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Annual Review information for 2016-2017

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I'm just going to walk through the various activities I'm involved in ...

• **Director of Philadelphia Neighborhoods**

We had a good fall semester at Neighborhoods. Nothing extraordinary, to be honest, but traffic was steadily in the 40,000 hits per month ballpark.

We tried doing one fewer assignment in the fall, with the workload from that assignment tacked onto other assignments (for example, we stretched the individual enterprise story to be a more complex assignment). It gave the students the appearance of a lighter workload and it allowed us to add an extra week between the individual enterprise assignment and the final team project. It also added an additional field production day.

I think the individual enterprise and final team projects were overall actually better than they have been in the past but I missed having that extra assignment to push the students to challenge themselves, and I missed the extra class session. I think we went too long between class sessions during one stretch.

For the spring 2017 semester, we brought back that one assignment but we also took the neighborhood overview assignment and divided it into two assignments. The first part is to review the existing stories from the students' beats and critique the work. That is due the second session of class. The second part, which is due three weeks later, asks the students to map out potential story subjects for the final five production assignments, provide three contacts for each story and develop a list of five additional people from their beat who could serve as sources for upcoming stories.

I bunched the early assignments together, so there are assignments due every week for the first six weeks. This allows us to focus the last half of class on the individual enterprise and the final project.

So far, things are going well, though cutting the neighborhood overview into two parts feels (to me) like we are slowing things down too much. We'll see how students react.

The structure of the program has remained as it has since the spring of 2014: I teach the lectures for the first three weeks of all sections. Then, we break down into smaller groups, where students work with their faculty editors (of which I am one). I lead the mid-term critique session for all the sections, and the final class session for all. The various faculty editors sit in for lectures for the sections they work with. The expectations, standards and approach are uniform across sections. This system is taxing but it works well.

Oh, I don't remember when this became official (some time during the fall semester?), but Lew Klein donated \$100,000 to Philadelphia Neighborhoods so that we can run a 10-week summer fellowship program for five recent graduates every year for three or four years.

The idea is to have those five fellows work three days per week, earning \$500 per week, while documenting the city in the style of the class, but deeper. The fellows will do daily briefs, weekly features and three longer packages during their time with us. This is a way to keep Neighborhoods running over the summer, almost making us a year-round operation.

I need to begin the process for applications and reviews very soon.

- **Journalism & Society**

I really love this class, which I have now been teaching for 10 years.

Things haven't changed much. I update every lecture before every class, and I try to add two or three new lectures every semester. During the fall, I built new lectures on data visualization and on how the communication/media/journalism issues that have evolved since World War II led to the election of a reality television star as president (a non-partisan discussion, I assure you). I used that presidential presentation during one of the last classes for the semester and it really brought together many of the concepts that we had discussed in class (globalization, fragmentation, ownership issues, objectivity and partisanship in the media, etc.) during the entire semester.

- **Assistant Department Chair**

I have continued assisting with schedule building and the assigning of classes to full-time faculty members and adjuncts. I also handle the orientation sessions and recruiting events, as well as random visits from prospective students.

I try to assist the chair with various stuff, like filling in at meetings when necessary. I served as acting chair during the summer, which is actually pretty light duty (compared to during the regular school year).

The biggest burden with the position, I think, is that people perceive me to have knowledge, insight and power. So they ask a lot of questions. I'm talking about students, parents, adjuncts, faculty, administration, etc. It's not a real problem but whereas I can budget time in my life to do the schedule, the emails, phone calls and other random messages just kind of pop up.

- **University and other service stuff**

I'm the chair of the search committee for the new department chair. During the fall, I worked with a team designing an SMC core course. I sat on a panel as a recent Lindback winner, where I spoke about classroom techniques (actually did this once in the fall and again in the spring).

I lectured at Arcadia University last week, a few hours after I met with a group of Afghani government officials visiting the United States thanks to our State Department. Before the fall semester began, I led a writing workshop for people who run workshops for kids at Mighty Writers. I ran a few workshops for members of the Malvern Prep newspaper during the summer as well.

I feel like there were other things I volunteered for but I honestly can't remember. I generally say yes when people ask me to do stuff, so I lose track after a while.

- **Summer Research Grant**

Last summer, I worked with a small team (two official student partners, a grad student doing an independent study and a volunteer from St. Joseph's University) on a project to interview 75 Philadelphia-based musicians about their experiences in the industry. This was subsidized by a university summer research grant.

The idea is to create a database of conversations that people can use to understand what it means to be an artist here in Philadelphia. We compiled a best practices list and we're slowly uploading all the interviews to letstalkmusic.org. And by we, I mean me. The team was great but their interviews were so long that when they transcribed them, they became sloppy. We also have video that could be edited and a world of images.

This undertaking was way more work than I expected it to be. But we learned so much stuff that I have yet to fully process. When I have more time, I will delve into this more.

I plan to make this an on-going project, maybe a legacy of JUMP, once that eventually ends.

- **Future teaching stuff**

Ruth Ost asked me to pitch an Honors class. I have an idea, tentatively titled *Music, Journalism and The Quest for Authenticity*, though I think it might make for a good GenEd class.

The whole Trump ascendance has me thinking about this notion that people want authenticity (however you define it). I think they always have but in a media-saturated world, where we have plastic news anchor hair and global brands and the washing away of local culture, there seems to be this greater appreciation – a nostalgia – for things that seem real (i.e. not Hillary Clinton, apparently).

Music genres, like rock 'n' roll, [punk](#) and hip-hop, for example, grew out of historical eras and became movements. But those movements, and that music, was mediated by journalists. And as journalists tried to cover the various sounds, the performers often shied away or just goofed on the journalists (I think of the [Sex Pistols on the UK Today Show](#)). Artists don't want to

become representative of one idea. As artists, they are constantly trying to push the boundaries or their art form.

So there becomes this cycle: 1). Something real that sparks or represents a movement, 2). Music that exemplifies/illustrates that reality, 3). Journalists documenting the movement and its music, thus altering it and 4). Artists moving onto the next real thing.

I haven't fleshed this out completely but I think there is great potential here. And given the pop culture foundation, I think students would be into this.

- **Future Journalism Department staffing ideas**

As we progress down this path of multiple senior capstones, I believe we need a content curator to manage everything. A good news organization has consistency, plus there will just be a world of stuff to maintain. I've attached a job description that I have been preparing. It contains a budget, which shows that this would not actually cost the department additional money, as the content curator position would fill many of the roles currently occupied by adjuncts. The financial breakdown is on the document.

I think Chris Malo would be perfect for the job. He knows the drill at PN now. He's an excellent editor across platforms and the students like him. I understand he was very valuable in a similar role for the DNC Project team.

Regardless of who gets the curator gig, I see that person as the institutional memory of the place, the way Rick Beardsley was for so long at Temple Update. The curator would be the constant, as instructors rotate in and out over the years.

Should Neil Ortiz remain with PN (as opposed to getting the NTT position he is a candidate for), I would like to alter his job duties to better take advantage of his skillsets. I would like to make him a roving video instructor. He would teach modules on video shooting and editing in every Writing for Journalism section, as well as in RWI and RWII, Public Affairs Reporting, Fourteenth Street Magazine, Investigative Reporting and any other class that should be multimedia but is staffed by a non-video person.

He would continue to work out of the PN lab, where he would be available to ALL journalism students who need video expertise, including help with demo reels. Hopefully, this will draw more students to use that lab space.

I've attached that tentative job description.

- **JUMP**

We released printed issues in the summer and fall of 2016, and a winter edition in January 2017. We have three more issues lined up this year, and we may do an anniversary edition

book, which will be a 124-page, perfect bound, 5-inch wide x 7-inch tall photo book featuring our best work from the past seven years. Working on getting sponsorship for that so we can sell the books as a fundraiser.

The magazine project is a total tangent from my teaching gig. But we use a handful of students every issue (and online). Many students who previously worked on the mag are doing big things in the journalism world now (for example, Sofiya Ballin, Rick Kauffman, Mike Bucher and Colin Kerrigan). Senior journalism major Brianna Spause is one of our contributing editors now and she's won a ton of awards, including several for her JUMP work.

Like everything else I love, this is a massive, time-consuming task with no financial reward. I think about quitting or selling the mag all the time but in the end, I like identifying as the JUMP guy. It affords me access to a really fun life.

• **Personal stuff**

I exist to serve. That was the takeaway from my most recent existential crisis (they happen pretty frequently). I like that my job puts me in the position to be of use to people.

To avoid the stress, however, I have been trying to find distractions, like playing baseball. The great difficulty is time management, and learning to say no to people.

At this stage, I have everything in a very delicate balance. Everything gets done. I have time to think. I tread water sometimes but I'm not freaking out. I could be better at stuff – I feel like I used to get to know students so much more and I move from event to event, class to class so much that everything becomes a blur – but things are good.

If I were to take on any more duties, I would have to start relinquishing things. I'm open to anything. But I would have to prioritize and eliminate things if this balance gets nudged.

• **Future plans**

It is my great desire to take sabbatical in academic year 2018/2019. Not sure whether I'd like to do both semesters or do one semester and pair it with a study away program. But please be aware that Philadelphia Neighborhoods and Journalism & Society will need new instructors. It might be worth having a full-time faculty member even begin down at PN during the spring of 2018 just to get to know the drill. Just a thought.

In a perfect world, I'd like to do an overseas appointment after that. My dream would be to teach at TUJ for a year or two or three.

I have no desire to leave Temple University for another university or another job. This place has created so many opportunities for me, in so many different ways.

- **Contingency stuff**

OK, I'm going to throw this out there, too: If these four chair candidates flop for any reason, I would volunteer for the position. Wouldn't want to do it for more than three years (as that sabbatical and overseas appointment really are the goals) but I think I would be a decent leader. And it might allow the department to hire a senior researcher who wouldn't be burdened with the grunt work involved in the chair position.