PAT meeting report and next steps
11/3/2018

Our newly constituted School of Journalism and Mass Communication Professional Advisory Team met on Friday morning Oct. 5 for a School overview and round-table discussions. Below you can find summaries of our discussions.

Now we are asking for further feedback from a broader range of stakeholders, including PAT alumni and partners who were not able to attend, as well as School faculty and staff. After Thanksgiving Break, we will move from data collection into developing an action plan to launch in Spring 2019.

We look forward to your responses via return email, particularly on the key questions (see below) posed to attendees in the two Roundtable Sessions. Please let me know (jfruit@kent.edu) if you have questions or would like further information.

PAB meeting highlights
- Since the 1990s, JMC has had an active and highly valued Professional Advisory Board. But in recent years, attendance at formal Board events in spring and fall has dwindled, and members have expressed concern about its mission and focus. As a result, we decided to seek out a broader range of our stakeholders and develop a Professional Advisory Team.
- We started with data and information gathered in advance of the meeting from our range of stakeholders. Those in attendance (about 20 plus faculty and staff) confirmed and added perspective to that data and information.
- We provided those in attendance with some updated information on the School as of Fall Semester 2018.
- We had two sets of roundtable discussions on key issues facing the School and how alumni and professional partners might engage with the School on those issues and other opportunities.
- Attendees had lunch with this year’s alumni award winners.
- The meeting adjourned to a reception and annual alumni awards ceremony in mid-afternoon.

Professional Advisory Team mission and scope of work
1. We need to develop and sustain broader, deeper, documented engagement by alumni and media-related professionals in the life of the School. We have a high level of engagement relative to most other academic programs on campus, but think we can do better, particularly in formalizing and building broader, sustained engagement around activities such as:
   - visiting with classes
   - coming to events
   - formal assessment of student learning (portfolio reviews etc.)
• brokering partnerships with media-related organizations
• interviewing and hiring interns
• assisting in career preparation and job searches
• advising student organizations
• recruiting new students
• financial contributions
• generally spreading the good word about our program

2. The PAT focus going forward should be on a more dynamic project-based, outcome-driven approach that finds ways to engage more of our external stakeholders in ways that have meaning and value to them, such as:
   • Structured engagement across our generations of graduates and professionals, as well as across their diverse career paths.
   • More regional and virtual engagement
   • Improved and sustained communication with alumni and professional partners through an appropriate range of channels
   • Two School current priorities for this year, career preparation and recruiting
   • A fall face-to-face meeting for planning and review, and --spring-summer hybrid meetings based upon defined projects and outcomes.
   • Structuring faculty and staff engagement and accountability for coordinating action plans.

Roundtable Session 1
Key questions:
1) Given the key considerations outlined earlier, what are your thoughts on how PAT stakeholders might prioritize their engagement with the School?
2) How do you suggest we broaden our base and reach out to more qualified people with whom the School and our students could find mutually beneficial interaction? Any suggestions on tactics for effective outreach to these targeted stakeholders?
3) Specifically, in the area of career preparation, what possibilities do you see where alumni and professionals could productively engage to help students better prepare for networking, internship searches, first job searches?

Key summary points from discussions
   a. Send out a survey of their needs, wants and how they’d each like to engage as individuals and from the perspective of their workplace.
   b. A bit more communication with stakeholders, such as email push a couple times each semester with bulleted updates etc. The survey above would be a good way to begin this.
   c. Come up with some sort of multi-semester project that would involve students, faculty and professional media partners. We talked about some of the efforts underway, but clearly there was interest in more of this.
d. Connect with the range of area professional media organizations with an eye toward broader engagement and student-faculty content creation partnerships with those organizations

e. Teach event planning management and sponsored content creation

f. Virtual mentoring. Ask PAT members to sign up as mentors and then create a database for students to connect with them and the PAT members would be virtual mentors (email, text, phone) for a semester. This is a way to directly connect PAT members with at least one student. Another group mentioned this might be done virtually through LinkedIn.

g. Clarity/transparency needed on internship policies and practices for hiring companies. Is there a database and regular communication with organizations hiring interns?

h. Leverage PAT member networks to broaden JMC’s reach. Have them bring professional guests to live and virtual meetings.

i. More effective engagement for critiques of student work.

j. Rethink job fairs from a “speed dating” perspective, but give students coaching to be better prepared.

k. More effectively articulate the benefits for alumni and professionals to be engaged with JMC (paying it forward, any tangible benefits, potential internship or employees).

l. Consider Loyola (Chicago) internship process as a model.

m. Consider a more formal “shadow days” program for newer students, particularly with regional media/company/organization partners.

Roundtable Session 2

Recruiting Undergraduates
1) How can our School and College separate ourselves from the pack?
2) How might we generate more applications from out of state?
3) How might we generate more applications from non-traditional students?
4) How might we follow up more effectively with qualified applicants?
5) Note importance of timely and competitive financial aid packages, debt reduction Strategies.

Recruiting Graduate students (see flyer for revised Master’s program)
1) How can we build upon this “shell of required courses,” using the breadth and depth of the university, to build compelling program options?
2) Targeting both full-time and part-time students, how should we be thinking about face-to-face, hybrid and fully online options to meet student needs?
3) What about summer workshops and boot camps for formal degree programs or professional education?

Key Summary points from discussions
a. Kent is known for producing ‘job-ready’ students, but are we current? Members felt we should do more cross-disciplinary engagement that is NOT tied to any particular program, but rather the school as a whole.

b. There was some question as to what our ‘brand position’ is – no one thought that was clear to them.

c. To differentiate ourselves, it was suggested that we have JMC offer scholastic awards to in-state and out of state HS students through a regional push, which would help us not just identify more recruits but also more quality HS programs. Similarly, another group discussed more explicit and broader marketing push on available scholarships/financial aid.

d. Leverage data from current students to track information about majors, coursework, internships, financial aid need, amount of debt, suggested classes and speakers; etc.

e. Tap alumni more formally to send us prospects.

f. The group discussed the need to set ourselves apart and to really tell our story. They said this is best told through our students, who they think are some of the best in the nation. We need to reinforce that marketing goes beyond promotion. It's about the good product. Telling the students stories.

g. For out-of-state students they said to focus on Kent as a cool college town. They suggested focusing less on the JMC/CCI programs, but rather play up the overall Kent/KSU college experience.

h. For graduate students, the target market is not clear. Who are we targeting and why? Given the more open curriculum, offer some “suggested” tracks, but indicate opportunities for building specialties from courses across the university.

i. Can we develop a “hybrid” online program that would give part-time professionals who want a Master’s degree but can’t travel to campus regularly the opportunity to complete our degree?