

spig news

Fall 2018: *The official newsletter of the AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group*

Programs take unique paths to career development goals

By Doug Mendenhall
Abilene Christian University

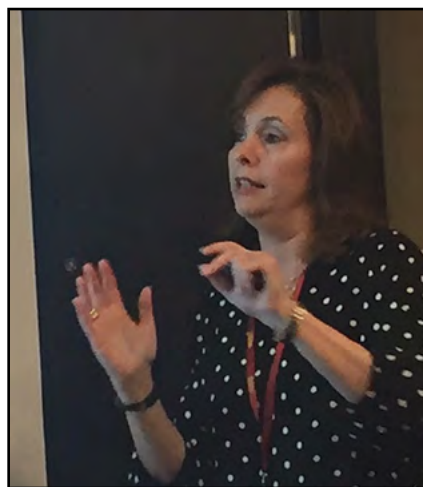
Whether small programs use specific, career-focused courses that eventually lead to an internship, or rely on select exercises spread through the courses of a larger curriculum, Dawn Francis and Jill Van Wyke agree that career development needs to be a high priority.

Francis discussed the Cabrini University method and Van Wyke the Drake University method of pursuing this priority in a session titled "Embedding Career Development Within Communication Curriculum."

Their session kicked off the Aug. 5 SPIG Pre-conference Workshop, "Beyond the Inverted Pyramid: Student and Faculty Development," leading up to the AEJMC annual conference in Washington, D.C.

"Don't only think of it the way we do it," Francis told the audience. "You can adapt this to your system and resources."

The communication major at Cabrini, a Catholic school with a social justice empha-



Doug Mendenhall/Abilene Christian

Dawn Francis of Cabrini opens the SPIG Preconference Workshop with a session on career development, one of four presented before the AEJMC conference officially opened in Washington, D.C.

sis embedded in its curriculum, focuses on storytelling to encourage career development.

Students take half a credit in professional development each semester, ending up with four full credits by their senior year, taught by all four of the department's faculty members, Francis said. Each semester has three assignments ranging from a professional development plan to industry research. Students also attend and write about a speaker panel, and partici-

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Carrie Sipes

head notes

SPIG remains certain about our priorities

Uncertainty. Members of small programs sometimes face a lot of uncertainty. For some it's related to administrative changes or too few faculty. For others it's related to funding, student enrollment, promotion or a host of other issues.

Our students face it, too. They are unsure of what the job market will look like when they graduate and how they will pay off student loans. They wonder if they will be prepared to meet the challenges of journalism in a time when journalists are seen as doing a poor job informing the public.

The late 2017 Gallup/Knight Foundation Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy data show more Americans have a negative view of the media than a positive one, 43 percent to 33 percent. Further, the study showed American trust in media averaged 37 out of 100.

A June 2018 Gallup/Knight

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preconference

workshop

Three more sessions are covered inside.

cover story

Developing careers a top goal

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pate in an intensive advising session about their goals.

Francis said that compared to other models, this one is more holistic. It starts by envisioning the future students want to be in – the kind of life they want. Then, students do a bit more work on their professional development plan each year to help them get to the future they envision.

Each year, students focus on a different aspect of that future:

Freshmen: Self-awareness and accomplishment storytelling.

Sophomores: Marketplace and societal knowledge, within which they can position themselves.

Juniors: Workplace readiness, including presenting themselves and shaping how they are perceived on social media.

Seniors: Entrepreneurial thinking and persuading as they take a larger leadership role in the process.

Seniors also complete a three-credit course, “Career Prep and Job Search Techniques.”

Throughout the curriculum,

starting with the freshman year, WordPress is used as a career portfolio and blogging tool, so that seniors have plenty of materials to work with as they craft and refine their professional image and search for jobs.

Key parts of the Cabrini plan, Francis said, are a mentoring night, during which an alumnus sits with half a dozen students and critiques their résumés, and an alumni networking night that simulates a business mixer.

Meanwhile, at Drake, “We’re a little more seat of the pants,” Van Wyke said.

She said the Drake Career Prep program attempts to find a “sweet spot” in the overlap of what students love, what the world needs, what they can be paid for and what they are good at.

The Drake Career Prep program, which is specific to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, has a part-time internship coordinator, and student groups sponsor Career Prep events.

However, Career Prep is also infused into a broad range of individual courses, including:

- A freshman “global society” course that explores the six JMC majors and their career possibilities.

- A pre-professional workshop for sophomores that focuses on résumé and cover-letter skills.

- A web design course in which students produce online portfolios.

- A public relations principles class in which students write a press release announcing they’ve landed their dream job.

- PR writing, in which writing assignments for a selected dream company become portfolios that are sent by faculty to the actual companies.

- A publishing course in which students design a prototype of a proposed magazine.

- A freelance course in which prospective magazine writers learn to pitch and query, negotiate contracts and work with editors.

- Public affairs reporting, where a Q&A session features a student’s “dream job” professional.

- A political strategic communication course in which students execute campaigns for advocacy groups and other clients.

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Special Promotions: Sonya DiPalma, UNC Asheville

head notes

SPIG takes on new challenges

Continued from page 1

Foundation follow-up survey revealed 62 percent of Americans believe newspaper, television and radio news is biased, and more than 8 in 10 adults report being angered by biased information.

This is the reality of what our students will face as they enter the journalism profession in a few short years.

Uncertainty moves us. It makes us try new things, experiment. It makes us problem solvers, and that’s what SPIG members are every day.

Yet it’s not only uncertainty that moves us forward. Of some things, we are certain.

We go into another academic

year certain about the role free speech plays in our society. We know the importance of a free press and transparency, and we’re certain that each semester we play a role in developing strong reporters and ethical public relations practitioners.

So, let’s have our voices be heard. Let’s continue to share how we are taking on the challenges and standing firm on the principles we hold close.

Be on the lookout for opportunities to share your areas of expertise. In addition to SPIG-sponsored panels and preconference workshop sessions at the national conference, SPIG will be hosting zoom meetings on teaching, research

and professional freedoms and responsibilities in the coming year.

I look forward to hearing about the innovative ways that you all are addressing challenges and being leaders in these areas.

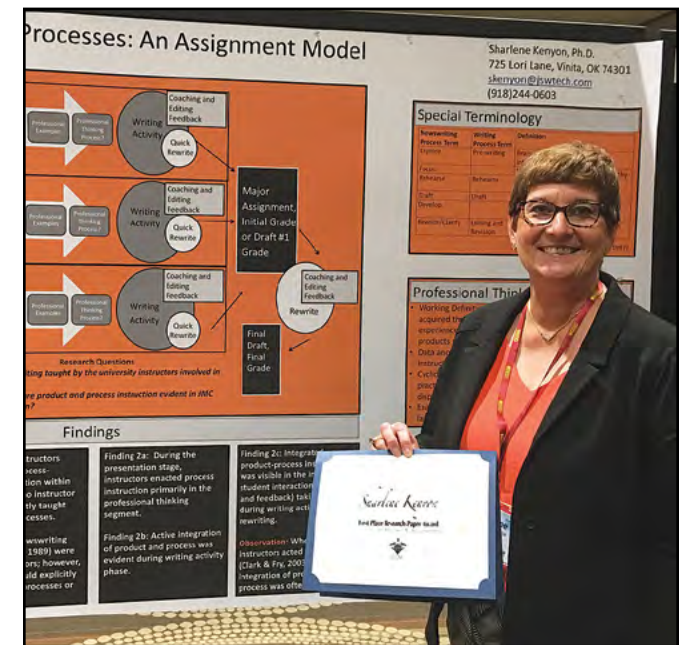
We have 16 weeks. That’s 112 days to inspire students to tell stories that matter, to teach them to seek diverse sources and to encourage them to listen to the communities they cover.

Sixteen weeks to prepare them for facing the uncertainties of covering and working in a politically polarized society.

Sixteen weeks to experiment and solve problems.

Sixteen weeks to support one another in the mission of SPIG.

spig research competition



Jackie Incollingo/Rider University

Tying for first in the SPIG research competition were two posters. Left: “Cross-Country Collaboration: Student Evaluations of a Collaborative Journalism Project Between Two U.S. Universities” by Stephanie Bluestein, Cal. State Northridge; Karima Haynes, Bowie State; and Yue Zheng, Cal. State Northridge.

preconference workshop

Combining science, media can be a catalyst for learning

By Doug Mendenhall
Abilene Christian

Four panelists shared examples of infusing media-related courses with a lively blend of science in a SPIG Preconference Workshop session titled, "Linked Courses: Science and Communication."

Kalen Churcher began by discussing her experience at Wilkes, teaching a course that threw together majors from pharmacy and communication science programs.

Churcher said the class focused on practical experiences, but first had to overcome tensions between the two groups, so that the pharmacy students were comfortable explaining technical terms and the communication students were comfortable speaking up when they didn't understand a term.

"The plan was to create teams of students – one from each side," Churcher said, "but they wouldn't even talk." She said it took a few weeks to reach the goal of camaraderie across disciplinary lines.

With that accomplished, the class tackled exercises such as a realistic press conference being conducted for the testing of a new drug, with professionals populating the audience. "It was a very quick learning experience for them," Churcher said, with comm students uncertain where to find needed details and pharmacy students needing advice on explaining technical information to laypeople.

"We felt very strongly about this not just being about the sciences, but about who people were interacting with," she said.

Sonya DiPalma of UNC Asheville said she saw similar benefits from a course in which her majors inter-

acted with environmental science students for experiences such as an overnight trip to a forest.

The course included a research component in which students prepared a multimedia package – often for the "community engaged partners" with whom the school has an ongoing relationship. DiPalma said she purchased subscriptions to allow students to compare coverage of climate change in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

DiPalma said the success of the course led to the creation of a course entitled "communicating science" for the coming year.

Carrie Buchanan of John Carroll – and a biology major as an undergraduate – said she has taught Health and Environmental Writing each year from 2010 to 2017. In 2017-18 she took on a new challenge: a linked course.

The John Carroll liberal arts core includes a requirement for paired courses across disciplines. Buchanan's introductory journalism course is paired with one on climate change taught by a physics professor. In that linked course, one of the shared assignments had students compare writing, structure and other features of an academic journal article, a newspaper article and a magazine story covering the same research – in this case about rising sea levels.

This led to a new appreciation for journalistic sourcing. "I think they were all surprised to find out how much journalists care" about accuracy, verification and using reliable sources, Buchanan said.

Students also created a shared [website](#) with pages produced in small groups about different im-

pacts of climate change on specific sectors of human and natural life, such as business, human health, water resources and population.

Buchanan said that for classes related to science, she recommends "[Journalist's Resource](#)," an open-source research site produced by the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center. It summarizes recent academic research on particular topics, ranging from science to social issues and public policy.

Finally, former *New York Times* reporter Joe Treaster, who now teaches at Miami, explained an immersive capstone course in which students traveled to the Galapagos Islands to write about the blue-footed booby, which is threatened because of diminished availability of its favorite foods.

Other science topics in which students in the Miami School of Communication have been able to immerse themselves include the health of the Florida Everglades and the poor quality of Cuba's drinking water.

Treaster said the Cuba project was accomplished by conducting interviews with people returning from Cuba to Florida, which helped avoid the fear many Cubans have of speaking freely about how things are in their country. He said their reporting tried to focus on a solution for the problem, including writing about American companies with potential solutions for the "stinky" water, in hopes of enticing Cuba to accept help.

Treaster said it's exciting to teach students to use basic tools of research and journalism, then apply them to another topic, whether it's science or sports. "It's actually news you can use," he said.

preconference workshop

Recruiting faculty requires deeper and wider searches

By Liz Atwood
Hood College

Recruiting outstanding faculty to small communications programs can mean casting a wide net, panelists at a pre-AEJMC Conference workshop sponsored by SPIG said.

The participants shared their strategies for finding professors who are willing to balance service, research and a heavy teaching load, often in remote locations for low pay.

Deborah Silverman, an associate professor of communications at Buffalo State who is heading her third search, suggested advertising on social media sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as the websites of professional organizations, such as Public Relations Society of America.

Amanda Weed, a visiting instructor at Ashland University, stressed the importance of using personal connections, including those formed at professional conferences, to help find the right person.

Panelists and members of the audience said they are particularly concerned about recruiting minority faculty members. "All of us are having trouble with this," Silverman said.

Katherine Orloff, associate professor of journalism at Hood College, said it is often difficult to know an applicant's race until far into the interview process. "Even though your heart may be in the right place, the opportunity has to present itself," she said.



Liz Atwood/Hood College

Debbie Davis, Amanda Weed, Katherine Orloff and Deborah Silverman discuss the recruitment of strong faculty members to small programs.

The problem can be especially severe when the college is overwhelmingly white or located in a community where there are few minorities, said Pam Parry, chairperson of the Department of Mass Media at Southeast Missouri State University.

Sometimes search committees need to educate college administrators about a program's needs, the panelists said. Problems can arise when provosts insist on a new hire having a Ph.D. while the program needs an experienced professional.

Debbie Davis, an assistant professor at Texas Tech, said she was fortunate that her college was flexible enough to hire her with a doctorate of education rather than a Ph.D. "I couldn't even have applied for the job I just left," she said. She said colleges need to recognize that law degrees, doctorates of education and other terminal degrees can be as good as

a Ph.D.

Orloff advised crafting search ads as broadly as possible to attract candidates. She said search committees should be aware that some colleges insert boilerplate language into the ads that could discourage applicants. She recalled that her college insisted on specifying in an ad that a new hire should be able to lift 25 pounds.

But while broadly worded ads can entice more applicants, panelists said job listings should clearly specify research expectations and the courses the new hire would teach.

Weed said many graduate students have no idea about the demands of teaching at a small program. She related her own experience of taking a position in which she was teaching a 4-4 load and advising two student organizations – all while trying to complete her degree requirements.

"There were a lot of sleepless nights, and coffee is my friend," she said.



preconference workshop

Sitting in a department chair requires problem-solving skill

By Dawn Francis
Cabrini University

Evidently, Charles Dickens knew a great deal about the life of an academic department chair. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” he wrote in his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dickens aptly captures the thoughts and emotions of many department chairs, said Pam Parry, chair of the Department of Mass Media at Southeastern Missouri State University.

Parry and her co-presenter Carrie Sipes, chair of the Communication/Journalism Department at Shippensburg University, shared the joys and challenges of serving as a chair in their SPIG pre-conference session, “The Department Chair: Transitioning into a Leadership Role.”

Parry has been a chair for several years at public and private institutions of higher education. Sipes has just completed her first semester as chair at her university.

Among the joys of being chair, Parry identified the elation that comes from hiring the right people for faculty roles, helping them begin their careers and achieve tenure, and helping them surmount problems as they arise.

“If you’re a good chair, you can make things better for everyone else,” Parry said.

The challenge comes, however, in having to make unpopular decisions such as trimming department faculty positions in response to an institution’s



Dawn Francis/Cabrini University

Pam Parry and Carrie Sipes offered advice for new and experienced academic chairs in their preconference session.

financial struggles.

Challenges also arise when strife among department faculty members requires the chair to intervene. Parry said the pressures are different at each institution.

“You just have to have the elegance to handle them,” she said.

Parry and Sipes offered advice for new and seasoned chairs.

“Ask questions,” Sipes said. “You may get many requests from administration. Ask

questions first before jumping into action.”

Sipes also suggested involving department faculty in vetting requests from outside the department. Doing so fosters

collaboration and helps faculty feel valued.

Parry and Sipes emphasized that the role of the department chair is to be a problem solver. Patience, they said, is essential to being successful in the role. Parry also named other key factors to a chair’s success: being accessible, fair, accepting, discrete, diligent and collaborative.

A final piece of advice from both presenters is to find a trustworthy friend from outside the department who will listen and offer support. Having a friend to rely on will enable the chair to remain focused on why they do the work in the first place – namely, to grow and develop students and cultivate their passion for communication.



aejmc in d.c.

‘Fighting Fair’ seeks to cope with often toxic atmosphere

By Michael Longinow
Biola University

People are mad at each other. Lots of people: in government, in business, in sports, in schools, even in religious settings. And they’re getting loud and ugly about it in news media spaces that, it seems, used to be more civil. It’s causing people to turn away from news media in droves.

Can faculty do something about it? Yes. Is it easy? No.

In a panel titled “Fighting Fair: Teaching critical thinking and media fairness in a climate of rage and rants,” scholars from SPIG and Community College Journalism Association offered suggestions on how to cool things down. Liz Atwood of Hood College was the panel’s moderator.

New students coming into our classrooms, if they have been exposed to news media coverage of national stories, have, since they were in middle school, been exposed to a variety of media approaches to the disagreement over public policy, popular culture and trends in American life.

President Donald Trump and his tweets have been case studies of attack and bombast – though tweets in recent years from professional athletes and film and music celebrities have also added tension. But the problem is not new.

Deborah Tannen, in her 1999 book *Argument Culture: Stopping America’s War of Words*, suggested that growing numbers in the United States have developed a mindset in which impression and preconception have led to triggers toward verbal attack (if not physi-

cal attack), debate without real dialogue, and litigation.

However, journalists and journalism educators don’t fear disagreement.

“The marketplace of ideas has always been rough and tumble,” said Pam Parry, chair of the Department of Mass Media at Southeast Missouri State University, who was on the “Fighting Fair” panel. Though rational discussion of news might be harder to find now than in recent years, Parry said students can be nudged toward media voices that use restraint “while challenging us to think.”

But Marquita Smith, also a panelist and chair of the Division of Communication and Fine Arts at John Brown University, said the work of guiding students to civil discourse can be risky – particularly for a female faculty member of color.

Smith, who is African-American, told the panel session that she has received threatening mail from the Ku Klux Klan and has seen students make obscene gestures at her in class.

Faculty facing the heat of such pushback from inside and outside their classrooms can feel isolated and vulnerable. Panelist Doug Mendenhall said he came away from the session with the hope that Smith – and faculty facing similar pressures – will feel supported by colleagues in AEJMC, and by SPIG faculty in particular.

Mendenhall, an associate professor and journalist in residence at Abilene Christian University, said faculty have a responsibility to do more than observe the fights. They need to “be in each other’s

Staying ethical more important in a digital era

CJIA’s Toni Albertson of Mount San Antonio College offered a checklist of basics to help ensure that journalism programs remain ethical in contemporary media settings:

- Use Twitter for all breaking news coverage, but emphasize how to report facts and not speculation as news breaks.
- Use caution when retweeting and sharing posts from other news organizations or blogs. Learn how to verify and confirm.
- Remain ethical first. You’re still a journalist, so use good judgment.
- Keep coverage current.
- Allow no speculation, even if all you have is one verified sentence.
- Learn to verify the source if you are not covering it yourself.
- Learn to judge the reliability of a source on Twitter. Who are you following? Go to their profile – check bios, who they follow, who they retweet, ideology, location, tweet times. Are they tweeting live? Photos? Video?
- Post live video with the source being quoted.
- As a journalist, you represent your student media even on your own personal account. Rants and rages reflect you and your students’ publications. Example: the case of Matt Foresta (her student) vs. Gateway Pundit, which registered his name as URLs.
- Differentiate between advocacy and news reporting.

corners when the going is tough and even dangerous,” he said.

spig teacher of the year

Mendenhall started by putting a little fizz in his lesson plans

By Mary Alice Basconi
East Tennessee State

Doug Mendenhall, associate professor of journalism at Abilene Christian University, received the Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year award during a luncheon sponsored by SPIG at the 2018 AEJMC convention in Washington. The award recognizes excellence in teaching and advising.

Mendenhall was chosen after two rounds in a very competitive contest, said Teaching Committee Chair Cindy Simoneau, who said his chair described him as someone “born to teach.”

Mendenhall has taught at the university since 2008.

Double-booked on the AEJMC schedule, he arrived late at Zaytinya’s restaurant with ACU undergraduate student Lani Ford as SPIG members applauded. The two had left early from presenting their research, “A Longitudinal Analysis of the Linguistic Tone of American Churches Online,” at a poster session sponsored by the Religion and Media Interest Group.

Mendenhall said he invited Ford to participate in his research project while she was a student in his introductory JMC course. He noted that it was her first conference presentation, asking colleagues, “How old were you when you got yours, slackers?”

The son of a minister, Mendenhall recalled his “earliest teaching memory, ever” – how as a boy he taught youngsters in his church about Jesus quieting the storm.

Turning to his mother’s kitchen



Mary Alice Basconi/East Tennessee State

Cindy Simoneau presents Doug Mendenhall with SPIG’s 2018 Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year Award in Washington, D.C.

for props, he found “one of those little plastic banana split boats from Dairy Queen,” a big bottle of vinegar and a box of baking soda.

“I put the boat in the lake of vinegar while I told the story. I sort of deflected all the questions about why the Sea of Galilee smelled so bad,” he said.

He sneaked the baking soda into the “lake” while recounting the tale about the coming storm.

“Then, I talked really, really fast, to time things right, so that just as Jesus says, ‘Peace, be still!’ the catalyst is over, and the sea is calm, and all the foaming ends. The entire class was spellbound. It was a miracle! And I caused it,” he said.

“Go out there and keep

teaching,” he added.

In a letter to the selection committee, a former student said Mendenhall invites students to breakfast at his house, setting a different tone from what they see in the classroom.

Mendenhall has been the Faith and Values columnist for the Abilene Reporter-News since 2009.

“Doug does an excellent job of helping students understand the important combination of academic research and professional preparation,” said Kenneth Pybus, chair of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Abilene Christian.

“His freshman course prepares students to think critically throughout their university experience,” Pybus said. “His course evaluations are always strong, and the students rave about the in-class discussions.”

Mendenhall has also led efforts to add diversity to the curriculum at Abilene Christian through a one-hour race and media class and two weekend courses taught by diverse leaders.

Mendenhall, who serves as journalist in residence at ACU, spent 26 years with newspapers in Texas, Tennessee and Alabama. He holds a Ph.D. in mass communication/media studies from Texas Tech University, a master’s in mass communication/media studies from Middle Tennessee State University and a bachelor’s degree in mass communication from ACU.

The teaching award honors Miller, a former SPIG president and longtime member.

spig teacher of the year

5 quick thoughts on teaching

By Doug Mendenhall
Abilene Christian University

My thanks to all of you for this recognition and for turning out today. The Small Programs Interest Group has meant a lot to me over the past several years as I’ve tried to find my place in all of this academic hubbub. I do thank you for your kindness and camaraderie.

If you’ll give me 10 minutes, I’ve got five quick thoughts I’d like to share with you about teaching. These are idiosyncrasies

from my own long and winding road, but maybe they’ll also shed a bit of light on some foundational principles that we have in common. Who knows?



Mendenhall

1 Here’s my earliest teaching memory. In junior high, at the church where my dad was the minister, somehow, they let me sign up to teach the preschool Sunday School class. It was the story of the storm on Lake Galilee, where they have to wake up Jesus in the back of the boat.

They say, “We’re about to die!” He says, “What’s the big deal?” and then he tells the storm, “Peace! Be still!” and the winds stop, the storm calms.

So, I got a pie pan from Mom’s kitchen, and a plastic banana-split boat from Dairy Queen – do they still have those? And a big bottle of vinegar and a little cup of baking soda. I put the boat in the lake of vinegar while I tell the story, and I sort of deflect the questions about why the Sea of Galilee smells so awful, and when we get to the part about the storm I do a little sleight of hand and dump in some baking soda.

Then I have to talk very fast to time things right so that just as Jesus says “Peace! Be still!” the catalyst finished and all the foaming ends. The entire

class was spellbound.

It was a miracle. And I was the teacher.

2 About six years ago, not long after I left newspapers for higher education, I got this email out of the blue. And you need to know that when I worked in Alabama for The Huntsville Times, one of my duties in addition to being design editor was to coach and edit a weekly page written by contributing high school students. We called it the HT Page, and my students and I thought it was the bomb. So, here’s the email.

Hey Doug,

Not sure if you remember me -- I was one of your HT Page writers for a few years (1995-98). In any case, I’m getting back into writing after a bit of a break and thought I’d let you know that I just had a piece published on the NY Times Op/Ed page. Considering how many columns on school I wrote for the HT Page, I thought you might find this interesting. Thanks again for all of your guidance back then!

Best, Alexandra

[Each Teacher Wonders, Is This the One?](#)

By ALEXANDREA J. RAVENELLE

(Published: March 9, 2012)

I’m not the only teacher who, facing down an angry student, worries that he could come back firing off more than snide comments.

I knew Alexandra was in New York, because she had a job working as an assistant to Elie Weisel at the foundation that bears his name. She went on to direct it, in fact. I checked the other day and found out that Alexandra just finished her dissertation, so now she’s Dr. Ravenelle.

You never know, do you, which student is going to be “the one.” Not in a worrisome way, but in a great way. Someone you teach this fall will do amazing things down the road a few years, right?

3 I was a soccer coach for 20 years. Kid soccer. My kids’ soccer, because we have five children, and I started when the first was only 4 and coached

until the last one was in middle school.

As far as I know, I’m still the reigning state championship coach for Alabama 7-year-olds, because after my son’s Decatur Gators won that state title, the state decided maybe 7 was a little young to be having state championships, so they did away with that.

Did I learn anything about what makes a good coach? Well, I learned that I am not a molder of champions, not at my best in identifying that one in a million kid and perfecting his or her skills.

No, I’m better at taking the kid who has never excelled in sports, and probably never will, and helping him or her at least become competent. Not great, but better, OK, able to enjoy the sport and maybe want to stick with it next season.

And I think it’s the same way in the classroom. I don’t perfect students. I don’t make them ready for a top job at The New York Times. But I take them another step or two closer, and I think that’s enough.

Teaching is really not a job for a lone wolf or someone with a big ego, is it?

4 I’m quite a late starter in higher education. I didn’t begin my master’s degree until I was in my mid-40s, and I wasn’t hired as a faculty member until I was just shy of 50, so one aspect of academia that I wasn’t really prepared for was the research aspect.

I don’t mean that I was incapable of doing research, like I couldn’t handle the mathematics or didn’t have a clue what was going on in de Saussure’s head, because nobody really understands that.

What I mean is that I was so used to the daily newspaper rhythm of investigating 20 different topics a day, without getting to choose any of them myself, that when I joined the university I really didn’t have a single driving topic to which I wanted to devote myself.

My master’s project was a comparative study of audience reactions to two different types of newspaper design –

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aejmc in d.c.

Pros who've been there offer tips to cover school shootings

By Kathleen Norton McNulty
Marist College

In the quiet calm of a Washington, D.C., hotel meeting room, a newspaper editor, a reporter, a media ethics expert and an education writer tackled the most disturbing of American news stories – and the reporting challenges that result.

The AEJMC Conference panel, “The Problem from Hell: Covering School Shootings in America,” touched on such topics as:

- Whether the 24/7 news cycle, which bombards audiences with detail and images, encourages copycat crimes.
- Whether news media companies need policies on how such materials will be released and how often.
- Why reporters should step back from the day-to-day events to examine big-picture issues.
- Why news organizations should recognize that shootings traumatize entire communities, as well as reporters who cover shooting after shooting.

The discussion at the August conference was sponsored by the Small Programs Interest Group and the Community College Journalism Association.

Reporting advice came from St. John Barsed-Smith, who has covered many disaster stories, including mass shootings, for The Houston Chronicle. He said when a disaster occurs, reporters must keep in mind that the trauma extends to the entire community. “These are the people you write about and care about,” he said.



Kathleen Norton McNulty/Marist

From left, school-shooting panelists Evie Blad, Randy Roguski, St. John Barsed-Smith and John Jenks.

Barsed-Smith said journalists can “report to themes” such as resilience or heroism, as well as finding people on the outside of the immediate circle of victims and their families, such as funeral directors or surgeons who have operated on victims.

Other panelists were Randy Roguski, metro editor for the South Florida Sun-Sentinel in Florida, Poynter Institute ethicist Kelly McBride and Evie Blad, a writer for Education Week. The moderator was SPIG member John Jenks of Dominican University.

Roguski is still living out the local newsroom challenges that follow a school shooting. The shooting at Marjory Stone-man Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., has been the *Sun-Sentinel's* dominant story since it happened Feb. 14. Roguski said aggressive reporting is necessary at the start, but said caution and care must be taken with facts.

Reporters shouldn't get pulled into the “feeding frenzy” created by the 24/7 news cycle, which Roguski said can lead to reporting rumors and incorrect information, such as the number of fatalities.

Beside the initial breaking and follow-up news stories, his newsroom has examined several critical issues that give context to the Parkland story, and other stories like it. The newspaper is in several legal battles over access to documents or videos related to the case, including the school district's report on the educational records of the shooter – a former student – and the videotaped police interrogation of the shooter.

Barsed-Smith and Roguski agreed there are times for reporters to “think fast” at the outset of breaking stories and times to “think slow” so they can consider the related issues as well as ethical challenges. Although reporters are trained to stay neutral, Barsed-

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Teaching is heartfelt, personal

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newspaper design – which was cool because I was able to conduct it under real conditions, actually stopping the presses halfway through the day's run and changing the front-page plates so that half of our subscribers were exposed to one type of design and the other half saw a different type. It was practical to my job at the time.

But when it came time to choose a dissertation topic, I was sort of at a loss.

I finally chose to figure out how to quantify incivility levels in media messages, because that seems practical to the times we live in. And having chosen that general topic, what I've enjoyed for the past several years has been inviting my beginning students to select specific research points and help me throughout the research process, all the way to a publication or presentation.

And I'm very happy today that I have as my guest Lani Ford, who is a junior at Abilene Christian University and is my coauthor on a paper we just presented in the Religion and Media Interest Group about incivility levels on the

websites of major American churches.

You might want to congratulate Lani for having an AEJMC presentation on her CV so early in life – making all the rest of us look bad, right?

5 I have been a newspaper columnist for a lot longer than I've been a teacher.

And I'm a religion columnist, or Faith & Values as they like to call it, so what I write tends to be more personal, more heartfelt maybe, than if I was a gossip columnist, say, or a sports columnist or even the John Belushi character in the movie *Continental Divide*, which was the first date movie I ever went to with Janet Dampier.

Belushi plays a fearless Chicago political columnist sort of like Mike Royko or Studs Terkel, and my wife-to-be leaned over and whispered, “That's going to be you someday.” So, I married her and maybe she saved me from going any further down that bad Belushi path.

But the point is, I teach classes that to me are personal, and heartfelt, and important.

About the First Amendment.

About the correct way to write a

news story.

About the principles of design and the importance of informational graphics.

About the importance of diversity to media professionals.

About the evils of the Oxford comma – can I get an “amen”?

About how to express deep opinions without alienating half your audience.

And I wonder about people who teach other stuff, like chemistry, or accounting, or data analysis. Do they get this worked up about their topics?

Is it as personal and heartfelt as it is for me with freedom of the press? I don't see how it could be, but I'm not them, and all I can do is hope that it is. That they're pouring themselves into their classes just as passionately.

Because what fun is all this if it's just the dispassionate sharing of information, just a set of exercises to supervise, just a job?

Thanks, everybody. Keep teaching.

Shooting coverage is complex

Continued from page 10

Smith said it's OK when covering a disaster to think and feel, “This is awful.”

McBride, from Poynter, said via Skype that news organizations should consider policies on covering disasters such as school shootings, particularly when it comes to headlines and how often shooters' names and photos are used. She said research indicates that news media coverage can be a factor in the “contagion” effect – the possibility that others with mental illness who read or see news media reports will look at attacks as a way

to resolve angst, anger and discontent.

Among McBride's suggestions:

- Only using the shooter's name or photo/video when critical to that day's story.
- Not using a shooter's “manifesto.”
- Using events such as mass shootings to educate audiences about mental health issues and warning signs.

In response to a comment about the safety of student journalists in a campus setting, where there may be fear of a shooting, McBride said her advice is the same as it would be to professional reporters in any

dangerous situation – stay safe.

Blad, whose publication reports on education-related stories, said she'd been on her way to another location when the Parkland story broke.

As details emerged, she went to that community and joined other media in covering the story.

Like Barsed-Smith, she said that when reporters arrive at the scene of a school shooting, the community is already in the midst of a crisis. This can shape how journalists approach stories, as well as the people they have to interview.

Said Blad: “Your presence there means things have changed.”

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Panelists offers ways to climb ACEJMC diversity standards

By Carrie Buchanan
John Carroll University

The special challenges of small programs in hiring and teaching about diversity were explored in a Wednesday morning panel that featured, among others, past SPIG heads Pam Parry and Doug Mendenhall.

Parry, whose latest book, *Exploring Campus Diversity*, is being published by Rowman and Littlefield in November, was frank in describing the problems she has faced, trying to diversify the faculty in the department she chairs at Southeast Missouri State University, located in Cape Girardeau on the Mississippi River.

"We have trouble hiring anyone, let alone (people of) diversity," she said. "It's not a destination city. We're not competitive with our salaries."

Parry offered an example of a creative solution to the problem. She had a promising faculty member of color, teaching as an adjunct, whom she wanted to get onto the tenure track. But the path to that goal wasn't straightforward. The adjunct had a master's and the university required a doctorate. But with no doctoral programs in communication nearby, Parry convinced the dean to accept a theology doctorate with significant elements of communication as a qualification.

Phil Wagner, from South Florida University Sarasota-Manatee, said when he moved to Sarasota, he thought of Florida as a multicultural state to which it would be easy to recruit new faculty who reflect that

mix. He discovered, though, that Sarasota is an affluent, largely white community where it's difficult to recruit students and faculty of color. They simply don't want to live there, he said.

Wagner started a number of new programs that brought diversity into the curriculum, despite a lack of it among the faculty. He said he has not given up hope, but admitted that diversifying the faculty is an ongoing, and much greater, challenge.

The challenge is significant for universities that seek accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications or other bodies that have diversity standards. Panel member Peter Bhatia, editor of the Detroit Free Press, is president of ACEJMC and knows the challenge well.

Bhatia said small programs aren't the only ones who find it challenging to meet ACEJMC standards on diversity. Even among large, R1 institutions, some "hide behind excuses" and are failing to meet ACEJMC goals. Using creative methods such as the one described by Parry, he said, is often necessary when universities require doctoral degrees for new tenure-track faculty.

Perhaps the most surprising story of overcoming barriers to diversity was told by former SPIG head Doug Mendenhall of Abilene Christian University. His university, he said, is in West Texas, 150 miles from any urban center, and this has created barriers to hiring similar to those described by Wag-



Bhatia

ner. Abilene Christian was placed on ACEJMC probation in 2012 because of its lack of diversity, he said.

But Mendenhall said he has a strong motivation to change that, he explained. He has two African-American children and a half-Latino grandson. "I take it personally now," Mendenhall told the audience. That commitment led him to think creatively. He developed a "Race and Media" curriculum required of all JMC majors, which brings in multicultural speakers to challenge and motivate students as they consider these issues in weekend sessions.

Over the past 10 semesters, that program has featured top professionals and academics, such as Mia Moody-Ramirez, this year's winner of the AEJMC Barrow diversity award.

"We have never had anybody we asked to help us turn us down," he said. "We really are trying here." The effort paid off with full reaccreditation in 2014. Recently, his department managed to hire a Hispanic faculty member.

Those looking to bring more diversity into their faculty and curriculum might want to consider Parry's book, *Exploring Campus Diversity*. It uses 38 case studies on issues such as campus climate, university policies and enrollment, and includes suggestions for class exercises.

"It's about things that happen on college campuses," Parry said. In one case, a football star takes a knee and isn't allowed to play. In another, a campus is divided by the "building a wall" debate. It draws upon issues in the country at large using campus examples, she said.



spig members meeting

Changes in Journal, TOY ahead

By Dawn M. Francis
Cabrini University

Minutes of the 2018 SPIG Members Meeting, conducted August 7, 8:30 p.m., with Head Sonya DiPalma presiding.

- At 119 members strong, SPIG is the third largest interest group within AEJMC
- SPIG members voted on a possible location for AEJMC 2022: Detroit 13, Chicago 5, Indianapolis 3.
- Members voted to retain the current \$12 annual cost to join the Small Programs Interest Group.

SPIG financial report

- Beginning funds for the fiscal year were \$4,869.24
- No expenses reported; \$816 income reported (dues for 68 members).
- Available funds as of June 30, 2018, were \$ 5,685.24

Update from TJMC Journal

- Editor Cathy Strong said publications occurring regularly in July and December
- Sections include: Research, Teaching, Book Reviews
 - Research submissions: two blind peer reviews
 - Teaching submissions: one blind peer review
- Strong is looking into aligning the journal and its reviewers with Publons, which allows reviewers to set up a profile and keep track of their review activity. It also enables editors to find reviewers and organize/track manuscripts.
- She is also seeking to get TJMC listed in the Scopus database
 - Approval needed from AEJMC, which is the publisher, to get the journal listed in Scopus. Discussion ensued about why approval may be difficult to secure.
 - Strong will attend the August 8 Journal Editors meeting to ascertain steps necessary to garner AEJMC approval.

Programming in general

- Ethnicity & Gender – Need to collect this data during programming. SPIG panelists are predominantly white. AEJMC will release a new demographics survey this year.
- Toronto – Attendees will need a passport

Hot Topics programming

- Attendance was low at this year's session
- John Jenks suggested ways to improve attendance and buzz for Hot Topics:
 - Inviting celebrity journalists to be speakers
 - Getting a better time (not up against similar topics OR an obvious "hotter topic" for audiences)
 - Publicizing the session more actively, definitely through Twitter using the conference hashtag

SPIG promotions in general

- Looking ahead to AEJMC 2019, request that members live tweet the SPIG conference sessions and promote all the sessions. Send out a request for volunteers just as we do for members to write about SPIG sessions for the newsletter.

- Kay Colley is the point person for SPIG's Special Promotions. Perhaps, she could assist with this need for a greater social media push for SPIG's sessions at AEJMC 2019 (pre-, during and post-conference).

2018-2019 slate of SPIG officers (see page 2)

- Many current officers will stay in their positions.
- Carrie Sipes will replace Sonya DiPalma as SPIG Head
- Liz Atwood will move into the position of First Vice Head
- Kalen Churcher will be Second Vice Head

Teacher of the Year

- The Second Vice Head will coordinate SPIG's TOY competition.
- More members are encouraged to enter the competition and/or volunteer to read applications.

SPIG News

- Doug Mendenhall will continue as editor of *SPIG News*, the newsletter, which publishes twice a year.
- Carrie Buchanan and other volunteers (more are welcome) will assist with editing and proofing.

GIFT & SPIG co-sponsorship

- The Community College Journalism Association group said it is not in a position to co-sponsor Great Ideas For Teachers with SPIG this year
- A question came up: Did CCJA start GIFT, and does it have ownership? One member said SPIG's Edna Bautista started GIFT more than 10 years ago for SPIG and therefore owns it.
- Other interest groups have expressed interest in taking ownership if CCJA has to give up GIFT.
- Brian Steffen said he will speak with Toni Albertson about CCJA's co-sponsorship with SPIG.
- Jim Sernoe has volunteered to coordinate GIFT for 2019.

Tribute to Dick Hendrickson

- Carrie Buchanan said long-time SPIG member Dick Hendrickson passed away July 29. She said Dick's requirement from John Carroll University in 2009 paved the way for her to assume his position.
- Buchanan will share Hendrickson's obituary with the listserv.

Dalton-Landon Award

- Mitzi Lewis is the recipient of this year's Dalton-Landon Award, which recognizes a member of SPIG who volunteers his/her time and talents in service of the membership. Lewis was not in attendance but received a loud round of applause from all members who are grateful for her tireless service.

Change in SPIG Leadership

- The meeting ended with the official passing of the leadership baton from Sonya DiPalma to Carrie Sipes.
- SPIG members thank DiPalma for her significant service and efforts on our behalf.
- Welcome Sipes as the new SPIG Head.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.