



## Supporting Local News Ecosystems: Faculty Motivations in Maintaining News-Academic Partnerships

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### Abstract

More academic institutions are embarking on news-academic partnerships to offer experiential learning opportunities for students and to fill gaps in news coverage. Faculty who oversee news-academic partnerships are part of an emerging business model of content production for some news organizations. In many cases, faculty shoulder the responsibility to develop and oversee such partnerships; thus, their motivations are critical to understand how such partnerships can be sustained. This landmark study sought to understand motivations and strategies of faculty who oversee collaborative journalism efforts. This qualitative study found that faculty who oversee news-academic partnerships do so more because of intrinsic motivations that align with their personal and professional values. Faculty are often not compensated, either financially or through reduced course load, despite significantly increased duties. The findings suggest that institutions involved in news-academic partnerships should further examine how to support faculty to ensure program sustainability of news-academic partnerships, and prevent faculty burnout.

### Introduction

News-academic partnerships – as conceptualized by (Salahi and Smith, 2021) – is a form of experiential learning that involves collaboration between a news outlet and an academic institution to develop and disseminate journalism in a variety of formats, such as daily news stories, investigative works, and multi-media projects. The practice is not new. However, a growing number of news organizations and even academic institutions are increasingly relying on developing partnerships as a business model and as a prac-

tical experience for students (Salahi and Smith, 2021). Some news-academic partnerships are regarded as a solution to communities where there are little to no established local news outlets, otherwise known as news deserts; while, in other cases, partnerships may be built to help supplement existing news coverage (Allen, 2022).

News-academic partnerships can be an effective practice to help students retain fundamental and abstract concepts of the journalism discipline by undergoing concrete experiences and producing content

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through a process of active experimentation. Such a partnership allows students to translate editorial concepts taught within the classroom into field work, with the ultimate goal of providing students a transformative learning experience.

Additionally, such an experience could build connections between academia and industry as a possible business model to fill gaps in news coverage within local communities.

An initial quantitative study garnering perspectives from individuals within news organizations and academic institutions sought to better understand the practices and strategies used when collaborating on news-academic partnerships (citation removed). Some local news outlets that have seen a decline in budget, revenue and personnel, have engaged in news-academic partnerships to help fill gaps in news coverage, especially during the coronavirus pandemic, which exploited already existing news gaps across the nation. Fifty-seven percent of the 2,485 U.S. counties that reported COVID-19 cases early in the pandemic had no daily newspaper and 37% saw their local newspapers disappear within the last decade (Hendrickson, 2020). Data from our initial survey were beneficial to understand *how* and *why* news-academic partnerships are formed.

News-academic partnerships may be one promising business model to sustain local news. Like other news business models, it is worthwhile to examine this model's sustainability through the perspectives of those who shoulder the primary responsibilities to maintain it. The findings warranted expanding the research on news-academic partnerships to focus on perspectives of college and university educators who lead students and the collaboration efforts.

### Literature Review

This study, guided by self-determination and normative theoretical frameworks, sought to understand both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation(s) for faculty advisors who are overseeing their respective news-academic partnerships.

**Self-Determination Theory:** Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a behaviorist psychological perspective developed by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci in the late 20th century, posits people are motivated to act in certain ways they think will help them achieve a particular goal (Gagne & Deci, 2005). At the root of this perspective, which is often applied in understanding the driving factors behind workplace behavior, people

act based on core values.

Ultimately, SDT suggests people carry out behaviors they think are most likely to have the most value and bring them joy as well as reap benefits and/or prevent negative consequences. Rewards can be presented in extrinsic or intrinsic form. Common extrinsic motivations in U.S. workforces range from paychecks to award recognitions to praise by colleagues. Specifically, Deci and Ryan (1985) contend the primary external motivation factors that influence behavior revolve around required duties, atmosphere of the workplace, and organizational structure.

Intrinsic motivations can range from self-endorsement of goals to job enjoyment to high levels of self-efficacy (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Previous research on faculty motivations in the classroom suggests faculty are highly motivated by "relatedness," a sense of belonging to a larger community, and "autonomy," having a sense of independence or freedom from authority (Deci, Kasser, & Ryan, 1997). More recently, Stupnisky, BrckaLorenz, Uhas, and Guay (2018) demonstrate in their survey of 1,671 faculty members that teaching effectiveness is highly motivated by a faculty member's perceived self-autonomy. However, Wan-shuai, Xiao-Wen, and Yu-mei (2019) contend that teachers can be incentivized to become motivated in their teaching.

Traditionally, faculty are incentivized to seek scholarly pursuits through intrinsic motivations such as their own interests and expertise, along with extrinsic motivations which include, but are not limited to, funding, a reduction in teaching load, work recognition, or other merit-based compensations (Cook, Kinnetz, & Owens-Misner, 1990; Fairweather, 1993).

However, news-academic partnerships — often championed by the faculty member who find and oversees the work — are not as easily recognized as traditional scholarship practice such as academic research, and therefore may not qualify for many extrinsic factors for motivation. It is worth exploring how the work of developing and sustaining news-academic partnerships are regarded in the academy, and faculty motivations and goals in developing and sustaining such partnerships.

While scholarship explores faculty perception on the factors that drive their teaching development, we did not find literature that used social determination framework to assess journalism faculty motivations.

**Normative Theory:** There are various threads in the Normative Theory framework, including: Develop-

ment Theory (Schramm, 1964), Democratic Elite Theory (Baker, 2002), Democratic Participatory Theory (McQuail, 1983), and Social Responsibility Theory (Peterson, 1963), but Hallin (2004) has suggested that most journalism inquiry is grounded in some vein, sometimes simultaneously a combination of veins, in Normative Theory because journalism is rooted in a pragmatic and professional educational framework.

Simply put, as McQuail (1983, 2005) argues, Normative Theory provides media scholars a conceptual lens for analyzing how journalism *ought to be* rather than exploring the *why* of media and their producers. Moreover, the framework provides a method to understand how journalism practitioners may be guided – and even influenced – in their work by news values such as timeliness and relevance, knowing the difference in source type, being able to interview sources, and adhering to the rule of avoiding conflicts of interest (Lanson & Stephens, 2007; Ward, 2010; Wasserman, 2010; Harrower, 2013; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014).

Additionally, this framework suggests media play a significant role within a democratic society. While the various veins in Normative Theory are each worthy of explanation, media scholars, specifically those in journalism studies, often examine the practice of journalism and the producers through the conceptual framework of Social Responsibility Theory (Peterson, 1963). Under this perspective, it is believed media must act responsibly for the good of society. Traditional journalism ethical practices, which are promoted by the Society of Professional Journalists (2014), are by nature rooted in social responsibility. These ethical practices include: “Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information. Clearly label illustrations and re-enactments” and “Balance a suspect’s right to a fair trial with the public’s right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014).

Furthermore, Normative Theory allows media scholars to examine the traditional rules and roles of media, as taught in most major journalism schools in the Western Hemisphere and/or passed down through journalistic traditions. For journalists, roles can range from serving as the fourth estate watchdog, information sources, and promoters of residents’ civil debates (Glasser, 1999; Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Additionally, the theory suggests journalists

adhere to the most prominent, long-standing norm of the profession – seeking truth, traditionally referred to as “objectivity” or “neutrality” by journalism absolutists. In recent years, journalists and journalism critics and educators have transitioned from employing and teaching “objectivity,” an ambiguous term, to simply making “seeking truth” the golden journalistic standard (Baleria, 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Solkin, 2022). While terms might be interchangeable, the practice adheres to the following principles: reporting is rooted in facts and takes precedence over editorializing, news needs to balance viewpoints backed by sound evidence, and journalists must be impartial (Schudson, 2001; Raeijmaekers & Maesele, 2017; Hartley & Askanius, 2021; Harlow & Brown, 2022; Solkin, 2022)

While Normative Theory is primarily adopted and analyzed through the perspective at larger daily newspapers, it offers conceptual insight into understanding how journalism faculty working within news-academic partnerships conduct their roles within the structure as well as their perspectives of the appropriate roles, routines, strategies, and practices of their students and their media production. This understanding is important because partnerships – regarded as an expansion of traditional journalism practices – may help to promote the sustainability of local news.

### Research Questions

This study sought to understand motivations behind building and sustaining news-academic partnerships from the perspective of faculty members who are the primary overseers of such partnerships. This study also examined strategies faculty used to make such partnerships sustainable, fill coverage gaps in regions with limited local news, and – in some cases – drive news coverage in their respective communities. No publicly available study to date has examined whether news outlets that engage in partnerships may have a competitive advantage in their respective market, or whether academic institutions may consider the value and resources that they provide to the ecosystem as a competitor to existing news outlets.

The idea for this study emerged from data previously collected in an exploratory study on news-academic partnerships, which revealed the various levels of partnerships and the benefits and challenges such partnerships serve to academic institutions, their students, and to news outlets, regardless of size.

Among the types of content generated through the news-academic partnerships was the institution-led journalistic projects, including those targeting specific topics and/or niche audiences. In an initial exploration of these institution-led journalistic projects, we found numerous works provided exceptional added value to the partnership through editorial depth and elevated storytelling techniques.

This provided a springboard to understand motivations and strategies of academic institutions that are involved in high-caliber project-driven productions. Ultimately, faculty who manage news-academic partnership(s) within their respective institutions offer a deeper understanding to those challenges and benefits, as well as insight into their perspectives about the contributions made in the communities they serve. Additionally, a qualitative approach, specifically conducting participant interviews, would best help assess the benefits of an institution-driven news-academic partnership, and its sustainability as a driver of news.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What are the self-perceived motivations of faculty who are the primary overseers of news-academic partnerships to create and sustain such partnerships?

**RQ2:** From an academic's perspective, what resources, strategies and practices are critical to sustain a news-academic partnership?

**RQ3:** To what extent do faculty regard journalism produced in an academic setting as a competitive advantage in the local news ecosystem?

### Methodology

To understand the motivations of faculty who manage news-academic partnerships(s) as well as their reliance upon strategies and practices, we interviewed 7 faculty members (4 females and 3 males) who currently oversee an ongoing news-academic partnership. Ethnographic methods, including in-depth interviews, are useful in data collection because they provide the ability for participants to provide subjective perspectives on their respective experiences and for researchers to probe for more detailed explanations (Singer, 2009). A semi-structured interview guide was developed to gather information. This approach allowed for follow-up questions and prompts that permitted the interviewers to delve further into the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Participants for this study were recruited in early 2021 through both direct and indirect email outreach. Through research of standing news-academic partnerships, we located contact information for faculty members who were overseeing such projects and made initial email contact. We also solicited participants through outreach via social media channels targeting academic faculty such as Facebook groups and Twitter, as well as emails to listservs for news and media industry and academic organizations. We recognize the small sample size of the study, but we made multiple attempts to reach potential participants. We ultimately interviewed every candidate who responded to our request for participation. At the time of our request for participation, there was no known database of news-academic partnerships for us to use in targeting potential interview subjects. Therefore, we relied on snowball sampling methods for recruitment of participants.

Seven participants who responded to our request for participation fit the scope of our research. We conducted hour-long in-depth interviews with those seven participants to gain additional understanding of faculty motivations for facilitating news-academic partnerships in their respective institutions. The length of partnerships assessed in this qualitative study varied between 1 to 20 years. The types of partnerships varied as well, with four faculty describing their partnerships as a type of "newswire service" and three describing their partnerships as "community news websites." At the time of the interviews, participants served at institutions ranging from small private liberal arts schools to large public land grant universities.

Participants were asked to describe the type of partnership they held with a news outlet, its inception, and the work involved in sustaining the partnership. Participants were also asked to describe any benefits – including personal, institutional and organizational benefits – as well as challenges to cultivating a news-academic partnership. Participants were also asked to reflect on whether the work produced through the partnership filled a news gap as well as whether it could be viewed as a competitor to existing news outlets. Finally, participants reflected on how their area's news ecosystem would be different if their partnership had not existed.

Interviews were held and recorded via Zoom between April 2021 and August 2021. The digital software company provided us with transcriptions of our

discussions. Confidentiality was ensured for multiple reasons, including participant request for confidentiality due to potential professional repercussions when discussing challenges of maintaining and funding partnerships; confidentiality was also offered to participants per the guidelines of Endicott College's Institutional Review Board, which approved the human subjects research for this study.

We took notes during the interviews. To analyze the interview responses, we carried out the inductive process of line-by-line coding in order to identify thematic patterns, which is a common practice in qualitative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While both researchers are teaching faculty with professional experience in newsrooms, one of the authors is a founding partner for a news-academic partnership. To eliminate the potential for bias and to mitigate the possibility of asking leading questions, that researcher with first-hand experience overseeing a news-academic partnership was not involved in the interviewing of participants. That author's perspective, however, helped to inform some of the themes that emerged during analysis. For analysis, we initially probed through transcripts separately, producing initial themes, then compared our findings. We each looked for similarities and differences among respondents' comments, creating preliminary categories for further analysis. Drawing upon previous literature and the theoretical frameworks outlined in the literature review, we ultimately identified general concepts used to understand how faculty view their role(s) in creating and sustaining a partnership.

### **Findings**

Since there are many news-academic partnership models, it is important to understand the purpose of the partnership in order to assess whether the model is perceived to be working. The following themes emerged. Faculty stated one of their primary purposes for pursuing a news-academic partnership was to provide a service to the community (n = 7); faculty also stated their respective partnership provides experiential learning opportunities for students, including leadership, reporting, writing, and sourcing (n = 7).

Throughout the course of our interviews, incentives for faculty work in creating and sustaining news-academic partnerships emerged. Student learning, professional development, community engagement, and recognition arose as common themes as reasons faculty engage in partnerships. These themes

are articulated by the most frequent words used by all of the participants to describe their motivations to establish and maintain their respective partnerships (Table 1.1). It is interesting to note that the forms of motivation articulated by the interviewees were non-monetary.

RQ1 asked about the self-perceived motivations of faculty who are the primary overseers of news-academic partnerships to create and sustain such collaborations. In considering RQ1, most faculty expressed concern on the heavy commitment and workload to ensure the success of a partnership. In most cases, faculty are shouldering the responsibility of steering such partnerships, with limited to no compensation nor a decrease in their current teaching responsibilities to balance the workload or record for merit, which suggests these faculty are not highly motivated by the external financial or work recognition incentives.

A majority of faculty (n = 5) interviewed for this study said they did not receive financial compensation for their work in launching and/or sustaining their respective partnerships. Some reported that their contribution to their academic partnership did not contribute to their merit, nor did they receive a reduction in course load to take on the added responsibility of overseeing the endeavor. One participant stated, "If I gave it up tomorrow, it would make no bearing on my current position as a professor."

This suggests that faculty members may be motivated to develop a partnership beyond the extrinsic incentives of their profession. Motivators included the following: The opportunity to coach students in an experiential learning opportunity (n = 7); eligibility for grant funding (n = 7). One faculty member also reported recognition of their work within the journalism profession as a motivator.

Most faculty reported spending anywhere between 15 to 20 hours of work per week beyond their current role(s) to sustain the partnership. One participant noted working 80 hours per week in their total academic duties while also overseeing their partnership. Despite the time intensiveness, all participants stated they remained motivated to continue the work, as heard in the following comment: "But it's good work, meaning it's meaningful work. ... The idea is once the structure [is] built, then everything gets a little more stable."

Some faculty participants saw themselves in the role of an editor and their student as a journalist-in-training. One participant who cited students

as their primary motivation said they found value in viewing the partnership as a coaching opportunity, especially people from underrepresented communities. They stated:

I'm helping them problem-solve. ... Being able to support young people, particularly young people from underrepresented backgrounds in finding their voice as a leader and finding a voice as a journalist who maybe wants to challenge certain aspects of the profession or see if there are better ways to serve other communities, that's been great.

One participant remarked that females in their department were more likely to shoulder the responsibility of building partnerships and working on extracurricular projects with students. The participant remarked, "It would be interesting to see the gender breakdown of who is overseeing these partnerships – whose service and efforts are valued in the academy and in journalism for that matter."

Female participants in this study tended to note intrinsic motivators including leading students on a professional endeavor, and contribution to the profession. While our study included four female-identifying and three male-identifying participants, we did not actively seek gender equity in soliciting participants for this study.

RQ2 asked what resources, strategies and practices are critical to sustain a news-academic partnership. The findings indicate that for most faculty members, there are often several challenges to balancing the expectations of a newsroom with the reality that some of the work is occurring in classrooms where students are still learning the craft. Depending on the rigor of the partnership, faculty reported feeling burnout as industry-standard editors – in addition to their teaching course loads – and in some cases overseeing complete development of content to meet the editorial and technological standards of the multimedia publication.

One participant stated that they received accommodations from their department to support their work – more specifically, a reduction in course load: "Of course it is not nearly enough for this kind of work, but it's what the contract said." The same participant noted that they have adapted their current courses to support their work, since they do not receive administrative or personnel support for the partnership. Integrating the partnership into a course helped the faculty member's workflow since, one stat-

**Table 1. Participants' descriptors of motivations to establish and maintain their respective partnerships**

Descriptors of Motivations	Frequency of use in interviews
Community	164
Students	160
Work	125
People	106
News	90
Time	75

ed, "no one else is directly involved in building the program but me."

While not primarily motivated by financial incentives, participants in this study expressed the desire to be compensated and supported through more resources for their work in the partnership. For these academics, securing funding would allow them to do more within their jobs as leaders of partnerships; yet the financial incentive is not the deciding factor for their participation.

Another participant stated the importance of securing a funding source to incentivize participation in the partnership. That participant started an endowment program to help pay salaries for students so they could work on the newspaper and get paid, giving them time to work on projects. The participant remarked, "The type of grant support we have is crucial to the sustainability."

Additional funding sources, such as traditional advertising revenue, for support staff could also help take some load off faculty and help build the partnership. One participant stated, "It has not happened yet that I have been able to find someone willing to do sales for me, or even PR for me, but that is something I continue to work on." Another participant stated, "You [would] either need to fund a full-time faculty member to oversee it or a full-time editor of some type."

Faculty members also noted pulling from existing resources to help maintain the workload needed to execute the partnership. One participant stated, "The dean's assistant now has actually been helping

me with a lot of the bureaucracy. ... At some point I will get that money that will pay for the sustainability of the program and then we can hire that manager on the ground, and I can really focus on the direction of the program, the big picture kind of stuff.”

### **Students play a central role in the formation and success of a news-academic partnership**

Each participant acknowledged that student investment in the project is critical to the partnership’s success, and noted that students are incentivized to join the partnership through one of the following methods: paid extracurricular work; receiving credit similar to taking a course; a graded assignment built into a course.

One faculty participant – who leads a news-academic partnership at a large city-based university – noted that an academic institution’s buy-in to the news-academic partnership is critical to its sustainability. Financial incentives, in particular, may eliminate a barrier of entry for students who may not be able to afford the time to devote to the project because they need to pursue paid opportunities. The participant’s news-academic partnership structure is a student-developed and led news site that feeds its stories to area news outlets. The participant stated, “I think it helps weed out access issues that we’ve been talking about in journalism. ... If you have a student that is a federal work study eligible, instead of having them take a clerical job, they can take a job that helps them get a job in their major.”

RQ3 asked to what extent do faculty regard journalism produced in an academic setting as a competitive advantage in the local news ecosystem. To answer this, faculty participants were asked how they view the purpose of their partnership, and how that may motivate them to ensure its success and sustainability. Findings from our exploratory study on news-academic partnerships (citation removed) suggest that academic institutions are well-resourced to be a news service for communities, especially where local news outlets are non-existent or dwindling. In particular, long-standing partnerships that have sustained over the years may become a local news source for communities at a similar level to professional news outlets.

One faculty participant who oversees multiple news-academic partnerships at their privately-funded university said they produce more stories than some of their state’s local news outlets. Specifically, the participant stated, “I honestly think of us as the largest

newsroom in the state.”

Faculty recognized that in order to consider themselves a competition to existing news outlets, they must be able to not only generate stories, but also revenue to sustain their work. Participants noted that their partnership is not regarded as a profitable endeavor, and would not be sustainable without the partnering news outlet. One participant stated, “We don’t really have a business model. We want to be a nonprofit, but we don’t really make any money.”

The depth of the work students undertake in another partnership prompted faculty for one project’s website to post a disclaimer that they should not be perceived as competition. Another participant stated, “On our website [we] explicitly [state] that we are not looking to compete, we are looking to support the local ecosystem.” Another participant who views their model as a news service, said the work that is produced by students and fed to a news outlet supplements the local news coverage: “We work with populations that mainstream media is just not covering, so we are adding value to all of this.”

Faculty participants noted potential benefits to the community as a motivation to continue their partnership. One participant noted holding meetings with community members, the news outlet, and the participating students to better understand which stories to cover. The experience also helped build trust between the community and their news source. One participant stated, “We talked to them about what we’re working on, they gave us story ideas.”

Despite saying they are better funded and have more personnel than their news counterparts, none of the study participants regarded their respective partnership model as a competitive business model to existing news outlets, regardless of the type of partnership they have developed. One participant stated: “The purpose of being a news service and not a news outlet is so we don’t compete.” Overall, faculty perceived a news-academic partnership to complement the work of the news organization(s) they are working with.

### **Discussion**

Faculty who oversee these partnerships are typically the sole organizer from the academic side of the partnership. Thus, they reportedly shoulder the responsibility of not only overseeing the project and the student participants, but also maintaining relationships with the partnering news outlet(s). Faculty often dis-

cussed news-academic partnerships with enthusiasm. For most of the participants, these endeavors created a sense of professional enjoyment. Some faculty said they conceived the idea for the project and approached news outlets to create the partnership.

Faculty may parallel the role of a managing editor for students. As some faculty identified as former journalists, their role in their partnership provides a level of satisfaction in practicing their profession.

Another key motivational factor for many of the faculty for continuing overseeing the partnerships is their role in mentoring students. As a method of applied learning, a news-academic partnership allows for students to work on real stories with a wider reach than a typical class assignment. The partnership is a way students can earn experience in the industry while making connections with the partnering organization. The partnership may also serve as a pipeline to entering a professional career in journalism. Most of the faculty noted that some of their student participants are highly motivated and invested in the success of the partnership.

The findings of this study parallel previous psychology scholarship on human motivations, specifically Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits people are influenced by intrinsic (workforce joy) and extrinsic (a paycheck) motivations. This study revealed that faculty who lead news-academic partnerships are driven by intrinsic motivations to engage with extrinsic agents (students, community, news). In their interviews, faculty varied in how they described motivational factors for why they do what they do, but we conceptualized those intrinsic factors into three primary categories – service to community, professional enjoyment, and mentorship. In service to the community, some faculty explained the multimedia projects and stories they pursue within the partnership are of community interest. In some cases, the content produced helps to fill the gaps in coverage for news outlets or are sources for news in communities without a steady stream of local news.

Our findings indicate faculty who oversee news-academic partnership adhere to long-standing traditional journalistic rules, values, and routines such as a timeliness and relevance, knowing the difference in source type, being able to interview sources, adhering to the rule of avoiding conflicts of interest, and seeking truth, which are outlined in the normative theory perspective (Lanson & Stephens, 2007; Ward, 2010; Wasserman, 2010; Harrower, 2013; Shoemaker &

Reese, 2014; Baleria, 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Solkin, 2022). Additionally, the findings reveals a prevalent purpose of the newspaper academic partnership is to serve the broader community, which aligns with the Normative Theory perspective that a primary function of journalists and journalism is to serve a democratic society (Glasser, 1999; Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). For the faculty, adhering to these journalistic strategies and practices, including deep reporting, extensive editing, and multimedia production is crucial to how they do their jobs as journalism educators. The extensive workload and its promotion, above their faculty positional expectations, comes at the expense of constantly burning the midnight oil, on personal time, with little to no added financial compensation.

While this study provided insightful descriptive findings of faculty motivations to pursue a news-academic partnership, the findings may not be generalizable to all who oversee such endeavors given the small sample size of participants interviewed. A clearer picture of the demographics of the academic institution such as the demographic of its students, resources available to the academic program, and the financial structure of the academic program is also merited and would offer insight on the components from the academic side to sustain a partnership. Future research should compare rural to urban news-academic partnerships to address whether they are filling information gaps in known news deserts across the country.

Additionally, scholarship should seek to understand partnerships evolving outside of the U.S. Our study also did not measure students' perception of the benefits and challenges of participating in a news-academic partnership. Moreover, future research should include participating students' perceptions and recommendations to strengthen the partnership programs in order to garner a holistic perspective of this journalistic collaboration model. Also, we suggest there would be merit in examining the types of stories covered by students within the partnership to assess the added value of their work in the news ecosystem as perceived by the audience.

Our findings suggest that overseeing a sustainable news-academic partnership is no easy feat, specifically from the perspective of faculty participants. Academic institutions are theoretically positioned to sustain meaningful journalism, especially journalism that serves communities outside of elite news cov-



erage areas. Many universities and colleges are well-funded and provide the physical and intellectual space for minds to build healthy skepticism and investigate complex issues in society. It is worth considering whether the same institutions are the water well needed to hydrate news deserts and communities that are at risk of losing any reliable source of news and information. However, we contend that in order for news-academic partnerships to be viable within their communities, academic institutions should further examine the time and workload required of faculty to ensure program sustainability and possible methods to prevent faculty burnout.

Continuous exploration of news-academic partnerships is needed to understand the advantage of the business model to train student journalists, resource news outlets, and, in particular, sustain local news. Specifically, the findings from this research provide a basis for understanding the role(s), motivations, strategies and practices of faculty members who oversee news-academic partnerships they helped to launch and sustain. This information adds value to our understanding of an emerging business model in journalism, and the perspectives of key members in the partnership. Insights into current news-academic partnerships will not only help to understand the effort needed to launch such an endeavor, but also curate sustainability.

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