



Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

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Dear Magazine Media Division Leaders,

Thank you for making the time and effort to express these important concerns to the board. I'm replying as chair of the AEJMC Board of Directors (as well as AEJMC President-Elect), and I'm confident that I'm speaking for the board and chairs of the Council of Divisions; we have discussed these various diversity-related issues (as recently as in our Aug. 8 board meeting).

The overall theme of my presidency this year is "Closing the Gap," which implicates two issues you raise in the letter. One of these "gaps" is that between the academy and the media professions. We are challenged to make our research relevant to practitioners struggling in this confusing new age, and we are equally challenged to make our teaching relevant to the media work expected of our students in the near future. So, one might reasonably ask, why do organizations schedule conferences that knowingly exclude important, professional, affiliated groups from engaging with them?

The other, equally important "Closing the Gap" issue is of course the gap between the diversity of our U.S. population and the diversity in our JMC programs, in the media work place, and in AEJMC itself.

But first back to the conference overlaps: This has been a persistent problem over the last several years. The main reason AEJMC "locks in" a venue five years in advance is to guarantee reasonable hotel rates for our members. But that shouldn't exclude the possibility of coordinating with other organizations, especially when the other groups plan their conventions with shorter lead-times than five years. It just takes a bit more communication.

On Sept. 18, I will have an unusual opportunity: An informal meeting of representatives of 32 journalism organizations – from ASME and RTDNA, BEA and AEJMC, to NABJ, NAHJ, AAJA and NAJA – will take place for four hours as a sidebar to the Excellence in Journalism conference (SPJ) in New Orleans. On our agenda already is the issue of coordinating annual meetings to better encourage cross-attendance. This will include not only scheduling coordination but also discounted registration fees for members to attend others' conferences. I can't predict the results, but I know that at the very least we can swap – and promise to continue to swap – decisions about our respective future dates and locations.

As for the AEJMC's overall emphasis on diversity, I applaud the division's emphasis this year on diversity. This has been one of the "planks" of my own presidential platform, so it's encouraging to have divisional support.

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The AEJMC board's emphasis lately has been on raising diverse leadership in both JMC education and within our organization. Last year we revived the highly-regarded JLID with new funding sources and renamed it The Institute for Diverse Leadership, which provides year-long leadership training to eight women and/or diverse colleagues. (We learned in Minneapolis that already three of the eight "graduates" of our first class had accepted offers of administrative positions for the current academic year.) More internally, AEJMC's Nominations and Elections Committee did an excellent job of compiling a highly diverse slate of candidates last year, and our elected standing committees are more diverse as a result. This summer I have appointed members to the Nominations/Elections committee who can only enhance the committee's dedication to further diversifying the leadership of AEJMC. And you may recall that at the Council of Divisions' breakfast meeting on the final day in Minneapolis, I asked all divisions to make a concerted effort to identify division members from diverse backgrounds who might join each group's leadership ladder.

But there's so much more to be done! I too learned in Minneapolis that there has been no diversity research about the magazine workforce (to complement the ongoing surveys in newspapers and broadcasting). I agree: Given the actual decline in minority representation in the newspaper workforce, and the inexorable rise of minorities in the U.S. population as whole, the problem is acute. And persistent.

So let me suggest a couple of "next steps" whereby the AEJMC board can support your emphasis this year on diversity. First, has the division already decided on a Special Call for Papers with a diversity theme? If that is still a possibility, I can envision a research panel that quickly and directly responds to the dearth of research on diversity in the magazine profession. More broadly, the Emerging Scholars program (<http://www.aejmc.org/home/2016/08/emerging-scholars-grants/>) provides grants in the fall, for research during the coming year, to our newer members. Likewise our Senior Scholars Research program (<http://www.aejmc.org/home/2016/08/senior-scholar-grants/>) funds research by members of, well, somewhat longer standing. Diversity in magazine journalism would seem to be a promising proposal topic in either category. Also, I would encourage the division to think about a pre-conference session on a diversity-related topic, much like the panel you co-sponsored with MAC this year. The earlier date, plus the Chicago location in 2017, might help entice a more diverse set of speakers.

I will continue to explore other opportunities that could take effect sooner rather than later. And I'm happy to discuss other possibilities with you. As you said in your letter, diversity must become a set of practices. I am equally excited to further this ongoing conversation.

Sincerely,



Paul Voakes
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