

Recommendations Regarding Culture and Communications, Journalism, and Media Studies at NYU

I. PREAMBLE

After a thorough discussion and evaluation of the options and opportunities expressed in the reports of the faculty-led Steinhardt Strategic Assessment Committee and the Task Force on Culture and Communication, as well as the advice from many members of the faculty and the deans, and driven principally by academic considerations, the Senior Administration of the University recommends leaving the departments primarily involved in culture and communications, journalism, and media studies in their current school homes.

The Administration makes a number of recommendations which are designed to enhance the programs in culture and communications, journalism, and media studies. These recommendations seek to provide mechanisms to increase the ability of the faculty in the individual schools to collaborate across schools thereby achieving creative and intellectual synergies. We emphasize the importance of synergy -- both within the School and throughout the University.

Below are listed the specific recommendations, followed by a narrative elaboration on these recommendations, and a conclusion.

II. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Administration recommends the following actions:

- Each of the existing academic departments and programs responsible for teaching courses, administering programs and conducting research in the areas of culture and communications, journalism, and media studies remain housed in their current locations within the University. We further recommend that efforts to coordinate instruction, curriculum, research, hiring and retention among these units be improved and intensified within existing structures.
- The provost, in conjunction with the relevant deans and other appropriate administrators, appoint a university-wide *Coordinating Council for Culture and Communications, Journalism, and Media Studies*. This affinity group will consist primarily of faculty members (together with a representative from the provost's office), and will be co-chaired initially by Ted Magder (Professor of Culture and Communications) and Jay Rosen (Professor of Journalism). The Council will begin implementing a program designed to enhance research and teaching in the areas of culture and communications, journalism, and media studies.

- This Council will have two general functions: (i) to encourage faculty membership in, and commitment to, a university-wide effort to enhance teaching and research in the areas of culture and communications, journalism, and media studies; and (ii) to oversee the distribution of an initial modest investment of University and school resources to initiate projects and interactions and to provide a framework for their future development and growth. A possible menu of activities for the Coordinating Council:
 - Design appropriate mechanisms for improving coordination in curricular offerings -- including integration, elimination of redundancies, designing joint courses and seminars
 - Improve informal mechanisms for offering advice on hiring within the relevant departments, including identifying opportunities to create synergies, such as joint appointments, as well as other potential hiring opportunities.
 - Organize several focused working research groups drawn from faculty and graduate students from across the University in the areas of culture and communications, journalism, and media studies. (For example, we imagine that there will be three research groups working at any one time, with their projects expected to last 2-3 years -- meaning that some will be beginning as others are drawing to a close. These projects, which would reflect the current interests of members of the faculty, are conceived to (i) promote cross-departmental and cross-school research, (ii) improve the quality of graduate students and their research, and (iii) improve interactions between the NYU community in these fields and the communication, journalism and media professions in New York City and beyond. These working groups will have recognizable academic output, e.g. scholarly essays and books, white papers, public conferences and initiatives.)
 - Oversee the development of a website designed to reach internal and external audiences highlighting the depth and breadth of talent and resources throughout NYU in the areas of culture and communications, journalism, and media studies.
 - Organize a seminar series and perhaps an annual conference.
 - Participate with the Office of University Development (in conjunction with the deans and the schools) in seeking funds to support the areas of culture and communications, journalism, and media studies at NYU.

This sample menu of activities of the Council is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. It should be up to the Coordinating Council to lay out a set of explicit goals, design programs and activities that advance those goals, and develop a set of criteria against which success can be measured. The Coordinating Council will be expected to issue a report along these lines to be submitted within nine months after the group has been charged. During this period, some of the activities outlined above are anticipated to be underway.

For their part, the University and the schools will make a modest initial investment to encourage the activities of the Council. Subject to the Council's success in enhancing teaching and research in culture and communications, journalism, and media studies throughout the University, the provost and deans anticipate a sustained commitment to the Council. The University Administration will, after the initial period of investment, follow its regular processes of review to explore with the faculty continuation of the Council, further funding, sunset provisions, and the like.

III. ELABORATION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Administration was struck by the importance of keeping the departments primarily involved in the Task Force (Journalism, Culture and Communications, Performance Studies and Cinema Studies) in their current school homes. The Senior Administration viewed this choice as maintaining the status quo only with respect to location and not with regard to ambition or aspiration.

The key for us was the successful development of the relationship between Journalism and the College of Arts and Science on the one hand, and that between Performance Studies and Cinema Studies and the Tisch School of the Arts on the other. Over the course of the last several years, in a process marked by mutual responsiveness and joint understanding, the Journalism Department has reconceptualized itself -- so that it now sees itself as an integral part of the College. It has begun to adopt the College's academic values, to apply the standards of the College, and to design programs to take full advantage of its location in the College. Similar remarks may be said of Cinema Studies and Performance Studies as a part of the Tisch School of the Arts. Starting fresh, one could imagine locating Journalism, Performance Studies, and Cinema Studies in different schools than where they are presently located. But in the recent past, these departments in their respective home school have worked to have the departments' missions and programs of study reflect their locations in ways that are to the advantage of both the departments and the schools. And the schools see the departments as positive resources and have redefined themselves to incorporate the departments within their academic core. This alignment has allowed synergetic interactions between the schools and departments, and has made each more distinctive within their professions.

At this key moment in the history of the Steinhardt School of Education, the University Administration believes that much the same relationship should be encouraged between the school and its Department of Culture and Communications. To be sure, this

relationship has not always been well defined or mutually supportive. But education and communication are intimately interwoven. It is our strong belief that the time is ripe, given the school's self-conscious reconceptualization, to endorse a process of mutual redefinition and absorption by which Culture and Communications becomes a more integral part of the Steinhardt School of Education.

While our main emphasis is on strengthening the existing programs in their current locations, we recognize that there are many advantages to coordinating the teaching and research in those programs. In each case, efforts to do so must in the first instance rebound to the faculty, whose primary commitments remain in their departments and their schools. University-wide programs which are designed to encourage interdisciplinary research, or to coordinate education and research, cannot be a distraction or a diversion from the main goal of forging strong departments and deep relations between the departments and the core missions of their schools.

It is also true that the most successful programs of joint research and teaching are ones that are stimulated by faculty interest and commitment. The main role of administrators is to reduce or eliminate barriers, and to make such efforts easier by encouraging university-wide programs and by supplying resources to support these efforts.

In addition, the University, and its community and students, would clearly benefit from being able to highlight the extent of its offerings, its faculty resources, its opportunities for undergraduate and graduate education, and its research within the areas of culture and communications, journalism, and media studies. A website identifying the University's abundant resources and opportunities is an important component of any effort to achieve our long-term ambitions in this field.

With these principles in mind, the University Administration and the relevant deans thought it wise to make an initial investment in order to foster joint education and research efforts including research projects, seminars and conferences. The Administration is recommending a menu of several types of projects which could be undertaken. Because the Administration cannot (and should not) determine which research projects ought to be funded and which seminars run, or indeed, the full shape and scope of coordinated activities, it recommends that the provost appoint a university-wide faculty committee to oversee the initial stages of implementation and to determine more fully the activities over the period of initial funding. That Coordinating Council will report to the provost, not only on its initial plans but also on the criteria it adopts for determining the success of the initiative. This report is a precondition for any future investments.

IV. CONCLUSION

These recommendations are designed to recognize the importance of departments developing in ways that take full advantage of their schools, and of schools taking full advantage of the departments located within them. In addition, the recommendations are designed to encourage, enhance, and provide modest resources for coordination of the educational and research activities of the faculty in culture and communications, journalism, and media studies across the University. The recommendations are explicitly designed to posit to the faculty the type and scale of these joint activities that are most appropriate and most appealing to them. At the same time, the faculty is responsible to the University (through the Office of the Provost) for identifying the criteria by which these university-wide programs should be judged and providing evidence that these criteria are being met.