MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 22, 2005

TO: Jerry Hogle, Vice Provost for Instruction
    Jacqueline Mok, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Initiatives
    Jami King, Associate Registrar for Curriculum

CC: Jacqueline Sharkey, Head, Department of Journalism

FROM: Jim Shockey, Associate Dean, SBS

RE: Proposal to Create a Journalism Premajor

I am attaching a proposal to create a formal premajor status for the B.A. program offered by the Department of Journalism. The format utilized previously by the Department of Communication served as a model for many aspects of this proposal, particularly with respect to how it will be implemented. It has been reviewed and approved unanimously by the SBS Curriculum Committee, and carries the full support of the SBS Dean’s Office. The proposal has two motivations.

First, it is designed to increase the likelihood that students taking the central skills courses in the major will have the necessary preparation to pass the courses and thus obtain the required skills. As the proposal makes clear, outcomes assessments of various forms indicate this has not been the case in recent years.

- A comparative analysis of students’ performance in Journalism skills courses, and their performance in courses prior to beginning the skills classes, was used in defining the parameters of the proposed premajor.
- Students interviewed recently by the external Academic Program Review team reported that distinct subgroups exist within the population of Journalism majors. They identified two groups in particular that negatively impacted the quality of their educational experiences in Journalism classes (especially the required skills classes). The first group includes those students who chose Journalism more for its relative lack of strict premajor requirements than for their inherent interest in the major, while the second group is composed of those with inadequate language and mathematics preparation. Both groups tended, from the perspective of the students interviewed, to slow down classes and thus limit the ability of prepared and committed students to progress educationally.
Second, the proposal hopes to limit (in an intelligent manner) the number of students declaring journalism as a major. At present, enrollment growth in journalism is unmanageable and indeed threatens the department’s accreditation. This last issue—one of enrollment management—was a central theme of the report produced earlier this semester by their external Academic Program Review team. The department must find a way to reduce its student-faculty ratio, and that report encouraged the department to identify ways that it could limit its student population while at the same time bringing new faculty on board. This proposal aims to address the demand side in a manner based solely on improved curricular relevancy of prerequisite coursework for the major, and not on the addition of unnecessary and unwarranted coursework.

In short, the proposal seeks to impose a set of requirements which are anything but arbitrary and punitive, and the resulting premajor is in my view necessary for the good of the students majoring in journalism as well as for the department as a whole.

The entire process is made more complex by the impending external accreditation review, to occur early in the spring. It is my hope, and that of the Journalism Department as well, that this proposal will receive as swift a review as possible at all levels, so that in the event of its eventual approval, it can be implemented at the earliest moment possible.

I would be more than happy to provide you with any additional information or support you find necessary. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Attachment
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
TUCSON ARIZONA

PROPOSED PRE-MAJOR FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM

Introduction

This memorandum proposes instituting an undergraduate premajor for the Department of Journalism. The Journalism faculty and the department's senior undergraduate advisor are requesting that the premajor go into effect with the 2006-07 catalog; that is, for the Fall 2006 semester. The faculty and the senior advisor believe that the premajor will ensure the best possible educational experience for undergraduate students in the professionally oriented Journalism program, and will maximize students' chances of success in the highly competitive information-industry marketplace. In addition, the premajor will address grave concerns about the department's enrollment that were noted in the October 2005 report issued by the Journalism Academic Program Review Committee. The committee noted that the department had only 6 full-time faculty and more than 600 majors in Fall 2005, for a student-faculty ratio of 100 to 1. This ratio is so alarming that the APR Committee said it presented a very serious risk to the department's accreditation. The committee recommended strongly that the University and the College support robust, simultaneous efforts to control enrollment and hire more full-time faculty. This premajor proposal is the department's response to the enrollment issue.

Premajor Proposal

The premajor would require students to fulfill the following criteria before taking any Journalism class:

1. Earn a grade of B or better in each semester of Freshman English. Please note that the first class in the skills curriculum, Reporting the News (Jour 205), currently has a prerequisite stating that students must earn an "average" of B or better for Freshman English, which means that students could earn an A in the first semester and a C in the second semester, and still be admitted to Journalism 205. The premajor requirement would replace this Jour 205 course prerequisite.

2. Earn a B or better in Math 165 or a higher-level mathematics course.

3. Earn an overall GPA of 2.5 or higher.

4. Have sophomore standing. Please note that because Jour 205 has a prerequisite of a B average in Freshman English, Journalism majors at the present time don't start the skills curriculum until they are sophomores.
Rationale for the Premajor

The premajor is necessary for several reasons. First, undergraduate enrollment in the department has doubled in the past five years, from 316 majors in Fall 2000 to 633 in Fall 2005. Current course prerequisites—which include a B or better average in two semesters of Freshman English before students begin the journalism skills curriculum—have not been sufficient to bring enrollment growth to any reasonable level. Meanwhile, this explosive growth has put enormous pressure on the Department of Journalism, especially in light of the fact that the department has not been able to hire sufficient full-time faculty to cope with this sharp increase in the number of majors.

The second reason for requesting the premajor is that the Journalism faculty continues to find that many students in the department's skills curriculum lack basic grammar, spelling, and other language skills that are essential for succeeding in the department's professionally oriented curriculum. The faculty believes that requiring students to earn a B in each semester of Freshman English will ensure that students who become Journalism majors are well-prepared for the department's writing-intensive curriculum.

The third reason is that the faculty consistently has found that students are very deficient in basic mathematical skills that are crucial for every journalist, and believes that a mathematics requirement must be included in the premajor. A very large percentage of the source documents that journalists use for their reports include numbers or statistics. These sources include government reports, polls and surveys, studies by academic institutions or policy organizations, and economic data. This means that a very large percentage of news reports—whether they are disseminated through print, Web, radio, or television media—must deal with numbers or statistics. These include reports about government policies on the local, state, and national levels; economic and social issues; business trends and stock-market analyses; and information about sporting events. To ensure that students have the minimum level of mathematical skills necessary to succeed in journalism classes (and in the information workplace), the department believes it is crucial to have a mathematics requirement.

Timelines and Procedures for Implementing the Premajor

The points below are based on those approved by the Undergraduate Council in April 2002 for implementing the Communication Department premajor.

Timeline for Implementing the Premajor

The premajor will not affect current students who become Journalism majors in Spring or Summer 2006 under the 2005-06 catalog. It will affect only students who will be entering the University under the 2006-07 catalog, or current students who wish to declare Journalism as their major after the last day of Summer Session, which is August 9, 2006.

As of August 10, 2006, current students who are premajors or majors in other subject areas could change their majors only after attending a group orientation session led by Journalism Department academic advisors, and submitting SAPRs to these advisors, who then would enter them into the premajor or major, depending on the students' records.
The department wants to note that all current course prerequisites and requirements will remain the same for all Journalism students, whether they have started in the department as majors or entered through the pre-major. All Journalism majors must complete 27 units in the major, including the following requirements: Jour 203, 205, 206, 208, 320A, 380 or 411, 413, 439 or 470, and one of the following capstone courses: 450, 451, or 480.

Action items for implementing the pre-major include the following:

- The Curriculum and Registration department must create a PRJ code, which will be applied to any students under the 2006-07 catalog who wish to become Journalism majors as of Fall 2006.

- The Admissions Office, and any other administrative entity that can designate majors for students, should designate incoming students who will be under the 2006-07 catalog, and who want to be Journalism majors as of Fall 2006, by the PRJ code.

- The Journalism Department will monitor the PRJ majors as to their status with regard to the core requirements and GPA standards, and will take responsibility for changing the students' major designation to JOUR when they have met the criteria for the Journalism major.

- Incoming transfer students will submit a transcript to department advisers, who will work with University advisors regarding course equivalency and decisions about whether transfer students should be classified as Journalism premajors or Journalism majors upon admission, who would evaluate their credits and determine whether they would become premajors or majors.

- University administrative support will be needed to change catalog and SIS descriptions for 2006 and beyond.

- There may be other administrative details that the department is unaware of that must be managed. The department is committed to working with the University community and the state university and college system in meeting administrative needs for information.

- The Journalism Department will look for ways to provide freshmen interested in Journalism with opportunities to learn more about the discipline and interact with faculty members. The department will extend invitations to freshmen premajors to join the student chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, whose advisor is a faculty member. Journalism also will be open to offering Freshmen Colloquia.

**Plans for informing the Campus about the Premajor and Advising Potential Majors**

Plans for informing the campus community about the Journalism premajor – and for advising potential students about its requirements – will be done through personal contact; student, advisor and other campus listservs; orientation sessions; handouts prepared by the Journalism Department; and a story in the Arizona Daily Wildcat. The department also will ensure that Journalism faculty and staff are well-informed about the premajor so they can discuss it with current, newly admitted, and potential students.
The following are the ways in which these plans will be implemented:

- Journalism Department advisors and staff will prepare information for the Journalism Department Web site about the premajor. The information will include Journalism premajor requirements and the appeals process; Journalism advisor contact information; dates, times, and locations for orientation sessions; and other information that will serve the student and advising communities.

- Journalism advisors and staff will prepare an information packet about the premajor that will be available in the department’s main office, advisors’ offices, and literature racks in the advising area. The packet will be provided to advisors in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, General Education advisors, and the staff of the Freshman Year Center. It will have information about premajor requirements, the appeals process, orientation sessions, and how to contact Journalism advisors.

- Journalism advisors and staff will prepare press releases, announcements for listservs and bulletin boards, and other forms of information support for students, advisors, staff, and faculty.

- Journalism staff will be prepared to direct students to printed information and the department’s advisors, and to pass along informal information about the premajor.

- All Journalism faculty members will be given flyers about the premajor to pass out to all students in all classes. The faculty will be fully briefed about the premajor, so they can answer students’ questions in class.

- Journalism advisors will inform College and General Education advisors, and Freshman Year Center staff, about the premajor and the appeals process.

- Journalism advisors will provide briefings and information packets to community college and high school advisors and staff. The CEG and CAS systems will be updated if necessary to reflect premajor course work and the GPA requirement.

- Journalism advisors will provide orientation sessions that will present information about the premajor requirements and appeals process. These will include Freshman Orientation sessions during the summer, and at least two one-hour orientation sessions for potential majors each semester. Each session will be limited to twenty students, to ensure that all questions are answered and concerns are addressed. The first session will be held the fourth week of classes. The advisors anticipate that students will have settled into their classes by that time, and may have questions about their options for different classes and/or majors. The second session will be held one week prior to the first priority registration period. Advisors anticipate students will have additional questions about the major and what courses they should schedule for the following semester. Journalism advisors will hold additional sessions each semester if they ascertain that two are not sufficient to meet student needs or student demand.

- Journalism advisors will discuss the premajor with transfer students during the regularly scheduled transfer advising session scheduled by the University. Transfer students also will be invited to the one-hour orientations for potential majors discussed in the paragraph above.
Implementing the Premajor and the Appeals Process

Students in the premajor would have to earn Bs or better in first-year English composition and in math, as well as maintain an overall GPA of 2.5 or higher. Journalism academic advisors would preregister students into major classes on the assumption that the students would earn the necessary grades. If the students did not earn these grades in the English or math classes, advisors would drop them from the Journalism courses and inform them that they would have to remain in the premajor to GRO the class(es) or take another class (or classes) of equal or greater difficulty. Students would have one additional attempt to earn the required GPA in the premajor class(es). If students did not earn the required GPA, the premajor would be revoked.

If students attained the necessary grades in English and math, but did not achieve an overall GPA of at least 2.5, they would be dropped from Journalism classes until they had raised their GPA to the minimum level.

Students wanting to appeal these decisions could submit a portfolio of classroom or published work for review by a committee of at least two faculty members, with the department head casting a tie-breaking vote if needed.

Plan for Advising Students Who Do Not Meet Requirements for the Journalism Major

Two meetings to discuss alternatives (one per semester) will be held for students who do not meet the requirements for the major. The Journalism Department and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences will partner with other departments and colleges as well as the University College and the Freshman Year Center to assist students in their search for a major that matches their interests, abilities, and career goals.

Conclusion

The Journalism faculty and the department’s senior academic advisor believe that by instituting the premajor, the department will help ensure the best possible undergraduate experience for all students, and the best possible preparation for Journalism students who will enter the workforce in an economy that increasingly is driven by information and information industries. The premajor also will address grave concerns raised by the Journalism Academic Program Review Committee regarding the effects of ongoing enrollment growth on the department’s accreditation.