

# spig news

Newsletter of the AEJMC's Small Programs Interest Group

Spring 2005

## Searching for SPIG Successors; Rethinking our Officer Selection



By James Simon  
SPIG Head  
Fairfield University

For the last several years, we have tried it every way possible: Begging people at the annual business meeting. Guilt-tripping a past Head to serve again. Putting together slates of candidates beforehand. Going to the meeting without knowing what to expect.

There has to be a better way to pick SPIG's officers.

I am a guilty party here. Last year, as I moved from vice head to head, I thought I would use an economical, efficient system. I sought out people to serve in the various officer slots, looking for a mixture of men and women, old-timers and newcomers.

I succeeded in generating a strong lineup of talent, especially the current vice head, Jack Zibluk, whom I hope will succeed me this summer. But midway through the process last summer in Toronto, I confessed to all present that I felt like Joseph Stalin announcing a rigged election for the Politburo. While the end result was good, the process wasn't because it relied too much on me to create a slate of candidates. I also had a bias toward people who stayed in Toronto for the business meeting; several people who had to leave early did not get officer slots.

Serving as a SPIG officer is a terrific opportunity to make a difference, to network, to build support among peers, to help your resume and career.

There are many positives, and we don't want to discourage anybody of any background.

Here are some alternatives for this summer's meeting in San Antonio. I hope some people will respond on the listserv and we can develop a consensus on how to proceed.

1. We can take the simplest route, arriving at the business meeting and calling for nominations from the floor. (If we do, I hope we continue tradition and elect the current vice chair to the top job, both because the great job Jack has done as Program Chair for San Antonio and because of the hundreds of hours of training he's already received/invested).
2. We can use Plan 1 above, but invite potential candidates to contact me ahead of time and see if anyone else has expressed interest. I'll be straight with people (I have no interest in running again) and individuals can decide whether to be nominated on the floor.
3. Like last year, I can informally put together a slate and ask people to nominate these individuals, but also push for added nominations from the floor.

Other ideas?

One final thought. The 100 dues paying SPIG members split pretty evenly down the gender divide. But if Jack succeeds me, men will have served as SPIG Head for four of the last five one-year terms.

Why? I'm not certain, but I remember from my graduate Organizational Behavior classes that outgoing directors of organizations tend to pick people "just like them" if they are allowed to play a role in a job search.

We have many talented women in our ranks, and prior experience is not a strict necessity since the Vice Head trains under the Head. Regardless of what system we pick, I hope women candidates run this year for some of the top slots. Many are obviously qualified, and I believe it will be in the best long-term interests of the organization.

Let the debate begin:

What system would best serve the short-term and long-term interests of the 100 SPIG members?

### Media Convergence: Where Does PR Fit?

By Pam Parry  
Belmont University

As journalism educators retool their classrooms to teach media convergence, public relations professors need to ensure their discipline is not overlooked.

The unavoidable tension between journalists and PR practitioners often seeps into academic departments and can tempt faculty to exclude public relations as a part of media convergence. This is a mistake.

If traditional media are reporting across platforms, PR practitioners must adjust to the changing nature of the news business or risk failing their clients. What impacts the news business naturally impacts public relations.

PR educators must keep this in mind when working with their reporting colleagues, and journalism educators need not worry. Universities can keep their journalism pure while providing convergence education for their PR students.

We have done this at Belmont University, and it is working.

I confess we are nowhere near the place we need to be in terms of convergence education for PR majors. But we are taking small steps toward that goal.

With an undersized faculty, we launched a new public relations program in August 2004 – one year after we completely revamped our traditional journalism program to include convergence.

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## Top Ten Things I've Learned As Chair (with apologies to David Letterman)

By Jim Sernoe

Midwestern State University

*Editor's Note: Veteran SPIG leader Jim Sernoe recently became chair of the Mass Communication Department at Midwestern State University.*

- 14) When your dean says, "Can I talk to you for 10 minutes," he really means 40. In fact, no one can count accurately.
- 13) When something's broken, your first question is whether someone can fix it without spending lots of money.
- 12) You will be confronted with bills for things you didn't even know existed.
- 11) If you were slow on grading before being chair, it will only get worse.
- 10) Many students believe that if they gave one speech one time at their junior high school, this is a suitable course substitution for the basic public speaking class.
- 9) Proposing one simple change to the curriculum will involve more committees, councils, administrators and state agencies than you can count.
- 8) When the studio director calls you, something's broken.
- 7) You often remind the studio director that she has lots of paper clips and duct tape with which to fix broken equipment.
- 6) You will spend way too much time on the telephone trying to convince the police chief that taking hundreds of newspapers from the racks and putting them in the garbage really is theft and is thus a crime he should investigate.
- 5) It is difficult to convince the police chief that after the newspaper runs a front-page article about a fraternity party that got out of hand and led to arrests, someone from that fraternity might have had something to do with the stolen/trashed newspapers.
- 4) Just when you think you've modernized the computer lab as much as possible, someone will discover new software, new hard drives, new monitors and new printers that we cannot function without.
- 3) You will spend most days repeating your predecessor's famous line, "What a nightmare!"
- 2) You will tire of saying "What a nightmare" and say "What time does the bar open?" instead.
- 1) Regardless of any other issues, the biggest scandals will always involve parking.

## Spotlight on SPIG Members

John Hanc ran the Antarctica Marathon on Feb. 26. Held on King George Island, off the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, the 26.2 mile race attracted over 200 competitors from around the world. Hanc, who finished 17th overall in the race, wrote about the experience for *Newsday*, *Runner's World* magazine and the *Boston Globe Sunday Magazine*. Hanc also received a grant from his college, New York Institute of Technology, for release time allowing him to take the two week trip, which he also hopes to parlay into a book proposal.

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Vivian Martin has been promoted to associate professor of English/Journalism and granted tenure at Central Connecticut State University effective Aug. 2005

## Panels in San Antonio

SPIG is sponsoring and co-sponsoring a number of exciting panels at this year's convention in San Antonio. Here's a quick list for your calendar.

### Tuesday, Aug. 9

1 - 4 p.m. Show me the money: Funding for research and professional development. (Primary Sponsor: MAC. Co-sponsor: SPIG)

### Wednesday, Aug. 10

3:15 p.m. Great Ideas For Teachers (Sponsor: CCJA. Co-sponsor: SPIG)

5 p.m. Challenges and Strategies for Teaching in Small Programs (Sponsor: SPIG)

5 p.m. Relieving the Overload: Balancing Research and Teaching in Teaching Universities and Colleges (Sponsor: SPIG. Co-sponsor, CCJA)

### Thursday, Aug. 11

3:15 p.m. Don't Shoot the Messenger: Motivating Students to Appreciate Journalism (Primary Sponsor: SPIG. Co-sponsor: Grad Ed)

5 p.m. Hot Topics 2005 or Journalism and Mass Comm. Educators (Primary sponsor: SPIG. Co-sponsor: Mass Comm.)

6:45 p.m. SPIG Business meeting (Social to follow, with CCJA)

### Friday, Aug. 12

1:30 p.m. Teaching Tips from SPIG's Award-Winning Teachers (Sponsor: CCJ. Co-sponsor: SPIG.)

3:15 p.m. Converging on Campus: Multiple Media Approaches in the Classroom and in Student Publications (Sponsor: Magazines. Co-sponsor: SPIG)

## Convergence in PR

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These two programs have separate identities, keeping the appropriate distinctions, while co-existing peacefully in the Department of Media Studies.

Our PR students take a core of four courses, including Intro to Public Relations, PR Writing and Production, PR Research and PR Strategy and Implementation. They also must choose electives from a menu of marketing, communication and journalism courses.

In our first two semesters, this interdisciplinary approach has allowed one PR faculty member, who splits her duties between the two programs, to provide a quality education for more than 30 PR majors. We anticipate 40 majors by August, making our program the second fastest growing program on Belmont's campus.

This growth phenomenon has strained on our small department, but we are digging in and preparing for next year. Because of obvious demands, we have not developed a convergence course for public relations. If we did, no one would be available to teach it. Instead, we've leveraged our strength, using existing courses in a related discipline.

For instance, the journalism program has an Intro to Media Technology class that provides hands-on instruction in convergence. The course is broken into three sections, addressing Internet and Web design principles, desktop publishing and basic video production. PR students are encouraged to take this course, as well as others.

In the traditional PR classes, convergence also has been introduced to the majors through guest speakers, lectures and books. In one class, we read Michael Levine's *Guerrilla P.R. Wired: Waging a Successful Publicity Campaign Online, Offline, and Everywhere in Between*. This practical book underscored the Web's value in public relations.

Although our PR program needs to do much more, we believe small departments can and should take incremental steps to incorporate convergence into PR education.

*Pam Parry is assistant professor of journalism and the director of the public relations program at Belmont University, Nashville, Tennessee.*

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