

AEJMC Division Annual Report - 2020

Division: Communicating Science, Health, Environment, and Risk

1. Division Officers

Head	Rachel Young
Vice-Head	Kajsa Dalrymple
Vice-Head Elect	Sara Yeo
Research Chairs	Timothy Fung and Matthew VanDyke
Teaching Chair	Jessica Willoughby
PF&R Chair	Ashley Anderson
Secretary	Sojung Kim
Media Chairs	Mo Jang; Kang Namkoong; Roma Subramanian
Outreach Chair	Tsung-Jen Shih

2. [Demographic Summary.](#)

3. Activities in Research, Teaching, and PF&R.

ComSHER activities are focused primarily on the annual convention – balancing our activities between research, teaching, and PF&R sessions. In research, we were successful in recruiting a large number of submissions for the annual conference (126 total), and were able to accept 65 of these submissions, for a 50% overall acceptance rate. Notably, we had to disqualify 26 submissions that contained author-identifying information either in the submission or in the submission’s metadata. In addition to our research panels, we have also programmed 2 PF&R sessions and 3 Teaching sessions for the annual conference. Across these sessions we maintain a diverse array of offerings in research, teaching, and PF&R areas for the domain of science, health, environment, and risk communication. We collaborated with several new division partners, including the Minorities and Communication Division and the new Political Communication Division. We also adapted well to the online format. Notably, we will use money typically spent on our social to pay registration fees for 8 graduate student members. Outside of the conference, we maintain communication with our members through a bi-annual newsletter as well as an email listserv and social media to communicate about grant and job offerings as well as provide general information about the field and solicit submissions for the annual AEJMC conference. We added a new member profile feature to our newsletter to publicize the excellent work done by our members. For 2019-2020, we also added another research chair to share the heavy workload, as we typically have among the most submissions of any division at AEJMC.

4. Goals for the upcoming year

- Most important goals
 - Grow and diversify ComSHER membership, especially graduate student membership.
 - Provide content to members through newsletters and social media.
 - Maintain a robust reviewer pool, with a goal of 3-4 papers assigned to each reviewer.
 - Increase the range of scholars nominated for Article of the Year by encouraging members and officers to nominate others’ work.
 - Reorganize the Media Team to promote accountability and engagement.

- Continue to promote the ComSHER Teaching Award and increase the number of applicants (we would like to have between 5 and 10 applicants).
- Maintain a high level of racial and ethnic diversity in all of our panels and address issues of equity and justice in our programming.
- Develop a revised and updated leadership handbook to serve as the institutional memory for the division.
- What goals that we set that we were unable to achieve.
 - Our social media is slowly growing. We have increased engagement on Facebook, but an officer dropping out midyear left us without a dedicated officer for Twitter.
 - We were unable to increase the number of Article of the Year Award entries to 20. Next year, we'll promote the option for people to nominate other work as a way to diversify the articles nominated.
- How may the standing committees help implement goals for the next year.
 - The standing committee on teaching could aid in sharing the Innovative Teaching Award opportunity.
 - We also experienced too many paper disqualifications for identifying information, despite increased communication to our submitters about how to de-identify papers. We strongly suggest that the committee on research reconsider this rule, as other divisions are not applying it strictly, creating frustration and confusion. This leaves ComSHER officers vulnerable to a lot of complaints from paper submitters. We suggest that the committee say instead that reviewers should not look in the document properties or metadata and that only papers with identifying info within the document should be disqualified. Policing the document properties also creates a lot of unnecessary work for research chairs.
 - Programming for division heads on how to reinforce commitments equity and justice in panels and programming would be valuable.

RESEARCH

4. Number of faculty research paper and extended abstract submissions:100 (126 minus 26 disqualified papers)__; number of acceptances __63__; __50__%. (overall research activity; please note the Research Committee guideline is a 50% acceptance rate).

This number reflects faculty-only papers as well as faculty and student joint submissions.

5. Number of student research paper and extended abstract submissions __33__ (40 minus 7 disqualified papers); number of acceptances __20__; __50__%. (research activity with students; please note the Research Committee guideline is a 50% acceptance rate).

This number reflects only papers submitted solely by students, not co-authored with faculty. All student papers are reviewed alongside faculty submissions.

6. Overview of judging process (forms used, please attach).

We used the standard online form.

7. Total # of judges __113__; average of __3.53__ papers/extended abstracts per judge (please note the Research Committee guideline is no more than 4 papers per judge).

8. Did your group conduct any other type of refereed competition? (Could be creative projects, teaching papers or any other non-traditional method of inquiry.)

In conjunction with our regular research paper competition, we sponsored the three Eason Awards for Graduate Student Research. These prizes go to the top three student papers and, this year, went to PhD students at Pennsylvania State University, Cornell University, and University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Number of submissions __33__; Number of acceptances __20__ accepted; 3 winners__.

Briefly explain the competition and the selection process.

Student papers identified as Eason Award entries were judged alongside faculty authored papers and must meet the same criteria for acceptance. The top student papers (in terms of scores and reviewer comments) received the award.

We also conducted our annual “Article of the Year” Award competition. The goal of the annual “Article of the Year” Award is to honor AEJMC members who have made a substantial novel contribution to Science, Health, Environment, and Risk Communication research. The ComSHER Vice Head oversees a judging panel composed of past ComSHER heads, peer-reviewed journal editors or associate editors, and full professors.

9. Please list your in-convention activities related to research.

Three research paper panels feature 15 papers. One high density session features 10 papers and two scholar-to-scholar/poster sessions feature 57.

10. Please list your out-of-convention activities related to research.

We share SHER relevant research on social media and through the ComSHER newsletter. In addition, we also share calls for research in those spaces. We additionally share research and research opportunities (eg, grants, journal calls, conferences) through Twitter and Facebook.

11. Please describe briefly the research goals and activities of your division. Such description may include discussion of primary accomplishments, programming diversity, special competitions, faculty/student research awards, newsletter activities and other activities.

The primary research activity of ComSHER is to sponsor the paper competition at the annual convention. This year, we planned three research presentation panels featuring 5 papers each, one high density session featuring 10 papers, and two poster sessions featuring 57 and 4/5 papers each (82 total presentations).

The titles of the ComSHER research presentation panels for 2020 are:

1. ComSHER Top Papers Session
2. Examining COVID-19 Communication and Information Behaviors
3. Understanding Audiences for Science and Health Risk Information

We are holding one high-density session entitled:

1. ComSHER High-Density Session

Finally, we are holding two poster sessions entitled:

1. ComSHER and Scholar-to-Scholar Refereed Paper (Poster) Session
2. AEJMC Scholar-to-Scholar Refereed Paper (Poster) Session

In addition to the research competition (including the Eason Prizes described above), the ComSHER blogs and social media channels are used regularly to circulate notices for research opportunities, including grants, conferences, and special-paper calls.

TEACHING

12. Please list your in-convention activities related to teaching. Describe how these activities fulfill one or more of the Teaching Standards Committee's focus on curriculum, leadership, course content and teaching methods, or assessment.

At our annual conference in 2020, we will host three teaching panels, one solo-sponsored teaching award panel, one co-sponsored with the Political Communication Division, and one co-sponsored with the Mass Communication and Society Division. All panels fulfill the Teaching Standards Committee's focus on curriculum, leadership, course content, and teaching methods.

The first panel, a solo-sponsored by ComSHER, is the second annual ComSHER Teaching Award session. The Teaching Award aims to identify innovative and effective pedagogy in the communication of science, health, environment, and risk. This session will feature the 2020 winners of the ComSHER Teaching Award as well as an additional speaker to discuss opportunities for engaged learning among the current pandemic. The session is intended for any scholar or practitioner teaching in the areas of science, health, environment, and risk communication. Two competition winners will share their teaching submissions, explaining their innovative approaches and how they apply those inside and beyond their classes. In addition, we will have a discussion on the role of applied aspects and community engagement in teaching amidst the current COVID19 pandemic.

The second panel, co-sponsored with PCD, will discuss the teaching of environmental and political issues. The panelists will discuss environmental justice, sharing their experiences from courses and curriculum, as well as suggestions for incorporating consent into relevant COMSHER classes.

The third panel, co-sponsored with MC&S, will focus on graduate education and the process of conducting research with graduate students. Panelists will present on their insights from working effectively with graduate students over the years, including different methods of working with graduate students (e.g., individually, in research groups), the differences in advising, coaching, and mentoring, meetings people where they are, and other relevant topics.

13. Please list your out-of-convention activities related to teaching. Describe how these activities fulfill one or more of the Teaching Standards Committee's focus on curriculum, leadership, course content and teaching methods, or assessment.

We have been in discussions with representatives from Rowman & Littlefield Publishers about the possibility of a ComSHER text that would, in addition to providing other content relevant to ComSHER members, also

provide content related to teaching methods. Due to COVID19, we have postponed the project, tentatively considering a goal of Winter 2021 for a draft outline of the content that might be included.

14. Please describe briefly the Teaching goals and activities of your division. Such description may include discussion of primary accomplishments, programming diversity, special competitions, faculty/student research awards, newsletter activities and other activities.

Our division is committed to open discussion of effective teaching practices within the broader SHER communication field. As such, this year's panels draw on the expertise of scholars both from within SHER and other areas of communication.

Additionally, through our listserv, Facebook presence, Twitter presence, and online newsletter, our members can share course syllabi and engage in discussion about ways to improve and enhance the quality of SHER communication pedagogy.

PF&R

15. At the Annual conference ComSHER is offering the following sessions in PF&R.

Making sense of technology buzz words: automation, robotics, AI

Co-sponsored with the Media Management, Economics, & Entrepreneurship Division.

This panel focuses on a media landscape that is increasingly shaped by technologies that threaten existing business models and organizational structures. While Silicon Valley has been the driving force behind AI, machine learning, and automation, legacy media have been slower to embrace these new technologies. However, considering the efficiencies in terms of content creation, audience engagement, and audience research afforded by these technologies, executives at legacy media firms are beginning to change their perspectives. The panel brings together experts who explain the reality behind the buzzwords of AI, robotics, automation, etc. Are they just hypes, are they threats or do they provide new exciting business opportunities for media? Successful collaborations to date will be discussed as well as the opportunities for media firms to better and more efficiently engage audiences and advertisers in the future. In addition, some focus will be placed on future challenges that will face media managers as they grapple with the negative impacts of automation and the misconceptions that their employees may have of AI and machine learning.

Addressing diversity and inclusion in the practice and scholarship of science communication

Co-sponsored with the Minorities and Communication Division.

Contemporary approaches to science communication prioritize bidirectional communication and understanding audiences, and broadening participation and engagement with scientific issues. A key component of this is championing a diversity of perspectives in the creation and interpretation of messages. This panel addresses ideas around justice and equity and inclusion through examination of practice and scholarship of science communication related to minorities and underserved communities. It will address how we define inclusion in the science communication context and how science communicators can broaden participation and engagement to reach underserved communities.

The topic of this panel should appeal to many attendees who regularly participate in research and teaching related to inclusion and diversity. It will also reach those who are newly engaged in such topics, or hoping to broaden their work to be more inclusive.

16. Please list your out-of-convention activities related to PF&R. Describe how these activities fulfill one or more of the PF&R Committee's focus on free expression, ethics, media criticism & accountability racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness, or public service.

None

17. Please describe briefly PF&R goals and activities of your division. Such description may include discussion of primary accomplishments, programming diversity, special competitions, faculty/student research awards, newsletter activities and other activities.

The goals and activities of ComSHER's PF&R are to offer programming in the substantive domain of science, health, environment, and risk communication (SHER) that fully address the PF&R Committee's guidelines on free expression, ethics, media criticism and accountability, racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness, and public service. To these standards, ComSHER is organizing two PF&R panels this year with Media Management, Economics, & Entrepreneurship Division and the Minorities and Communication Division. The panels have a particular focus on understanding the role of new technologies in shaping current media industries and practices, as well as perspectives on gender, racial, and cultural inclusion in the areas of science, health, environment, and risk.