

# spig news

**Fall 2020:** *The official newsletter of the AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group*



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## New legal questions rise as students report COVID-19

**By Liz Atwood**  
*Hood College*

**S**tudents always have questions about privacy, libel and copyright law.

But added to the usual lessons, professors teaching media law this year will need to consider new questions: What is the liability of sending student reporters into the field during a pandemic? What information are student journalists entitled to know about virus outbreaks on their campuses?

SPIG and the Law and Policy Division teamed up to answer those questions and others in a conference panel, “The Top 10 Legal Mistakes Com Professors Make in Class” during AEJMC’s virtual conference.

Incoming SPIG head Kalen Churcher of Wilkes University noted that the pandemic presents legal questions professors have not grappled with before, such as how much information a student journalist can obtain about COVID-19 cases on campus.

“A lot of our campuses will be covering COVID, and this is something they will be hit with,” Churcher said.

While health privacy laws prohibit schools from releasing the names of individuals who contract the virus, students should be able to get the statistics regarding the number of cases, she said. Some students, staff and faculty might even be willing to reveal if they have

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**Kalen Churcher**

### head notes

## Bar is set high for SPIG in New Orleans

I can’t help but think back to the excitement that filled the room during our 2019 Toronto business meeting. The flurry of ideas and preliminary plans for the 2020 conference – and the 25th anniversary of the Small Programs Interest Group – energized me after a long day of conferencing. Looking around the room, I could tell I was not alone.

Fast forward to April 30, when AEJMC announced it was moving virtual, and I confess: I experienced a moment of disappointment. Of course, in the back of my brain I knew it was inevitable. But there it was. In writing. It was official.

I can’t even imagine what went through Liz Atwood’s head at that moment. As the 2019-2020 SPIG president, she had plans in place to celebrate the group’s quarter-century anniversary. The schedule was shaping up, and it was full steam ahead. She could have put on

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## head notes

# Lots of goals for 25th year + 1

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the brakes and held back; no one would have blamed her. Instead, she continued as if virtual conferences were events that she planned all the time. And if you attended the conference this August, you know exactly what I mean.

So thank you, Liz. Thank you for everything you have done for – and given to – SPIG. You’ve set the bar high for New Orleans, and I’ll do my best to deliver as SPIG’s new president. With any luck, AEJMC will be safely back in person for 2021, and we’ll all get to enjoy what the conference and the Big Easy have to offer.

In addition to celebrating our 25th + one year anniversary in 2021, I do have a few things I’d like work on during my tenure as president. For starters, I’d like to see us really emphasize growth within SPIG. We have so much to offer through our list serv and other networking opportunities. At a time when many colleges and universities are facing

financial and enrollment issues, now is the time for us to strengthen and grow our network and interest group. So, invite your colleagues from other small programs. Introduce them to AEJMC and to SPIG. Explain the benefits and why it is so important to become a part of the larger organization and our group.

I’d also like to see us focus on diversifying. Diversifying our membership, our panels and the opportunities we bring to our classrooms. This year, I’ll be starting an online, living repository for us to add our names, academic institutions and areas of expertise to so that we can pull from more members when creating panels or looking for guest speakers, etc.

If there is one thing that moving classes online has shown us it’s that we can continue to bring great material to our students virtually. That being said, why not introduce some guest speakers to our classes that way as well? In addition to helping plan panels, this list will

also indicate members’ willingness to speak remotely on their areas of expertise.

Another point that going virtual has shown us is that conferences can work that way. To say that I was amazed at the audience sizes during the 2020 AEJMC conference would be an understatement. Let’s keep that momentum for 2021. I challenge all of you to come up with fresh and unique pre-conference and panel opportunities for our next conference. These ideas should be original, relevant and pull from areas which we don’t typically explore. Be original.

My last goal for this year is undetermined, because I want to hear from all of you. What do you want to see SPIG focus on for 2020-2021? What would you like to see me work on as president? Please reach out to me at [kalen.churcher@wilkes.edu](mailto:kalen.churcher@wilkes.edu). I’d love to hear your ideas, and I promise to consider all of them.

Have a wonderful semester. Stay safe, and I hope to see you in 2021!

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## aejmc 2020 conference

# Student risks demand balance

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tested positive.

“Sometimes they (the students) don’t realize if you just ask, people are willing to give you that information,” Churcher said.

Maria Fontenot from the University of Tennessee - Knoxville said she expects student journalists will be helped by parents who demand to know the risks their children are facing when they arrive on campus. “Parents are going to want to know what they are sending their kids in to,” she said.

The panelists noted that cov-

ering stories will be challenging during the pandemic.

Student journalists might not be able to conduct interviews in person and will have to rely on video conferencing or telephones to gather information.

The panelists cautioned professors against requiring students to go out into the community to report stories, saying such requirements could raise the risk of liability.

Yet while COVID presents reporting challenges, it also presents opportunity, Fontenot said. “We’re in different times, but we adapt. It also proves to potential employers,

‘Hey look what I can do.’ You’ve got to be very adaptable,” she said.

Adam Maksl, SPIG’s Teacher of the Year in 2017, asked the panelists for advice on deciding what areas of the law to teach. He wondered whether it is better to teach the students the nuances of communication law or to understand their rights as citizens.

Churcher said she considers the kinds of students who are enrolled in her courses as she develops her law lessons. “I try to balance it with the professional aspect and helping them to become educated human beings,” she said.

# Trauma follows NGO helpers

**Carolyn Kim**  
*Biola University*

**T**he SPIG panel NGOs and Global Nonprofits: Preparing Students for the Changing Technology Landscape raised some of the struggles that these nonprofit groups face in doing their work with unpredictable tech resources in disaster zones.

What happens when there’s no WiFi? If all those being rescued have is their phones, and those aren’t all smartphones, how do helpers bring the resources they’ve promised — particularly if they’re web-driven?

KiYong Kim and Michael Longinow, both of Biola University, joined Michael Ray Smith of Regent University in a panel talking through experiences with tech, lack of tech, and the work of nonprofits in other parts of the world.

Kim, a doctoral student and public relations faculty member, brought his experiences with Compassion International, where he worked for several years before en-



**Kim**



**Longinow**



**Smith**

tering academia.

Kim said he’s seen the struggle nonprofit groups have in other parts of the world — particularly in Hong Kong and South Korea, where he has lived.

Longinow, based on trauma research related to the Dart Center at Columbia University, talked about the after-effects of trauma that many in nonprofit groups struggle with.

Research on secondary traumatic disorder suggests that caregivers are affected psychologically, emotionally and even in physical ways by the pain and suffering of those they encounter and care for.

Few organizations (government or NGO) provide systematic or comprehensive care for those who suffer post-traumatic or secondary stress. The result can be a

phenomenon of walking wounded in the ranks of those rushing to help.

Smith talked about ways a nonprofit school in Lithuania has used limited technological resources to do teaching in journalism and media.

He suggested that in cases where technology is limited, educators and media workers in nonprofits can find ways to step back into the basic lessons that students need to learn (e.g. critical thinking, visual assessment for use of a smartphone to capture meaning in a frame, and relationship-building to earn trust for interviews and gaining access to stories, context and meaning.



# member milestones



**Ohrt**

KWAR, the campus radio station, and is co-coordinator of the IS 101 program, a term-long course and first-year orientation requirement focused on interdisciplinary and liberal arts studies.

**Pamela Ohrt** was recently appointed to the R.J. McElroy Chair in Communication at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. Ohrt has served Wartburg for 16 years, where she is faculty adviser for

ter leading the department when it was first formed in 2007. Longinow teaches courses in reporting and writing, philosophy and ethics, and the religion and culture of media. He is faculty adviser to the Daily Chimes, an online student newspaper.



**Incollingo**

associate professor at Rider University, Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

**Jackie Incollingo** has been promoted to as-



**Atwood**

former Baltimore Sun reporter who worked as a spy for the Military Intelligence Division in the 1920s. It is published by Naval Institute Press. Liz is the outgoing head of SPIG.



**Madsen**

**Dave Madsen** has been promoted to associate professor at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, where he is Mass Communication Department head. Madsen is co-chair of the SPIG Research Committee, and

was recently elected vice president of the Iowa College Media Association. As a personal milestone, Madsen and his wife, Mary, celebrated 40 years of marriage this summer.



**Welter**



**Longinow**

**Tamara Welter & Michael Longinow**, both from Biola University, La Mirada, California, co-wrote two chapters in the just released textbook by Richard Craig, *Navigating the News*. Their chapters looked at local news reporting and the news from the Middle East.

**Welter** also celebrated some personal milestones with her son's 18th birthday at the start of COVID-19 lockdown in April, graduated him in June, and her other son's 21st birthday in June as well.

**Longinow** has been appointed chair of the Department of Digital Journalism & Media at Biola. He re-enters this role af-



**Buchanan**

plans. Buchanan is co-chair of the SPIG Research Committee.

**Liz Atwood** of Hood College, Frederick, Maryland, had her first book come out Sept. 15: *The Liberation of Marguerite Harrison, America's First Female Foreign Intelligence Agent*. It's the story of a



**Broussard**

**Sharee LeBlanc Broussard** joined Belmont University's public relations faculty in August 2019 as part of her family's relocation to Nashville, Tennessee. Before relocation she was at

Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama, for 15 years and completed multiple faculty, administrative and special projects appointments.

## Top SPIG research

Winning papers from the SPIG research competition were presented during the AEJMC conference in a virtual poster session Aug. 8.

**First place**, presented by Masudul Biswas, Loyola University of Maryland, and Carrie Sipes, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, was "State of

DataViz and Data Storytelling Education in Journalism and Communication Programs: An Exploratory Study."

In her comments, discussant Carrie Buchanan of John Carroll University said, "The use of multiple research methods is a strength of this study. An excellent paper that definitely should be published."

**Second place**, presented by Doug

Swanson, California State University at Fullerton, was "Mindfully Preparing Generation Z Undergraduates for Communication Workplace Realities."

Buchanan said, "The focus on mindfulness is much-needed in today's media-saturated, short-attention-span environment."

Moderator for the session was Kelly Bruhn of Drake University.