University of Colorado **Boulder**

2022 Program Review

College of Media, Communication, and Information (CMCI)

Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee Report

Approved

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Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the College of Media, Communication, and Information (CMCI) was conducted in accordance with the 2022 program review guidelines. Self-study responses were prepared by the college as a whole and checked by two ARPAC members specifically assigned as liaisons to the unit, as part of the discovery process. These ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the self-study and from interviews and/or surveys with faculty, staff, and student unit members. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of five experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and meetings with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over September 7-9, 2022. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the dean, and wrote this report. Discovery process summary and external reviewer comments and recommendations are shared when relevant throughout this report. Although this review was conducted by CMCI as a whole college, in the future CMCI's program reviews will be conducted by individual departments.

Past Reviews

This is the first academic review of CMCI since its founding in 2015. The review is inclusive of the College and its individual units. Of these, the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC)—components of which became the Departments of Journalism, Media Studies, and Advertising, Public Relations and Media Design—was reviewed in 2003, and the Department of Communication underwent a self-study in 2013. The other CMCI units have not been reviewed previously.

Unit Overview and Analysis

The campus' standardized description of CMCI is available on the website of the Office of Data Analytics (ODA) at https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning. ODA updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report cites data posted in October 2021, reflecting the state of CMCI as of the academic year (AY) 2020–21. Additional and updated data obtained from the unit are also cited where relevant.

Disciplinary Context

As noted in the self-study, "CMCI was founded in 2015 to respond to the changing communication, media and information landscape." CMCI houses six departments offering undergraduate and graduate degrees: Advertising, Public Relations and Media Design; Communication; Critical Media Practices; Information Science; Journalism; and Media Studies. In addition, the college houses the interdisciplinary program in Intermedia Art, Writing, and Performance, which offers a PhD only. CMCI also supports four centers (Center for Democratic Engagement; Center for Documentary and Ethnographic Media; Center for Environmental Journalism; and Center for Media, Religion and Culture), one studio (Nature, Environment, Science and Technology Studio for the Arts), and four laboratories (Josephine Jones Speaking Lab, Immersive Media Lab, Media Archaeology Lab, and Media Enterprise Design Lab).

As a college, CMCI's multi-disciplinary identity is relatively unique among potential peers. The departments within CMCI also maintain distinct disciplinary identities. Two units, for example, undergo formal disciplinary accreditation (Journalism and Advertising, Public Relations and Media Design). As the self-study notes, this combination of multi-disciplinary and disciplinary identities creates challenges for characterizing CMCI as a whole with regard to its relative prominence within a particular discipline or

disciplines, nationally or internationally. The self-study states that "CMCI's unique interdisciplinarity *complicates efforts to assess its status in relation to peer institutions*" and does not provide peer comparisons. In contrast, the external review committee (ERC) report does provide a list of institutions that have attempted a similar interdisciplinary approach to "media, arts, technology, and communication": the University of Washington, Bothell; the Arts, Media, Engineering Program at Arizona State University; the School of Arts, Humanities, and Technology at the University of Texas at Dallas; the Ivan Allen College at Georgia Tech. The ERC report does not make an assessment of how CMCI's reputation compares to that of these peers.

Research and Scholarship

CMCI faculty engage in diverse and interdisciplinary research, creative work, and public scholarship. Types and topics of research, scholarly, and creative works vary widely across the departments within CMCI. The self-study describes this range of activities and approaches to research and creative work:

> CMCI faculty programs of research and creative work are *diverse*. They not only engage a wide-ranging set of topics and issues, but they do so through a variety of knowledge-creating paradigms. These include artistic representation, personal and professional narrative, and scientific explanation. As well, CMCI faculty seek to overcome rigid, unhelpful distinctions *between these genres*, developing new combinations that produce new effects.

The data provided in the Office of Data Analytics profile of CMCI also reflect this diversity in terms of types of research outputs.

However, declining productivity levels in some areas since 2016 and only minimal comments from the external reviewers addressing research and scholarship at all (which were aimed solely at the need for a renewed focus on research) mark this as an area of concern for CMCI. Looking at averages across CMCI for total seven-year activities reveals productivity in a number of publication and presentation categories, most of which place CMCI in the upper half of units across campus. (Refereed articles/chapters and conference presentations/papers rank in the lower half of campus units.) However, the self-study indicates that since 2016 these levels of productivity have declined in all categories except refereed articles/chapters and creative works.

The external reviewers made only minimal comments addressing research and scholarship, but those comments were aimed solely at the need for a renewed focus on research in the college. The most relevant statement the external reviewers provide with regard to research is in the context of a recommended "reset" of CMCI's graduate programs: "A reset would offer the opportunity to recommit to the research mission of the faculty. The faculty, too, would benefit from such a reset, which would enable them to refocus on their work as scholars and creative practitioners at an R1 institution."

Notably, the lack of any peer comparisons in the self-study also complicates efforts to evaluate research and scholarship productivity at the college level.

Collaborations

The initial "One College" vision for CMCI, discussed further below, proposed an interdisciplinary arrangement in which the units were fundamentally collaborative. Evidence from the self-study and ERC report suggests that this vision has foundered in important ways. In the words of the external reviewers,

> The promise of interdisciplinarity has lost its luster. Very few members of CMCI continue to ascribe to the "One College" ideal. Geographical dispersion among so many locations undermines any sense of belonging. The university's promise is on the line: what can we make of this differentiated cluster of programs scattered across 16 different buildings, with few shared spaces that can be labeled CMCI rather than the bits and pieces of departments? That promise to the dean, faculty, students, the academy must be made real and given a home and front door with dedicated space that serves as the place of CMCI.

The ERC report emphasizes that a graduate program "reset," as described further below, would allow the college to rebuild its collaborative focus: "A reset would offer an opportunity to articulate a unique profile of CMCI's combination of departments." The external reviewers specifically focus in on the value of rethinking a collaborative approach to graduate teaching:

> There is an opportunity to rethink the conceptual map of current graduate programs. Rather than simply eliminate a program(s), we suggest a collaborative reimagining of programs. Such a mandate must be part of the Strategic Plan. It should come with incentives for collaboration, and support for the realization of new approaches. The objective is not the creation of a one-size or one-college-fits-all degree program, but rather the identification of creative partnerships that would enhance units' abilities to staff courses, mentor students, and deliver educational and research experiences that are adequately supported.

Importantly, the self-study and the external reviewers both underscore that from the undergraduate perspective, CMCI's curriculum is collaborative, and wonderfully so. Still, from the graduate student, faculty, and staff perspective, the college is fragmented physically, intellectually, and administratively. The result is that the "One College" vision is, as the self-study quotes from one department's individual self-study, "'hollow, bureaucratic…rhetoric'," concluding it is "a cliché that substitutes for participants' necessary commitment to conducting complex and difficult conversations."

While the self-study gives significant treatment to the concept of collaboration in general, particularly across the departments within CMCI, it mentions very little about collaboration with institutions or research groups outside of CU Boulder, with the singular exception of external collaborations involving the Department of Media Studies.

Campus Context

CMCI's establishment reflects the University of Colorado Boulder's commitment to producing knowledge and educating students about and for the twenty-first century information economy. This role is captured in the college's twofold mission: for research and creative work, CMCI "cultivates reflective agents of change, creates new knowledge, and fosters forward thinking practices for emergent media, communication and information landscapes." For teaching, its mission is to produce graduates who "go forth as proactive leaders with the confidence, knowledge and skill to address the humanitarian, social and technological challenges of the 21st century."

CMCI aspires to achieve these research and teaching missions through a highly interdisciplinary approach, and as the ERC report notes, it is successful in "delivering a thoughtful, diverse curriculum to more than 2,000 undergraduates."

Strategic Vision and Planning

Both the self-study and the ERC report underscore that CMCI is in urgent need of a new strategic vision and planning process.

The current vision and mission date back to the founding of CMCI in 2015, and these were formally articulated as "One College, One Culture, One Plan" in fall 2017. Often referred to in shorthand throughout the self-study and ERC report as the "One College" approach, CMCI's vision is "to be the premier college of communication, information and media, an inclusive community of scholars and artists recognized for creative collaborations, public scholarship and interdisciplinary programs."

This vision is currently contested. The self-study asks (but does not attempt to answer) the following question: "Is our 'One College' idea merely an administrative construct or a promising vision?" The self-study reports that the college discontinued working on the strategic plan in spring 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine and argues that the ARPAC process is a foundation for returning to it:

> We needed to set aside the work on our strategic plan, and since the spring of 2020, we have also determined that our college leadership team did not have the capacity to begin a major strategic planning revision in parallel to the work required to complete this ARPAC review. Therefore, we decided for ourselves that the work to complete our self-study reports at both the departmental and college level for ARPAC would work best as the foundation for our next steps in strategic planning. This is a process we are anxious to begin, following the input we will receive from both internal and external reviewers at the conclusion of the ARPAC process.

Indeed, the concluding section of the self-study, Sec. 9F: "Achieving a More Fully Mature State," begins developing questions to help inform a strategic plan.

The external reviewers' report also highlights that strategic planning is extremely important, listing it as the first of three key recommendations. It documents that the external reviewers "heard many times that people take [the 'One College' vision] to be convenient rhetoric that justifies centralization of decisions." While the ERC report commends the many accomplishments of CMCI administrators, faculty, staff, and students in launching a new college, particularly during the challenges of the last few years, it notes that the initial plan for CMCI "didn't provide enough detail about operational structure, nor the resources to support the College in its startup phase."

Specifically, the ERC report states that:
- CMCI is in a time of transition.
- To move forward, the college requires "a detailed strategic plan that outlines (year-by-year for 3-5 years): key College-wide objectives; realistic projections of growth; resource need; and methods for participation and decision making."
- This plan must involve all stakeholders, "including the provost's office. The College Dean should work with the Leadership Committee, and most centrally the Department and Program heads, to establish the planning process. Faculty should play a key role in the formation of objectives that guide the overall development of the College."

The self-study and ERC report both emphasize that the next iteration of strategic planning for CMCI will be critical for the success of the college as it transitions from its initial launch phase into a more stable state.

ARPAC recognizes that CMCI delivers a first-rate undergraduate experience. ARPAC also recognizes that along with this significant success, CMCI faces challenges with budget and physical space, as well as with a lack of alignment between college and departmental leadership, disagreement around vision, siloing of academic units, and poor graduate student support and mentorship. These challenges are well documented in the self-study and the ERC reports.

CMCI is now at a critical juncture. The self-study refers to the moment as "an inflection point," and the ERC report succinctly states, "the time of that transition is now." To navigate this transition, ARPAC recommends a process of guided strategic planning with significant milestones calibrated to specific incentives over the next three years. ARPAC appreciates that CMCI has made strides toward strategic planning over the course of the program review process, engaging in much-needed reflection that was not done during the initial launch of the college, and believes that CMCI is now prepared to create a strategic plan that situates the college in relation to peer programs, articulates student credit hours as a basis for faculty and staff hires, and lays out a direction for inclusive faculty governance, a strong vision, and a decisive graduate student and research strategy.

The self-study includes requests for a slate of faculty and staff hires at this time of transition. The external reviewers do not address these specific requests, instead suggesting three priorities CMCI should adopt toward "resetting" and "right-sizing" the college: "(1) strategic planning, (2) graduate programs, and (3) resource allocation and decision making" (2). Because CMCI does not have such a strategic plan, ARPAC cannot for the most part endorse its specific budget requests at this time. ARPAC does, however, recognize that CMCI has clear funding and space needs. Further, ARPAC believes that CMCI needs external support to create the plan and proposes two support mechanisms: a faculty fellow for strategic planning to assist the dean directly and an external advocacy group (EAG) reporting to the dean to produce the plan. Ideally, the faculty director would be an experienced CU Boulder administrator, and the EAG would be composed of 3-4 members, drawn from the external review committee (or comparable). ARPAC recommends that as the faculty director and the EAG accomplish their work, CMCI should receive incentives in the form of budget and space affordances that will facilitate carrying out the strategic plan's objectives.

ARPAC notes one specific planning area in need of immediate attention: consideration of what needs to happen for APRD to earn accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The self-study notes that APRD "anticipates that its currently high student-faculty ratio may result in probationary accreditation" and that the unit "seeks assurance from campus and CMCI leadership that it will be adequately resourced to meet reaccreditation requirements." ARPAC supports the college's hiring of additional teaching faculty for ARPD if unit accreditation is at stake.

Governance

Both the self-study and the ERC report underscore that there have been significant challenges in enacting a college-wide governance structure.

CMCI is primarily governed by the college's bylaws; four standing committees ([1] academic community and diversity, [2] grievance, [3] personnel, and [4] undergraduate curriculum) as well as an ad hoc budget advisory committee occasionally convened by the dean; and a faculty council. Members of the faculty council are elected to represent every CMCI department and program and include both tenure-track and teaching-track faculty. The faculty council oversees development of consensus resolutions, revision of bylaws, and staffing and operation of the standing committees. In addition to college-level

governance, each department within CMCI has its own bylaws, leadership structure, and standing committee arrangement, which all vary to some degree across departments.

The self-study identifies several difficulties and challenges with regard to governance. Faculty and staff report ambiguities and inconsistencies with policies at the department, college, and campus levels. The faculty council members express difficulty gaining meaningful access to the dean, as well as challenges with filling both their own membership and that of the standing committees due to "the general fatigue and overload that have shadowed CMCI faculty and staff throughout CMCI's history." There is also a feeling among the faculty that senior faculty from some departments within CMCI carry an unfair burden with regard to faculty governance at the college level. This division among departments has also revealed itself in personnel issues, including conflict during tenure cases, which resulted in actions taken by the dean to clarify and become directly involved with the policies and procedures of the CMCI personnel committee.

The self-study identifies two faculty governance-related proposals it will likely consider in the coming years. The first is the adoption of the budget advisory committee as a standing committee, and the second is the development of a college-level faculty mentoring policy. Some individual departments also have plans to revise specific policies, including several departments looking to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion more fully in their bylaws.

Inclusive Excellence

CMCI incorporates definitions of inclusive excellence and diversity in its current strategic plan, which also contains notable and specific goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). In their report, the external reviewers identify DEI as a key component of their primary recommendation for CMCI to undertake a new strategic planning process.

The Office of Data Analytics unit profile lists 87 total faculty in CMCI (59 tenured/tenure-track faculty, 26 teaching-track faculty, and two research faculty). Of these 87 faculty, 41 (47%) identify as women, and thirteen (15%) identify as belong to an underrepresented[1] race/ethnicity. One faculty member is categorized as international. In terms of percentages, these numbers rank CMCI 21st among all campus units with regard to percentage of women faculty, 43rd with regard to percentage of BIPOC faculty (American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander), 31st with regard to percentage of faculty from an underrepresented race/ethnicity, and 8th with regard to percentage of international faculty.

The self-study reports a numerical increase since the college was instituted in women and underrepresented faculty, which "compares favorably with campus trends"; however, it notes that the percentage of underrepresented tenure-track faculty overall has decreased in the college.

The undergraduate student population is more diverse than the faculty in terms of relative percentages, but the ranks among units are relatively similar. Sixty-five percent of CMCI undergraduate students identify as women, while 17% identify as belonging to an underrepresented race/ethnicity. One percent of CMCI undergraduate students are categorized as international. These percentages place CMCI 15th among campus units with regard to women students, 39th for students from an underrepresented race/ethnicity, and 37th for international students.

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[1] ARPAC notes that it can sometimes be complicated to have consistent, shared terminology for protected class identity groups. In the context of this report, we use the term "underrepresented" to refer to individuals or groups that have been historically marginalized or minoritized within U.S. higher education. Although national data sources often use the term "underrepresented minority (URM)" to combine people who are Black, Latine, and Native American, ARPAC acknowledges that the term "minority" is contested and diminishing.

The graduate student population appears to be the most diverse constituency within CMCI, with graduate students identifying as 60% women, 22% international, and 18% from an underrepresented race/ethnicity. This ranks CMCI in the top 20 of all campus units with regard to percentage of students from all of these groups.

Since 2018, CMCI has had an associate dean for DEI on its college leadership team. The current person in this position, who also serves as the co-chair of the campus inclusion, diversity, and excellence in academics (IDEA) council, oversees a variety of CMCI efforts aimed at increasing representation of underrepresented faculty, staff, and students. These include summer programs targeting recently admitted students as well as rising high school juniors and seniors, training in inclusive pedagogy for instructors at all levels, student mentoring for first-generation college students, and a variety of professional development events on DEI-related topics. There has also been a focused effort to incorporate inclusive hiring practices at the college level as well as a recent college-wide cluster hire in race, media, and technology with the goal of adding at least one new faculty member to each department. Departments are encouraged to apply for faculty lines through the campus FDAP program as part of this cluster hire.

Unit Culture

Both the self-study and the external reviewers candidly describe significant climate concerns within the college.

In addition to the Campus and Workplace Culture Survey from Fall 2020, CMCI has engaged in two recent internal efforts aimed at understanding issues with climate and culture in the college: the "One College + Climate'' survey administered to CMCI faculty in 2019 and the "listening tour" conducted by the associate dean of DEI in 2018–19. As described in the self-study, results from these surveys and the listening tour reveal a college with strengths characterized by excitement and enthusiasm for the potential of CMCI as an interdisciplinary endeavor, a commitment to inclusive excellence, and general collegiality; however, the Fall 2020 survey identified issues with experiences of incivility, and a number of other challenges were identified across all three sources of data on CMCI's climate and culture. Specifically, the self-study reports that the survey, the dean's assessment, and the departmental self-studies revealed the following:

> Growing faculty fatigue, cynicism, and discouragement (if not outright resentment); fatalistic perception that current unstainable conditions will not be mitigated; unhealthy ripple effects created for faculty collegiality, and for faculty relationships with students and staff; and decreases in faculty identification with CU and workplace satisfaction, with negative consequences for their retention.

These issues include perceptions of unclear communication and lack of transparency at the college level, feelings of overwhelming and unevenly distributed service loads heavily weighted on the associate professor rank, "a negative spiral" of faculty losses, low average salaries and salary compression, the lack of a mentoring program, and collective burnout from the challenge of starting a new college with insufficient resources.

The ERC report echoes all of these findings from the self-study. With regard to the strengths of CMCI's culture, the external reviewers note that "it is evident that the constituents of CMCI remain committed to the future-forward spirit of the College" and that "administrators, faculty, staff, and students are to be commended for their resilience and dedication to the project." The external reviewers also heard

many of the same concerns expressed in the results provided in the self-study. They note that they heard the current climate "often described as 'an environment of scarcity,' with departments scurrying individually for scraps of resources, which leads to lingering resentments as some units seem to reap more than others." In addition, the ERC report reiterates concerns expressed with regard to CMCI's leadership in terms of lack of transparency and clarity, particularly around decisions related to the budget.

Faculty and Research Personnel

According to the Office of Data Analytics (ODA) profile for AY 2020-2021, the CMCI faculty included 59 tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty, 26 instructor-track faculty, and two research faculty, as well as 64 temporary faculty (i.e., lecturers and other instructional personnel).

Considered as a single unit (as this ARPAC review and the Office of Data Analytics profile both do), CMCI represents the largest faculty of any campus unit. The self-study indicates that the current number of faculty has increased by 35.5 FTE since 2015 as the college has grown since its founding. The self-study contains a request for an additional 32 tenure-track faculty lines in order "to create and maintain a quality undergraduate student experience that aligns with our promise to students who enroll in CMCI." The ERC report does not address this specific request but does recommend developing a multi-year plan for adding new faculty lines in combination with a "right-sizing assessment" that would "determine the optimal size of the College given the level of resources that are currently in place or are forthcoming in the near term." ARPAC notes the potential need specifically for faculty hires in APRD, as described above.

Faculty salaries are closest in comparison to AAU peers for faculty at the assistant professor rank, with the average CMCI assistant professor salary at 97% of the average AAU salary for the discipline. This is followed by associate professor salaries at 89% of the AAU average, and full professors at 82%. As a whole, average CMCI faculty salaries are 89% of comparable AAU peers' average salaries.

Undergraduate Education

CMCI offers a variety of undergraduate degree programs, majors, and minors, as follows:

Communication
- BA - Bachelor of Arts
  - Major: Communication (COMN)
Information Science
- BS - Bachelor of Science
  - Major: Information Science (INFO)
Journalism
- BA - Bachelor of Arts
  - Major: Journalism (JRNL)
Media Production
- BA - Bachelor of Arts
  - Major: Media Production (MDPD)
Media Research and Practice
- BA - Bachelor of Arts
  - Major: Media Studies (MDST)
Strategic Communication
- BS - Bachelor of Science

- o Major: Strategic Communication (STCM)
  - Option: Advertising - Creative (ADC)
  - Option: Advertising (ADV)
  - Option: Media Design (DSN)
  - Option: Public Relations (PRL)

Undergraduate minors
- Minor: Sports Media (CMSM)
- Minor: Communication (COMM)
- Minor: Communication (COMN)
- Minor: Information Science (INFO)
- Minor: Journalism (JRNL)
- Minor: Media Production (MDPD)
- Minor: Media Studies (MDST)

In the most recent Office of Data Analytics profile, there are 2,205 current majors in CMCI as well as 681 minors. CMCI awarded 722 total bachelor's degrees in the most recent year for which data is available (2020–21). This represents a 26% increase over the past five years, and a total of 6.86% of campus undergraduates.

In 2020–21, CMCI accounted for 58,531 student credit hours (SCH) taught, which was a 102% increase in the last five years. Forty-one percent of SCH were taken by non-majors, placing CMCI 45th of 56 campus units for this metric. The breakdown of SCH by type of faculty reveals that 33% were taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty, 23% by instructor/teaching-track faculty, 24% by lecturers/other, and 20% by GPTIs/TAs. Five-year trends indicate that the percentage of SCH taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty has decreased by 13% while the percentage of SCH taught by instructor/teaching-track faculty and lecturers/other has increased by 10% and 20%, respectively. GPTI/TA SCH loads have decreased by 5% over the past five years.

CMCI offers an undergraduate honors program, and 1% of students graduated with honors in 2020–21. In addition, all CMCI majors have the opportunity for experiential learning in the form of internships, and students completed 1,250 internships between 2017 and 2021. Internships are required by some CMCI departments, while other departments offer internships as an option for meeting degree requirements or earning elective credit.

Both the self-study and the ERC report describe CMCI's accomplishments in undergraduate education as a major area of success for the college since its founding. The external reviewers note that "the students we met express enthusiasm for the flexibility of degree programs that enable them to take courses across programs, citing interdisciplinarity as one of the unique strengths of the college." Similarly, the self-study lists the following as one of CMCI's major accomplishments to date: "Developed and built strong (even visionary) curricula to serve the diverse student needs for academic education, creative expression and professional training." The 2021 senior exit survey data provided by the Office of Data Analytics also show a majority of students indicating satisfaction with CMCI in nearly all categories; however, the percentages of satisfied students in two categories—"preparation for the job market" and "preparation for graduate school"—place CMCI in the lower half of campus units.

Between 2017 and 2019, CMCI developed a college-wide set of learning outcomes that are presented in the self-study. The college-level learning outcomes are mapped to outcomes at the degree program level, and each unit within CMCI has a three-year plan for assessing learning based on these outcomes.

Implementation of a college-level assessment program was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

ARPAC congratulates CMCI on its successful creation of a vibrant and interdisciplinary set of undergraduate programs with clear learning outcomes and urges the college to build on this success as it engages in strategic planning.

Graduate Education

CMCI offers a variety of graduate degree programs, as follows:

Communication
- MA - Master of Arts
  - Major: Communication (COMN)
- PHD - Doctor of Philosophy
  - Major: Communication (COMN)

Corporate Communication
- MA - Master of Arts
  - Major: Corporate Communication (CCOM)

Emergent Technologies and Media Art Practices
- PHD - Doctor of Philosophy
  - Major: Emergent Tech & Media Art Practices (ETMP)

Information Science
- MS - Master of Science
  - Major: Information Science (INFO)
- PHD - Doctor of Philosophy
  - Major: Information Science (INFO)

Interdisciplinary Documentary Media Practices
- MFA - Master of Fine Arts
  - Major: Interdis Documentary Media Practices (IDMP)

Intermedia Art, Writing and Performance
- PHD - Doctor of Philosophy
  - Major: Intermedia Art, Writing & Performance (IAWP)

Journalism
- MA - Master of Arts
  - Major: Journalism (JRNL)
    - Option: Professional Practice (PFP)
    - Option: Self Designed Area Expertise (SAE)

Journalism Entrepreneurship
- MA - Master of Arts
  - Major: Journalism Entrepreneurship (JRNE)
    - Option: Journalism Entrepreneurship (JEN)
    - Option: Sports Journalism (SJR)

Media Research and Practice
- PHD - Doctor of Philosophy
  - Major: Media Research and Practice (MDRP)
    - Option: Journalism (JNR)
    - Option: Media Studies (MDS)
    - Option: Strategic Communication (SCM)

Media and Public Engagement

- MA - Master of Arts
  - o Major: Media and Public Engagement (MAPE)

Strategic Communication Design
- MA - Master of Arts
  - o Major: Strategic Communication Design (STCM)
    - ▪ Option: Academic Research (ACR)
    - ▪ Option: Professional Media Design (PMD)
- MAP - Master of Arts
  - o Major: Strategic Communication Design (STCM)

ARPAC finds that graduate education is a significant area of concern for CMCI. The external reviewers conclude that "CMCI's graduate programs are in need of a reset." The issues of concern include program competitiveness, graduate stipend support, increasing graduate teaching loads, expectations for time-to-degree set against teaching duties, and the apparent decline in master's program enrollment.

According to the most recent ODA profile, there are 181 total graduate students enrolled in these programs, including 56 students in master's programs and 125 in doctoral programs. In 2020–21 (the most recent year for which data is available from ODA), CMCI awarded 36 total master's degrees and 13 total doctoral degrees. Notably, among all campus units, CMCI ranks second in shortest median time to degree for master's students and has the sixth shortest time to degree for doctoral students. According to ODA, the number of master's degrees awarded has increased by 44% over the past five years, while doctoral degrees have increased 8% over the same period.

Graduate students who receive funding from CMCI typically serve as teaching assistants (TAs) or graduate part time instructors (GPTIs). Funding is almost exclusively available only to PhD students and is guaranteed for four years. One department (Information Science) provides funding for some master's students via research grants obtained by department faculty. These grants also support research assistant (RA) positions for Information Science PhD students (in addition to TA or GPTI work).

The self-study reports both high GTPI teaching loads and an extremely quick time-to-degree. These two data points suggest a powerful tension in graduate responsibilities, one that does not seem conducive to wellness.

Further, the decline in many of the master's programs' enrollments is striking. Overall, enrollments in master's programs in CMCI declined from 67 students in AY 2016–17 to 57 students in AY 2021–22, with only Information Science and the new Corporate Communications master's programs seeing a notable increase. It suggests problems in marketing or in the design of these programs and perhaps a dysfunctional misalignment in resources. The external reviewers comment that "masters programs that cannot generate meaningful revenue to help support the mission of the college need to be reimagined, paused, or terminated."

Overall, the ERC report identifies graduate education as a key area of concern. The issues the external reviewers uncovered are numerous and troubling:

The doctoral students we met expressed strong discontent with the lack of support from their programs and the College more broadly. They mentioned inadequate stipends, heavy teaching loads, lack of space for teaching, research and creative practice. They noted that they don't feel a sense of belonging within the College. They didn't know each other; and were unaware of any sustained program of activities that would support the formation of a sense of community. They reported being beleaguered with teaching

responsibilities. Not one of the students mentioned their area of research or their faculty mentors (except, in one or two cases, to say they were happy with their committees).

The ERC report also notes recent difficulties with recruiting graduate students, likely due to the college's inability to offer competitive support packages. In addition, the external reviewers raise concerns with formal faculty mentoring for graduate students, space for research and creative work, and access to private office space for TAs and GPTIs to meet with students to alleviate potential FERPA issues.

As the ERC report describes, an overall reset would afford an opportunity to identify areas in which increased collaboration across CMCI in the delivery of graduate education would "enhance units' abilities to staff courses, mentor students, and deliver educational and research experiences that are adequately supported." ARPAC endorses such a reset as a major focus of the college's strategic planning process.

Postdoctoral Training

There is little mention of postdoctoral fellows in the self-study report. The self-study states that there have been a total of nine postdocs across CMCI since its founding. The majority of these have been housed in a single department (Information Science). There does not appear to be any coordinated support for postdocs at the college level.

Staff

According to the ODA profile for AY 2020–21, staff personnel in CMCI consisted of 47 university staff members, five classified staff members, and 38 student hourly employees.

CMCI staff is primarily centralized at the college level in terms of both organizational structure and source of funding. Staff support the following areas: undergraduate education and student experience, graduate programs, research, management of physical spaces and administrative support, budget and finance, personnel management, communications and engagement, DEI, and technology. Staff positions at the department level appear to focus on administrative support.

Related to the ERC report's concerns about graduate education, the self-study indicates that the area of most urgent need at the college level is "greater support for the administration of graduate programs." The self-study also presents a general concern regarding staff burnout and turnover related to the challenges of the past few years in addition to the immense effort required to launch and grow a new college. The self-study presents a request for 26 new staff lines "necessary to achieve expected levels of success in supporting student education, faculty research and creative work, and inclusive excellence initiatives." Similar to its treatment of the request for new faculty lines, the ERC report does not weigh in on this specific number of requested positions but recommends that a multi-year plan for new staff lines should be considered as part of the extensive strategic planning effort.

Budget

In fiscal year (FY) 2020, CMCI had a total budget of $25,083,290, with $22,736,699 coming from the general fund, $602,038 from auxiliary funds, and $1,744,553 from gift funds. Approximately 85% of this budget went to salaries/benefits with the other 15% going to operations, student support, and travel.

The self-study describes numerous budget challenges stemming from an initial budget deficit that increased as the college grew and expenses proliferated. According to the self-study, this has created great uncertainty with the budget at the college level, which has in turn caused "departmental

frustration and concern (e.g., by preventing confident planning)." CMCI acknowledges the need for a revised budget process that "encourages higher levels of trust, predictability, and support among its stakeholders."

The need for revising the budget process comes through strongly in the ERC report as well. The external reviewers identified significant issues with regard to lack of transparency and confusion with the current budget process. As the ERC report suggests, "department leaders don't understand how they should manage their fiscal matters, with several saying, 'we have no idea how [internal] budget decisions are made.'" This is further evidenced by the ERC's observation that "right or wrong, the perception outside the dean's office is that there is no clear budget planning." The external reviewers make multiple recommendations related to the budget aimed at increasing understanding of the college-level budget process at the level of department chairs, standardizing budgets across departments as much as possible, and creating transparency in hiring priorities as part of the strategic planning process. The external reviewers also recommend that the campus should be transparent with CMCI with regard to a realistic projection of available resources now and in the near term, an essential consideration for prioritization and planning efforts.

CMCI has a total of three FTE dedicated to fundraising provided by the campus Office of Advancement. The Office of Advancement also provides a budget of roughly $80,000 for fundraising activities. In FY2021, CMCI received over $3.3 million in charitable gifts, and the college expects to raise a similar amount in FY2022. Since its founding, CMCI has received seven gifts of $500,000 or more, with a largest gift of $2,475,000. CMCI's fundraising priorities include DEI initiatives, undergraduate scholarships, graduate student support, experiential opportunities, and endowed chairs and professorships. CMCI currently has only one endowed chair.

Space and Infrastructure

Space is identified as a major area of concern in both the self-study and the ERC report.

Currently, CMCI is spread out across nine on-campus buildings and one off-campus leased space. The self-study presents unmet current and projected space needs as critical to CMCI's operations. These needs include centralized spaces for meeting and collaboration to help improve issues related to the identity of CMCI as a unified college as well as specific urgent needs of individual departments. (The self-study mentions Communication and Critical Media Practices as two examples of departments with critical current space issues.) The self-study also indicates that continued growth of CMCI will not be possible without a plan for addressing projected space needs. CMCI's ideal strategic goal for space needs "would be new facilities dedicated to making, performance, exhibitions, screenings, and appropriate lab and classroom spaces for CMCI activities, including student gathering areas, student support hub (e.g., academic advising, career counseling, and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)), and administrative offices for the central support teams." The self-study notes that many in the college believe this would be best achieved by a "single, dedicated building, where all of CMCI's units can be housed together."

The ERC report also notes that space needs and "geographical dispersion among so many locations" are contributing to the inability of CMCI to meet the initial goals of innovation and interdisciplinarity that the campus pledged it would support in the initial vision for CMCI. Echoing the self-study, the external reviewers also call for a "home and front door with dedicated space that serves as the place of CMCI." At the department level, the ERC report identifies finding a space for the Department of Communication, which will be displaced from its longtime home in the Hellems Building during

upcoming building renovations, as the most urgent need. The external reviewers recommend that space planning should be central to the critically important next iteration of strategic planning.

Support Needs

With regard to support from the Research and Innovation Office (RIO), the self-study describes general satisfaction with support for grants in the departments that focus more on external funding. The self-study does identify that there is an area of opportunity to work with RIO to strengthen their understanding of CMCI faculty research interests in order to better align support with actual needs.

The self-study also indicates a variety of technology needs that could be potentially met by the Office of Information Technology (OIT). In particular, Information Science describes "mid-scale computing" needs for teaching and research that do not rise to the level of the high-performance computing resources provided by OIT's research computing. There are also a variety of specialized software needs across the college, currently paid for out of faculty research budgets, that could be supported centrally.

Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to CMCI and to the offices of responsible administrators:

To the Unit and the Dean:

1. Recruit a faculty fellow for strategic planning and an external advocacy group (EAG) to assist the dean with creating a strategic plan.
   a. By no later than August 2023, and subject to the provost's approval, recruit the faculty fellow for strategic planning from within CU Boulder but outside of CMCI. The dean should call on both CMCI and the rest of CU Boulder for nominations. The faculty fellow will be charged with helping the dean to recruit the EAG, managing the EAG's strategic planning assistance, overseeing the strategic planning process, and assisting in launching the plan's implementation. Ideally, the faculty fellow would be an experienced CU Boulder academic leader who would be appointed to serve in a 50% temporary capacity.
   b. By no later than September 2023, recruit the EAG. The EAG should be composed of faculty members from outside CU Boulder and will be charged with helping CMCI to refine its own sense of identity, structure, and purpose and to define its competitive identity in the context of its peers. Ideally, the advocacy group would be composed of 3-4 faculty members with administrative as well as scholarly/artistic credentials. Concurrent with soliciting nominations for the faculty fellow for strategic planning position, the dean should make a campus-wide call for possible advocacy group candidates.

2. Complete the strategic plan by June 2024. At a minimum, the plan should address the following:
   a. **Business Plan:** A complete strategic plan will include a business plan that uses the new CU Boulder budget model and other modeling tools (such as for enrollments) to calculate CMCI's optimal size and related needs over a ten-year interval. The business plan should resolve factual discrepancies found in CMCI's 2021 self-study around program enrollments, staff-to-faculty ratios, and faculty counting. The business plan should also account for undergraduate and graduate student enrollments, gift funds, scholarships, graduate support, research funds, costs associated with hiring and retaining faculty (including temporary instructors) and staff as well as other administrative costs, physical plant overhead, and all other CMCI income and cost factors. The plan should model anticipated expenditures against peers. It should aspire to be predictive and holistic.
   b. **Competitive Analysis:** A complete strategic plan will identify national peers (recognizing that peers may differ from each other and from CMCI in scope) and compare CMCI's strategic metrics to theirs. The results should be used to articulate CMCI's market competitiveness—for example, with regard to research, creative work, and teaching. Such an analysis should answer, "can CMCI be successful?"

c. **Graduate Programs:** A complete strategic plan will seek to understand the landscape in which CMCI's graduate programs exist. Critically, the competitive analysis described above should also inform a reconsideration of CMCI's graduate programs, including to answer which programs should be reimagined through interdepartmental collaboration, or paused or terminated. As part of this market understanding of graduate programs, the analysis should identify optimal graduate teaching loads and graduate student funding levels.

d. **Governance Structure:** A complete strategic plan will rationalize the unit's governance by comparing CMCI's existing organization to those of peer programs identified by the competitive analysis. The plan should consider governance changes in conjunction with a possible college reorganization—for example, as a school with divisions rather than a college with departments. The changes should come with measurable metrics to assess their impact on employee well-being—for one, to understand how governance upgrades (as well as actions addressed to enhancing budget and space allocations) help to reduce current unit discord. The faculty fellow for strategic planning and the external advocacy group should work to ensure that individuals within the college or at the campus administrative level possess the proper authority and accountability to bring governance changes into effect, including to help to coordinate actions among key stakeholders such as the provost, dean, executive vice provost for academic resource management, senior vice provost for academic planning and assessment, Graduate School dean, CU Boulder chief financial officer, and faculty members.

e. **DEI Strategy:** A complete strategic plan will clarify the college's diversity, equity, and inclusivity strategy. This clarification should employ demographics data to assess retention rates among faculty, staff, and students. Second, it should assess the cause of retention problems and propose recruitment and retention improvements. Finally, it should inform the business plan by specifying the optimal funding required to accomplish these solutions.

f. **Infrastructure Needs:** A complete strategic plan will identify and prioritize infrastructure needs from physical space to computing over the next ten years. It should build these needs into the overall business plan and take license to propose a consolidation of CMCI's operations at a single location. The identified needs should also include an estimate of the college's immediate and future computing and specialized software/licensing requirements.

g. **Vision:** A complete strategic plan will make a consolidated vision for CMCI clear. The plan should articulate a compelling vision for CMCI that is true to the unit's sense of itself.

2.1. To support the dean and the faculty, a timely, thorough, and fair strategic plan drafting process should proceed as follows:

a. The dean and the faculty should create the strategic plan by means of an open, transparent process with a clear timeline and intermediate goals.

      b. The faculty fellow for strategic planning should advise and guide CMCI's college and department leaders as they identify the college's priorities and emphases as they draft the strategic plan.

      c. The faculty director should also liaise between CMCI and the external advocacy group as the latter works with CMCI to analyze and define its identity in relation to CMCI's peer programs.

      d. The strategic plan draft should be completed no later than January 2024.

      e. The faculty director should be charged with overseeing the external advocacy group's involvement during a commenting period on the strategic plan draft open to the CMCI community, to last through March 2024.

      f. Following the commenting period, and in consultation with the external advocacy group, the director should oversee an editing and revising period led by the dean and the dean's leadership team that ends no later than June 2024, at which time the advocacy group's responsibilities would be complete. The dean should submit the plan to the provost by no later than the end of June 2024.

      g. The provost should give final approval to the strategic plan no later than September 2024.

      h. Strategic plan implementation should begin no later than fall 2024.

      i. The faculty fellow for strategic planning should remain in an advisory capacity to the unit, though perhaps with a reduced appointment, until the unit makes its first follow-up report to ARPAC.

3. To ensure the Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Media Design's continued accreditation, give immediate attention to the unit's instructional staffing. The department's heavy reliance on graduate and part-time teachers jeopardizes accreditation. To remedy this situation quickly, the dean should work to identify funding mechanisms for two instructor lines.

To the Vice Chancellor for Academic Resource Management:

4. Work with CMCI throughout its strategic planning process to identify space solutions that support sustainable growth and a shared sense of community.

5. Support CMCI in clarifying and further developing a transparent and predictable budget model as part of its strategic planning process.

6. Provide expertise as CMCI, in collaboration with the faculty fellow for strategic planning and the external advocacy group, completes a business plan.

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

7. Work with CMCI throughout its strategic planning process to identify how increased collaboration among CMCI graduate programs or a reimagining of such programs, including possible consolidation or discontinuance, would benefit CMCI graduate education outcomes.

To the Chief Information Officer:

8. Work with CMCI to better support mid-scale computing needs and to evaluate the possibility of lending financial support for specialized software/licenses.

To the Provost:

9. Collaborate with CMCI to identify funding to support a strategic planning and visioning process, including funding for a faculty fellow for strategic planning and an external advocacy group to provide an external perspective.

10. Appoint and formally charge the faculty fellow for strategic planning by August 2023 and the external advocacy group by September 2023.

11. Approve an updated CMCI strategic plan by September 2024.

12. Support appropriate and prioritized budget and infrastructure requests resulting from CMCI's strategic planning process.

Required Follow-up

The dean of the College of Media, Communication, and Information shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2024 and one due on the first of April 2026. The follow-up reports are to be addressed to the provost and other central campus leadership and shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The relevant central campus leadership and the provost will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. Relevant central campus leaders and the provost will submit a follow-up report due on June 1, 2024, and June 1, 2026.