculty of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication is excited to request that the UO Undergraduate Council approve a reorganization of undergraduate majors in SOJC. On Dec. 9, 2008, the faculty voted to adopt the revised structure we present in this proposal.

The proposal is designed to improve the progress of students into the major and to graduation. While aspects of this proposal will increase instructional costs, those costs should be offset by more efficient class scheduling and more predictable student progress through the curriculum.

The revised curriculum results from a lengthy, intense and spirited process of research, discussion and proposal vetting guided by the Ad Hoc Curriculum Revision Committee and involving all faculty members through working groups and full faculty meetings.

The review process arose from recognition of the need to define the SOJC undergraduate curriculum by content integration rather than by medium. Although the current premajor core has worked effectively for more than 20 years, we determined that the school could better serve students by 1) moving freshmen and transfer students more quickly into their major courses, and 2) integrating content in both fundamental core courses and upper-division tracks. Our overarching mission in reorganizing coursework and majors is to create a dynamic, vital and groundbreaking pedagogical structure that not only will better prepare our students for a wide variety of careers in 21st-Century media but also will better prepare them to forge paths of excellence and leadership for the challenging times ahead. This proposal summarizes our recommendations for addressing the most significant question driving comprehensive curriculum revision in SOJC:

How best to facilitate original and flexible approaches to education in journalism and communication while maintaining the century-old excellence of SOJC?

Our review focused on the Premajor Core and Admissions Requirements, Portfolio Development, Majors, Upper-Division Core and Electives.
Goals

- Streamline the premajor core so that it allows students to move quickly into core major courses and have more time to take courses in the major.
- Better serve the University at lower- and upper-division levels.
- Integrate technological and conceptual pedagogies for better comprehension, retention and creative/critical application.
- Facilitate curricular flexibility in order to better meet the challenges of rapidly changing journalism and communication practices.
- Facilitate development of student cohorts to build community and strengthen resources for diverse populations.
- Better position the SOJC as one of the leading journalism/communication schools in the country and internationally.

Solutions

Summary: Reduce premajor core, strengthen major core at both lower- and upper-division levels, require portfolios of all students, increase major requirements, add electives.

- Reduce the premajor core from 19 to 8 credits. The current premajor core requires J101 Grammar (3 credits), J201 Media and Society (4 credits), J202 Information Gathering (4 credits), J203 Writing for Media (4 credits), and J204 Visual Communication for Media. The revised premajor adds a new 2-credit course—J100 21st-Century Media—to introduce contemporary practices, uses and professions in journalism and communication to a broad university constituency; reduces J101 Grammar to 2 credits in order to free 1 credit for upper-division work, and retains the 4-credit J201 Media and Society course, which focuses on history, fundamental concepts, theories and issues. J201 would continue to satisfy a University Arts and Letters requirement. The reorganization shifts J202, J203 and J204 into the SOJC major sequence as an integrated, 12-credit block.

- Revise Admission Requirements. In addition to reducing the number of credits required for the premajor core, we reduce the minimum number of UO credits from 45 to 24. We retain the requirements that students earn a cumulative UO GPA of at least 2.7 and earn a P, C- or better in Grammar and Writing 121 and 122 or 123 before admission to SOJC as majors. Under the revised curriculum, admission requirements can be summarized as follows:
Revised Admission Requirements

J100 21st-Century Media (2 credits)
J101 Grammar for Media (2 credits)
J201 Media and Society (4 credits)
Writing 121 and 122 or 123*

2.7 GPA
24 min UO graded credits (including premajor core, may include Writing)

*In the current premajor core Writing 121 and 122 or 123 are prerequisites for J203 Writing for Media. We want to retain the Writing courses as requirements for admission to the major and clarify the need for freshmen and transfer students to complete those requirements early.

• Integrate the concepts and skills taught in J202 Information Gathering, J203 Writing for Media and J204 Visual Communication into a revised 12-credit lower-division core required of all majors in SOJC. (This is called “Gateway to Media” in the attached curriculum summary.) Students will take a coordinated eight credits in fall or winter terms (registering for two corequisite, four-credit courses with coordinated curricula) and follow with four credits in winter or spring terms. Faculty will plan the 12 credits as a unit using increasingly complex projects to build a strong conceptual and skill base. The module will stress multimedia approaches to journalism and communication, integrating the gathering of information with both print and electronic-format writing, editing, design, dissemination and production practices. The module will be taught in a large-lecture format with students breaking into small groups for work in labs. The integrated structure of the course will make it easier for faculty to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses and work with them accordingly. The 12-credit, two-term structure will facilitate cohort development, which will foster student community and mutual support and also make it possible to better assess student progress through the curriculum. SOJC will discontinue offering J202, J203 and J204. The Registrar’s Office has suggested using the numbers J205, J206 (taken in tandem) and J207 for the revised 12-credit module. Important to note is that the shift to new numbers recognizes the reorganization of fundamental content in keeping with 21st-Century media developments.

• Require portfolios of all students. The ultimate goal of the lower-division 12-credit module is to give students the opportunity to begin a professional portfolio they will continue to build throughout their undergraduate preparation, thus facilitating their abilities to obtain top professional positions on graduation. Portfolios will be reviewed as part of coursework
as students work through their majors. This process will strengthen SOJC’s overall practices for assessing student progress.

- **Combine three existing majors**—News Editorial, Magazine and Electronic Media—under the umbrella term “Journalism.” The Journalism major is currently listed in the UO Undergraduate Catalog and will be clarified in the proposed curriculum. The comprehensive Journalism Major will focus curriculum on core cross-platform journalism concepts and skills, rather than on the traditional individual platform-based model of 20th-century practices. This facilitates flexibility and best use of resources in a rapidly changing media environment. The Journalism Major will begin with broad-based Reporting courses and allow students to focus their studies in one or two areas as they move through coursework.

- **Retain Public Relations, Advertising and Communication Studies, making it possible for students to select from one of four majors (Journalism, PR, Advertising, Com Studies).** The reorganized curriculum also will facilitate students’ developing cross-major paths with adviser guidance. The school also will retain the Communication Studies minor, which serves both SOJC and University populations with strong conceptual, critically based coursework.

- **Require all students to take 16 credits of Core Context Courses.** Students must take two 300-level courses from Ethics, History, Law, Diversity (Gender/Race/Media) and International Communication, and two 400-level courses from topics in Media Studies, Media Ethics and Law, Research Methods, and International Communication. Major tracks may specify one four-credit context course as a requirement (for example, Journalism may require Law).

- **Require all students to take four to eight elective credits in SOJC.** These credits may include internships, workshops, Senior Experience, study abroad, additional skill or conceptual courses, or other courses as determined with advisers.

- **Require all students to take a minimum of 60 credits for a major in SOJC and allow them to take a maximum of 64 credits for a major in SOJC.** This will strengthen student preparation by increasing the minimum number of credits required for a major from 49 to 60. The 64-credit maximum is the maximum allowed under accreditation standards of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. SOJC is a nationally accredited program.
SOJC requests that the Undergraduate Council approve this revised curriculum structure as soon as possible so we can begin implementing changes. We do recognize the need to continue offering the current structure for a while in order to serve students in the pipeline. However, we expect to implement the reorganization through a “resource-neutral” process—meaning we will gradually transition resources from the current curriculum into the revised curriculum. We propose the following schedule for transition and implementation:

Winter 2009  
Pilot J205/206 Gateway I and II with transfer students as J410  
Advise eligible students about revised curriculum

Spring 2009  
Pilot J207 Gateway III with transfer students as J410  
Pilot J100 21st Century Media as J199  
Advise eligible students about revised curriculum

Summer 2009  
Offer full premajor core from current curriculum  
Advise incoming students about revised curriculum

Fall 2009  
Offer J100 21st-Century Media and J205/206 Gateway I/II, along with current premajor courses at reduced levels  
Advise eligible students about revised curriculum

Winter 2010  
Offer J100 21st-Century Media, J205/206 Gateway I/II and J207 Gateway III, along with current premajor courses at reduced levels as needed  
Advise eligible students about revised curriculum

Spring 2010  
Offer J207 Gateway III and J100, and current premajor courses at reduced levels as needed  
Advise eligible students about revised curriculum

Summer 2010  
Offer current premajor courses as needed  
Advise incoming students about revised curriculum

Fall 2010  
Begin full implementation of revised curriculum, and schedule old curriculum courses only as necessary to support students in pipeline