

ASJMC

# INSIGHTS

*Fall 2010*

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in Competition for Students**

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**Redefining journalism  
is vital economic, social concern**

By James L. Stewart

ASJMC **INSIGHTS**

*ASJMC Insights*

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# From the Editor

## REDEFINING JOURNALISM IS VITAL ECONOMIC, SOCIAL CONCERN

*By James L. Stewart*  
Nicholls State University

*“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.”*

**William Shakespeare**  
“Romeo and Juliet”

With apologies to Juliet, while names may not have been important to the star-crossed lovers of Shakespeare’s play, they’ve become pretty darned significant to the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century world of mass communication.

The foggy lens of time makes most things appear less complicated when we look back at them. So it may not be accurate to say that it was once easy to define concepts like journalism or mass communication. But, if it ever was simple, it is far from so now.

Working through new definitions in the face of changes wrought by economic, cultural and technological shifts is far from an idle mental exercise.

Determining where individuals, organizations and processes fall in the new paradigms is, in fact, tied into vital economic, political and social concerns at a very practical level.

For example, government must now decide if bloggers are due certain protections traditionally afforded journalists. An April *Los Angeles Times* article reported that sheriff’s deputies used a warrant to seize materials and equipment from a blogger who had reported information about a lost prototype iPhone (Sarno, 2010). The company for which the blogger worked argued that the warrant was improperly issued, because there are laws prohibiting warrant-based searches of newsrooms — in this case, the blogger’s home.

As they try to develop new financial models, newspapers must decide if they are in the business of producing a paper product, or if their function is to locate, edit, package and distribute important information to the general public irrespective of the platform.

Consumers must decide if the difference between pundits and reporters matters to them.

That all of this is taking place in the face of, and perhaps in part as a result of, a general downturn in the economy makes the issues more critical. There is tremendous pressure to adapt quickly, but there is also little room for error.

The academy is caught up in the same maelstrom, facing most of the same questions.

The world for which we are training our students is rapidly changing. This world is driven by constant, rapid advances in technology that increase financial pressures on programs to stay current.

Some programs face a constant struggle to convince upper-level administrators that journalism and mass communication programs are still relevant and essential, when what administrators understand are stories of traditional media forms quickly dying away.

It is ironic that in an information-driven age that mass media education is not given more respect and resources. Perhaps that is because too often the old definitions are driving the discussion.

It is my belief, for what it's worth, that when the dust settles, the core principles of journalism will have survived.

Consumers will come to realize that they need a group of professionals to sift through vast mountains of information and intelligently present that which has real worth. After all, we survived yellow journalism.

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Sarno, D. (2010, Aug. 2). *Gizmodo iPhone blogger says home searched by sheriff's deputies*. Los Angeles Times. <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/apr/27/business/la-fi-iphone-probe-20100427>.

# DEPARTMENT SEES ACCREDITATION AS ASSET IN COMPETITION FOR STUDENTS

*By Joseph Borrell*

Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Members of the Department of Communication and Journalism at Shippensburg University voted three years ago to seek formal accreditation of our undergraduate program by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. We remain convinced that striving for program accreditation is the right move for all of the constituents of our program, although the process of setting the date for an initial visit has been long. Also, the costs related to gaining compliance with accreditation have proven to be significant, especially in light of the sobering reality of the current economic climate and the threats colleges now face from budget cuts and resulting faculty layoffs.

Several factors pushed us toward jumping into the water and swimming toward ACEJMC status after years of weighing the advantages and disadvantages related to seeking the imprimatur of program accreditation. Several new tenure-track faculty members were hired into the department after a wave of retirements around 2000. The new faculty expressed a strong desire to move the program forward in a dramatic way, and the goal of program accreditation fit neatly into the new group's scholarly and professional orientations and aspirations.

The environment on campus, particularly in the College of Arts and Sciences where the journalism and communication program resides, was also supportive of the accreditation initiative. Our dean, a chemist by training, has given us sound advice along the way and supported us where it counts. For example, Dean Jim Mike provided travel funds to observe the ACEJMC committee meeting in Chicago last year and has advocated at the highest levels for the program to have access to the equipment and communication technology that are comparable to what our students use at their first job.

Shippensburg has a strong tradition of quality instruction, systematic planning and resource stewardship, and this academic culture has led to a number of programs being accredited. Barbara Lyman, the provost, has stressed program quality and the integrity of the academic mission and so naturally supports our department's prominent alignment with these institutional goals. We would join a large group of programs on our campus with national accreditation. Our academic neighbors on the Shippensburg campus enjoy recognition from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, AACSB International, ABET, Inc., American Chemical Society, Council on Social Work Education, Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, International Association of Counseling Services and National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers and Council for Exceptional Children. In some way, our seeking program accreditation is just an example of keeping up with the Joneses among our academic neighbors, but the status of your program on your campus is vital for your long-term health. It has been observed that those programs that have earned accreditation have become stronger players in the campus community over time.

But it's important not to lose sight of the students in these campus contests about recognition and ranking. A not-so-insignificant part of the reason we sought accreditation is that in the increasingly competitive world of college admissions, program accreditation serves as an indicator of quality. Students and their families are making a substantial investment of time and money when choosing a major and a college. A program with ACEJMC status can serve as a magnet bringing in aspiring journalism and communications students from across the region, not simply your state, by assuring them of the quality of their college experience.



Of course, Shippensburg University is a public institution, and the push from Harrisburg, our state capital, for accreditation was also important. Shippensburg University is part of the 14-university Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. A previous system chancellor provided a strong push to university presidents to strive to accredit as many programs as possible. This mandate from the system office was accompanied with the promise of additional resources being given to universities with the most number of accredited academic programs. It is hard to imagine any chair or director taking on the quest for accreditation without a great deal of support from the upper administration.

To date, no other mass communication and journalism program within our State System has gone as far as we have down the road toward applying for accreditation. The clear promise of additional resources flowing into our program helped convince us that this was the right decision, but it has also changed our point of reference in a subtle way. Previously, our sister institutions in the system, for example Millersville University, have been our points of comparison and primary rivals for attention and resources.

However, seeking to join an accredited peer group means you now compare yourself more with national journalism and communication schools. To me, that has meant more time thinking outside the confines of the system and more nudging of myself to reflect more broadly about what we are doing and how well we are doing our work. We're proud to be a Pennsylvania State System campus, but we would be even more pleased if our teaching, scholarship and service were recognized by the national accrediting body.

The nine standards were posted to the bulletin board in my office the week I became chair and now serve as a constant reminder and shaper of departmental priorities. One or more of the standards have appeared regularly on our departmental meeting agendas over these many months. Despite our musings about ACEJMC status over the years and the experiences of some faculty at other accredited schools, we found that we had to carefully examine ACEJMC polices and accept that we had some work to do to become ready for a visit. We learned from a consultant that we were in good shape on such matters as the 80/65 rule, which limits the amount of coursework majors take in their home department, but found that we needed to do more toward assuring compliance with other standards and guidelines

Today, we have boxes of materials in our conference room documenting various aspects of student assessment. In addition, every student in the program completes designated courses focusing on such concepts as ethics and diversity.

Two of my colleagues worked closely with the Mathematics Department to make sure our students obtain the statistical skills employers tell us that our majors need. These and other changes resulted in a more modern curriculum that strengthened the academic core of the program, but gave students and faculty fewer electives to take and teach.

One of the strongest reasons to obtain and keep ACEJMC certification remains the cap on class sizes for most journalism and communication courses. No longer could classes be overloaded and pushed into the twenties in terms of enrollment in the skills classes. Naturally, this made class scheduling each semester more challenging, but the payoff in pedagogy was worth it. Many of us noticed that smaller class sizes meant we could do more in those classes. We had more time to grade and thus could give students more feedback on stories and scripts. In class, we could delve more into materials and go deeper into concepts since classes were now in the teens in terms of enrollment, not 25. The strict limits on class sizes were in sharp contrast to what is happening elsewhere. Whereas class sizes across the Pennsylvania System have been going up due to a renewed emphasis on "faculty productivity," we have largely been spared the academic concerns that come from supersizing sections due to our prospective ACEJMC affiliation. In fact, other departments wish their organizations and accrediting agencies had such rigid guidelines about when one more student is one too many for effective instruction to occur.

My colleagues and I have spent time this spring and summer drafting sections of our self study. Just as I have had to tell students in my office that there are no guarantees in life, so it is with us and accreditation. I am convinced that we have a quality program that provides a unique learning environment for students so they can contribute to the success of their employers, but the nature of any outside review produces some element of uncertainty. ACEJMC is no exception.

This winter, we are on the schedule for an initial accreditation visit. There is no doubt that all of the time we have devoted to pursuing accreditation has made us a stronger and more cohesive department. The lists of standards and competencies put out by ACEJMC have organized our work and produced many small changes for the good. For example, our striving to meet ACEJMC curricular standards lengthened, but improved, our course syllabi distributed the first day of class.

Gathering and analyzing the material required for ACEJMC has also spurred many informal hallway conversations. Faculty talk about matters that otherwise were likely to be overlooked in our daily dance to balance teaching, service and

research responsibilities. For example, the looming ACEJMC review has pushed us to codify some of our informal practices and critically review other policies for compliance. It is hard to imagine that this work would have been done without the pressure of ACEJMC coming in to look over our shoulders.

No doubt, the self-review has raised interesting questions, and the creation of the required self-study feels a bit like volunteering to write a second dissertation, but for us, the payback will be the feedback we get from the team. The comments can only help my nine colleagues and me do a

better job of helping our nearly 320 communication and journalism majors make the transition to working in the profession. That focus is why each of us decided to become a professor of journalism and communication in the first place, well before thoughts about accreditation filled our days and minds.

*Dr. Joseph Borrell (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 2000) is Associate Professor and Chair of the Communication and Journalism Department at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania.*

# ACEJMC CURRICULUM STANDARDS CAUSE PROGRAM TO DROP ACCREDITATION

*By Jerry C. Hudson*  
Texas Tech University

The mass communications industry has experienced a dramatic metamorphosis during the past decade. Administrators, faculty and industry representatives constantly strive to anticipate changes in business models, technology, consumer demands and employment skills. In 2007 and 2008, the College of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University examined its curriculum, projected industry changes, and drafted a new curriculum for each major. In fall 2008, the college faculty and the 75 members of the college's National Professional Advisory Board (NPAB) recommended the college not seek ACEJMC reaccreditation.

In making the decision to drop ACEJMC accreditation, the college reviewed both the benefits and liabilities of accreditation. However, before reviewing the specific considerations that led to the decision to not seek ACEJMC accreditation, it is important to briefly describe the program's history.

The College of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University reflects a long and storied history beginning in 1926. The initial college catalog listed the first journalism courses in the Department of English. Texas Tech University administrators approved a major in journalism in 1931. During the 1940s, semester course offerings varied from as few as 60 hours to as many as 81 hours in 1949.

Wallace E. Garets was employed by the University in the fall of 1956 to serve as chair of the Department of Journalism and remained for 14 years. Garets brought national recognition to the Journalism Department. In 1962, he was vice president of the American Society of Journalism School Administrators, co-author of *Modern Journalism* and editor of the *Journalism Educator*. He was elected to the executive committee of the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism in 1960. This association was a member of the American Council on Education for Journalism (ACEJ), the organization which provides accreditation for journalism schools and departments.

In 1970, Garets was one of eight elected educator members of the ACEJ and served two three-year terms as a representative of the American Society of Journalism School Administrators. The American Council on Education for Journalism accredited the Journalism Department in 1966. This was the second accredited journalism program in Texas. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in October 1968 approved a master's degree in journalism.

In 1970, Dr. Billy I. Ross, professor of marketing in the College of Business Administration at Texas Tech, became the next head of the Department of Journalism. Ross directed the Marketing Department's advertising program. Advertising, located in the College of Business, and Broadcasting, located in the Department of Speech, were transferred to the newly created Department of Mass Communications. The newly formed Department of Mass Communications – Advertising, Broadcasting and Journalism – was reaccredited in 1973.

The American Council on Education in Journalism visited the department in 1979 to review its performance. All of its programs were reaccredited. Tech's Department of Mass Communications joined ranks with the University of Missouri, Texas, Ohio, West Virginia and Syracuse in having five or more accredited sequences. Tech also became one of 10 universities, and the only one in Texas, with accreditation in mass communications graduate studies. ACEJMC reaccredited the program in '86, '92,

'98, '04. By the fall of 1986, the program had 1,482 majors in the several sequences offered by the department, and it had become the eighth largest in the nation.

In May 1988, the department became the School of Mass Communications within the College of Arts and Sciences. However, in 2004, the School of Mass Communications became the College of Mass Communications with four academic departments – Advertising, Electronic Media, Journalism and Public Relations. The college added a Ph.D. in 2005. In fall 2011, the college anticipates an undergraduate enrollment of about 1,500 majors, a master's enrollment of 40 and a doctoral enrollment of 28.

The point in reviewing the history of our program is to describe the efforts of many people to achieve excellence in Journalism/Mass Communications and the value they placed on ACEJMC accreditation. The college has been accredited by ACEJMC for almost 45 years. Therefore, any decision to drop ACEJMC accreditation was not taken lightly.

The program has produced numerous alumni who are winners of national awards including Pulitzer, Peabody, Addy, Golden Globe, Gold Lion and Clio. Alumni also are holding or have held management positions in many national media organizations and agencies.

The following summary of the meetings and considerations the college conducted prior to the decision to drop ACEJMC accreditation do not adequately reflect the lengthy and thorough discussions in making the final decision. While the new curriculum might not be perfect, members of the faculty are excited about the opportunities to expand and reinvent their respective disciplines.

Faculty and staff began a self-assessment of the curriculum in fall 2007. The purpose of the curriculum assessment was to determine the knowledge and skills students should possess when they complete their respective major. Following the assessment of each major, faculty wrote specific learning objectives for each course and complementing assessments for each learning objective. The learning objectives for each course were then compared to the knowledge and skills listed for each major. If the learning objectives for individual courses matched the knowledge and skills listed in the major, the courses were retained in the curriculum. Courses that did not contribute to the knowledge and skills for a major were considered to be unnecessary and were considered for further review by the faculty and members of the college's NPAB (see <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/masscom/about/nationalboard.php>).

Faculty and staff made several recommendations to add new

courses, slightly modify existing courses, and delete some courses. Additional meetings were conducted by each academic department to develop an effective curriculum that would meet the ACEJMC criteria regarding the number of hours within the major, liberal arts hours and hours outside the major. However, ACEJMC limits the number of hours students complete in mass communication courses. Faculty members in each degree program want students to complete specific courses within their respective major, but also have an opportunity to complete several courses in other mass communications majors. For example, public relations faculty recommended that public relations students should have an opportunity to complete additional hours in advertising, magazine writing, and multi-media courses in Electronic Media. Electronic Media faculty suggested that their majors complete courses in Advertising and Public Relations. In most cases, the new ideal curriculum in each major would take at least 48 hours – an excessive number based on ACEJMC criteria.

After much faculty discussion, each department developed a 15-hour core curriculum of Introduction to Mass Communications, Theories, Law, NewsWriting and the introductory course for the specific major. Each department then developed a list of 18 to 24 required hours specific to its respective discipline. In lieu of an 18-hour minor, each department developed three groups of courses – including elective courses from the student's major, courses from other mass communications majors, and courses from other campus colleges and departments. Students would be required to complete six to nine hours from each of the three groups of courses. This curriculum would give students more options to pursue their special interests in other areas of mass communications.

To implement the curriculum, college administrators and faculty conducted lengthy discussions regarding ACEJMC reaccreditation standards. The curriculum changes could not be adopted within ACEJMC accreditation guidelines. Following some of the initial faculty discussions, the faculty unanimously agreed the college would not seek reaccreditation in Advertising, Electronic Media and Public Relations. However, the faculty temporarily agreed that Journalism would seek reaccreditation. This would be similar to the accredited programs at the University of Maryland, Michigan State University and The University of Texas. Before a final decision was made regarding reaccreditation, college administrators and faculty wanted to review the new proposed curriculum with the college's 75-member National Professional Advisory Board.

Following the curriculum assessment, the college developed a five-year strategic plan. The 2007-2012 strategic plan in-

cluded goals and objectives the faculty reviewed during the ACEJMC reaccreditation decision. The faculty voiced concerns that the ACEJMC limits on the number of hours in mass communications courses were too restrictive.

About 65 members of the college's NPAB and the college's faculty met in October 2008 to discuss and evaluate the curriculum in each of the four undergraduate degree programs. College administrators distributed copies of the strategic plan and a proposal for a new curriculum to members of the NPAB. College representatives provided written and oral detailed information regarding the benefits of the new curriculum, issues with non-reaccreditation by ACEJMC, and their perceptions about the future of mass communications. During the afternoon sessions, representatives of the NPAB met with their respective departmental faculty members and continued to discuss the merits of the new curriculum and ACEJMC. When the faculty and the board members reassembled, the board chairman for Journalism informed the faculty and other board members that the Journalism faculty and the board members in Journalism voted unanimously to adopt the new curriculum and not seek ACEJMC reaccreditation. Following additional discussions, only two members of the NPAB suggested that the Department of Journalism seek reaccreditation. These two members were not members of the Journalism subcommittee. However, the Journalism faculty and the Journalism subcommittee unanimously supported the new curriculum and suggested that Journalism not seek reaccreditation. The new curriculum for each department was implemented in fall 2009.

The college faculty and administration continue to place

great importance on a strong liberal arts education. The curriculum in liberal arts will not change. The emphasis ACEJMC places on ethics, law, diversity, history, theory and skills will continue in the new curriculum.

Program assessments by professionals and academicians will be an annual evaluation similar to the guidelines established by ACEJMC. The college has completed two self-assessments on (1) student services and (2) facilities, resources and equipment. The written reports with supporting documentation have been forwarded to three professionals and an academican. This committee will visit the campus in fall 2010, complete its assessment and meet with the provost to report its findings. In fall 2011, other committees will review the program on (1) diversity and (2) professional and public service. In fall 2012, other committees will assess the program on (1) curriculum and (2) assessment.

ACEJMC accreditation standards are excellent criteria for providing excellence in journalism and mass communications education. Every discipline in higher education should adopt similar standards of excellence. The college recognizes the benefits of accreditation and realizes that many programs would fail without following the ACEJMC standards. However, at this time for this program, the college has decided that a more flexible curriculum is both desirable and beneficial for our students.

*Dr. Jerry C. Hudson is Founding Dean and Professor of the College of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University.*

# WORKING JOURNALISTS SAY EDUCATORS PART OF STRUGGLE IN REDEFINING JOURNALISM

*By Lorrie Lynch*

National Academy of Sciences

*EDITOR'S NOTE: During a luncheon at the ASJMC 2010 Midwinter Meeting in Atlanta, working journalists offered their insights into how the academy should respond to the changing world for which they are preparing their students. The following articles are based on comments by two of the speakers.*

## **Former editor says journalistic skills must survive the technology revolution**

I'm not going to lie to you. It's awful out there. Print journalism as we know it is dying – and no, not all because of the Internet. Print journalism, now very attached to the Web, is endangered because no one has figured out how to support it.

The business model that did support us all for centuries — advertisers who paid lots of money for space to reach a mass community plus readers who paid for the brilliant and entertaining content that wrapped around those ads— well, that's just not working for us anymore.

Newspaper circulation continues to drop – the latest figures from ABC last fall showed weekday sales down 10 percent overall and ad revenue down 28.8 percent. Industrywide 44, million copies a day are being sold. Newspapers have the lowest circulation since the 1940s.

But here's the ironic thing: Internet sites associated with newspapers are growing visitors. Last year newspaper sites had 72 million unique visitors, up 12 million from just two years before.

And, yes, while we see advertising all over those sites, it's not enough to pay the bills and certainly not enough to pay for the kind of reporting and editing staff once inhabiting the newsrooms of our best small-city and metro dailies. And those thinking clearly about the business understand, I think, that kind of staff will never happen again.

My friend and former colleague Bob Garfield, now an editor-at-large at *Advertising Age* and who some of you may hear on NPR's *On the Media* each Saturday, calls what is happening the Chaos Scenario.

Bob says we are in the middle of a digital revolution – yes, a revolution — and like all revolutions it is creating a shift in how modern life is lived in much the same way that, say, the invention of the printing press or the automobile changed life. And as our traditional business model is breaking apart and a new business model is yet unavailable, we have chaos – out of which we can only hope something tangible and good will arrive.

Now, some, like the authors of the a very topical book, *The Death And Life of American Journalism*, say it is time for the Fourth Estate to be funded by the state because it is essential to our system of government. It's pretty radical stuff.

But the writers are not socialists. They are just two seasoned journalists who believe we have to save some part of print journal-

ism so that our watchdog function doesn't disappear. I'm not sure I can agree that such a system could be set up without the state having control; but, they think so and hey, I think we have to stay open to all ideas.

Others, like my friend Mr. Garfield, advocate a strategy he calls "Listenomics" – based on his theory that if you listen to your audience, your community or your market and attend to its needs – you can grow your market share and perhaps, eventually, make some money. There's a novel concept.

And news organizations are trying this out in their own ways. At *USA Today*, for example, they are very big on building communities and encouraging conversation around certain topics that they believe have passionate responders who will visit their site.

They have done this by creating blogs, I'm talking about respectable news-driven blogs written and edited by people who know their stuff. There's one for travel, for example, because travelers love to share their experiences. There's one called *The Oval*, which tracks the Obama presidency, and there's one called *Drive On*, all about cars. That one is edited by my husband, *USA Today's* auto editor, and written by one of the auto writers with the help of the rest of the team. In one short year they grew their blog from nothing – to more than two million unique visitors.

How? Well, it helps that what they knew is true. People are nuts about cars. There's a car culture or cult. These are people who want the latest minutiae – say, for example, they are changing the trim on the new Ford Explorer – as well as important news like Toyota is about to announce a massive recall. They test drive cars, they go to auto shows, and they interview Toyota's U.S. president Jim Lentz all just for the blog. They do some print stories as well – but the blog is always ahead of print on the news and does more on the issues. Believe me, this is not your father's auto coverage.

When I was at *USA Weekend*, I launched a blog about celebrity and entertainment called *The Who's News Blog* – brilliant name, right? My weekly print column was called *Who's News* and for years I had been gathering more information than I could ever get into print. I developed the blog to be a place where people interested in the stars from movies, TV, music and more could come to get more of what we had on the print page – outtakes from interviews done for print, with some extras – an audio or video clip. But I soon began doing independent reporting for it, covering events like the Emmys and Oscars, doing fresh interviews that appeared only in the blog.

As we were trying to build its readership, or should I say visi-

torship, we decided to tap into the power of *Dancing With the Stars* – at the time the No. 1 show in the Nielsen ratings, with 22 million viewers a night. We knew online communities existed around DWTS and that conversation about it was ongoing – so I went to Los Angeles and blogged. I took a dance class with one of the pros and wrote about it. I went to a practice session with Jason Taylor and wrote about that. I was in the front row of the ballroom on elimination night and wrote about that. And we went from a flat 30,000 visitors a month to 80,000 during that week. Of course, we didn't stay that high, but for the small investment of my trip we exposed 50,000 more folks to a blog we wanted to grow and to the *USA Weekend* brand.

And while it cannot be said that our blog readers were necessarily clamoring for *Dancing With the Stars* coverage, my print readers were, I got more questions about the show than any other. So we listened.

Listenomics, community, conversation, blogging – interactivity, social networking – these are the words you'll hear in newsrooms now. Of course, they all have to do with the Web, and yes, that's where we are and where we all will be going regardless of the Internet's inability to pay for itself.

So, it is our job to get young people ready for journalism's digital age. And I know that as institutions and as individuals you are wrestling with how to do that.

Believe me, I wrestle with it myself. I wrote a textbook for high school students, and I teach Writing for Mass Comm at American University, which is in the forefront of the movement to get students ready for the digital world.

We, as teachers and department heads and deans, have to do some of the same things the industry is doing. We have to engage our students. We have to help them find journalistic passion. And we have to get across to them that no matter the medium – they have to be able to organize thought, write ideas clearly and make stories compelling.

Developing a backpack journalism class – where students use different kinds of equipment to go out on stories – is a terrific step because the knowledge to use multiple platforms is a useable, saleable skill. Teaching a course in storytelling through Blogs, or another on writing for the Web is terribly important. In my Mass Comm class I plan to spend a session on writing for Twitter and Facebook because those social media sites are becoming places to build communities. Writing short has always been a specialty of mine, but 140 characters? That's a challenge.

But we must also teach students to gather facts before form-

ing an opinion, to read widely and with depth, to learn the English language so they can use it with facility to persuade or entertain. We have to teach them to search for sources and interview them in ways other than e-mail – perhaps to interview them in person and weigh what they say against what is fact. Heck, we need to teach them to recognize a fact.

As news organizations continue to lay off and buy out the folks with the most experience – in my company alone we've

lost nearly 1,000 a year — who remains, or who gets hired, are those with little experience in the field. And they get little to no mentoring on the job. All the more reason that while we teach them to use Photoshop and Flash, to write for the Web, to storyboard enhanced features, to visualize informational graphics, we also must teach them to think and listen.

*Lorrie Lynch is a consultant for the National Academy of Sciences and a former senior editor at USA Weekend Magazine.*



# BROADCASTER SAYS EDUCATION MUST EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY CHANGES

*By Amy Zerba*

CNN.com

If I could walk in your shoes, I would make sure students left a journalism/communications program knowing six things:

1. How to synthesize information quickly. Being able to listen and report information simultaneously is essential in today's instant-news environment. Can students Twitter and blog an event in real-time and be accurate? Are students practicing real-time reporting in your classes? This can be a very practical lesson.
2. Embrace social media. They're here to stay and will only become more advanced. Students should incorporate social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook) as other tools in their reporting (i.e. story ideas, gathering content or investigating). Use them.
3. Incorporate user participation. Getting the audience involved in some way – i.e., interactivity, discussions, contributions – needs to be a part of stories, whether written or visual journalism. This is where we are in journalism right now, so how can we take it to that next level?
4. Step-back stories. With the number of media sources that audiences can choose from, what makes a news medium's coverage stand apart when every news outlet is covering the same story? Stepping back from stories and thinking about the big picture – on the day of the news event, not days afterward – is needed now more than ever. Call them trend pieces or making stories relevant. The point here is to look beyond the obvious and tell a different kind of story the day of the story.
5. Practice cross-platform journalism. You've heard it countless times – students need to be able to write, shoot, take audio, and produce their stories. Teaching the basics in these areas should be mandatory; advanced skills in these areas are what will set students apart in the job market.
6. Branding. Web portfolios are easy and convenient ways for employers to look at students' work. Having a Web site to market oneself today is a must. Do your students know how to market themselves? This is a skill or lesson that should be taught in classes.

*Amy Zerba is an Associate Producer with CNN.com*

# EFFECT OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN ON J-SCHOOLS MIXED

*By Marc C. Seamon*

Robert Morris University

## Research examines effects of poor economy on mass communication programs

### *Introduction*

The current recession or economic downturn, which began to make its impact on markets around the world in 2008, has had a series of effects on institutions of higher education. Layoffs and a tough job market have made “back to school” seem like a good option for many Americans, but those same difficulties in earning a paycheck have made big tuition payments all but impossible for many (Kelderman 2009). The tumbling stock market has caused endowments to shrink by 25 percent or more, leaving universities that live off the interest of big portfolios in a real cash crunch. Harvard and Dartmouth, pillars in the world of higher education, have faltered under the weight of the recession, announcing budget cuts and the possibility of layoffs and salary and program cuts (Basken 2008). Such announcements can make less-secure schools worry greatly about what the future might hold. Some have already closed their doors.

The most recent (2008) enrollment report for schools of journalism and mass communication suggests that while still growing at a modest rate of 0.8 percent, programs were already showing signs of a slowdown (Becker, Vlad & Olin 2009). Unfortunately, graduates from these programs were also seeing a slowdown in the job market. Fully 40 percent of graduates remained jobless six to eight months after graduation. In fact, employment prospects for 2008 graduates were gloomier than they had been in the 23 years data had been collected on the matter (Becker, Vlad & Olin 2009).

It's no secret that the news media are suffering in the current economic climate. More than 100 newspapers, including big ones such as the Rocky Mountain News, Seattle Post-Intelligencer and Ann Arbor News (Chen 2009), have ceased print publication in the last couple of years, and many others are seriously pondering what the future may hold for them (Gross 2009). This downturn in media futures is likely having an indirect effect on schools of journalism and mass communication, but the economy has also affected these schools directly. There is nothing in the literature examining in detail how the recession has affected the health of journalism and mass communication programs.

Research Question 1: How has the recession affected schools of journalism and mass communication?

Hypothesis 1: A plurality of schools will report either an expected or real impact from the recession

Hypothesis 2: Bleak media futures will be cited as a sizable part of the problem facing J-schools.

Hypothesis 3: Travel and discretionary spending will be the most commonly cut categories of spending.

Hypothesis 4: Private schools will report a worse impact than public schools because of their funding structure.

## *Method*

An electronic survey was sent Nov. 20, 2009 to 370 schools and departments of journalism and mass communication for which e-mail addresses were included in the 2008-09 AEJMC Journalism & Mass Communication Directory. The 19-question survey, which asked 17 objective questions and two open-ended questions, was administered using the Vovici electronic survey software platform. All responses were anonymous. Of the 370 schools and departments of journalism and mass communication, 302 successfully received the survey. After the initial survey request and three follow-ups in December 2009 and January 2010, 124 schools had opened or “clicked on” the survey, and 98 had completed it and submitted their responses, resulting in a 33 percent response rate. The current sample size of 98 results in a margin of error of plus or minus 8 percentage points. This means that to be considered real, differences in the answers to dichotomous questions must be greater than 16 percentage points.

## *Results*

About 85 percent of the JMC programs surveyed have been in existence for more than 20 years, and 12 percent were between 11 and 20 years old. Only 4 percent were between 5 and 10 years old, and none were younger than 5.

### *Institutional Effects*

Hypothesis 1 (A plurality of schools will report either an expected or real impact from the recession) was partially supported. Many schools reported having been hurt by the recession, but there was no statistically significant difference between the percentage of schools that said they were hurt and those that reported no effect. About 47 percent of JMC programs reported that the recession had hurt the overall health of their programs. One reported that it might not survive the recession and described itself as being in serious risk of becoming defunct. But a nearly equal number, 44 percent, reported no effect. A small contingent of 6 schools (about 9 percent) claimed the recession had helped the health of their program.

Hypothesis 2 (Bleak media futures will be cited as a sizable part of the problem facing J-schools) was not supported.

When the survey was taken in late 2009, 41 percent believed the effects of the recession on their programs would continue to worsen before any recovery would begin. Another 41 percent thought the worst was behind them, but said no recovery had yet begun. About 18 percent said their recovery was already under way. Of those programs that claim to have been hurt by the recession, 67 percent thought they would

recover to their pre-recession state in 2 to 5 years. About 12 percent thought they would do so in one year or less, and 8 percent thought it would take from 6 to 10 years to recover.

Almost 34 percent of programs expected, prior to the start of the 2009-2010 school year, to see a decrease in enrollments. About 26 percent said these projected decreases came true. It would seem that the recession did not hit enrollments as hard as some schools expected it would. Of the programs that offered graduate degrees, 64 percent thought the recession had affected their graduate program in the same way as their undergraduate. However, 36 percent reported a variety of different effects for their graduate program. Some reported an increase in graduate enrollments, while others saw graduate enrollments drop off more precipitously than undergrads.

Most (63 percent) JMC programs said the recession had affected them to the same extent as their parent college or university. About the same number (19 percent and 18 percent respectively) thought they had been more affected or less affected than their parent college or university.

Hypothesis 3 (Travel and discretionary spending will be the most commonly cut category of spending) was supported. More than 60 percent of programs cut travel and discretionary spending in response to the recession. More than a third cut spending on materials, printing, hardware and software. One in five programs cut research funding.

Faculty seemed to suffer more than staff, adjuncts or administrators when it came to hiring freezes, salary freezes, salary cuts and benefit cuts. Only in number of layoffs did faculty fare better than staff and adjuncts. About 46 percent of programs reported salary freezes for faculty, and 43 percent reported a faculty hiring freeze. Salaries and new hiring were also frozen for staff, adjuncts and administration at 20 to 35 percent of programs.

Despite cuts in spending and drops in enrollment at many schools, 29 percent described the current health of their JMC program as “excellent.” Another 46 percent rated it as “good,” while 24 percent said the health of their program was “fair.”

### *Effects on Students*

Some of the changes attributed to the recession affected students as well. About 15 percent of programs cut back on scholarships and work-study funding. An equal number of programs (16 percent) reported reduced course offerings because of both low enrollment and staffing shortages. About 6 percent of programs reported modifying their curriculum because of economic effects from the recession, and about 12

percent reported other changes, including increasing the number of students per class instead of opening up new sections. Some also reported difficulty staffing student media when funds for those positions were cut.

### *Public versus Private*

Hypothesis 4 (Private schools will report a worse impact than public schools because of their funding structure) was supported.

Of the colleges and universities responding to the survey, 59 percent were public and 41 percent were private. JMC programs at the private colleges and universities seemed to suffer more from the recession than their counterparts at public institutions. While 58 percent of public programs expected to see an increase in enrollment, only 27 percent of private programs anticipated enrollment gains. When enrollment numbers were finalized, all 58 percent of public programs that anticipated an increase actually got it, while 26 percent of private programs achieved gains. Conversely, 43 percent of private and 26 percent of public programs thought their numbers would go down. Reality was kinder than expected, though, as 33 percent of private and 21 percent of public programs reported actual decreases in enrollment.

For some reason, cutbacks on materials and printing costs seemed to be greater at public than private programs. Half of all public programs reported budget cuts for materials and printing, while 23 percent of private programs reported the same cost-saving measure.

No other noticeable or significant differences in enrollment or budgeting were reported between public and private programs.

### *Unionization*

Across the board, 24 percent of programs reported being unionized, but unions were more common at public pro-

grams (32 percent) than private ones (14 percent). When asked about concessions to their current collective bargaining agreement made to help their parent institution weather the recession, it was reported that such concessions were more frequently considered (75 percent at private versus 50 percent at public) by faculty at private programs. And among those programs that considered concessions, private schools were also more likely to actually make them (100 percent at private versus 75 percent at public).

According to open-ended comments, the concessions granted by the unionized programs that opted to yield from their contracts were all salary-related, including partial loss of raises, salary freezes, pay cuts and furloughs, with some pay cuts as high as 10 percent.

### *Open-ended Comments*

A total of 24 programs submitted open-ended comments when asked if there was anything they wanted to share that was not covered in the survey. Some of those comments contained good news about the health of their programs (presumably from among the 53 percent who reported either no effect or benefit from the recession). Others detailed how bad things are with them. Some cautioned that a decline in the health and employment opportunities of the media industries was hurting their programs as much or more than the recession. Assessing these problems was not the purpose of this paper, and survey questions were worded to ask specifically about recession effects. The problems within the media are only being exacerbated by the current recession, so such media-related effects can perhaps be thought of, at least in part, as indirect effects of the current economic downturn on schools of journalism and mass communication.

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# UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM PROPOSED TO COMPLEMENT BACHELOR'S DEGREE

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*and Richard Alan Nelson*

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Some 81,000 students graduate annually with a B.A. or B.S. degree in journalism and mass communication (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, July 2009; see also Becker, Vlad & Olin, 2009). Weaknesses in the economy, changes in technology and fundamental shifts in the media business are combining to make absorbing such a large number of eager young people a serious issue. For some, but only for some, one path is the post-undergraduate accumulation of advanced degrees such as the M.S., M.A., or J.D. or, for the very few, the Ph.D.

Such an extension of effort (as well as time and money) suggests that in an era when all professionals in America's communications industries hold some kind of a bachelor's, the ubiquitous "college" degree may not be enough. It follows that departments, schools and colleges of journalism, communications and media find curricula options that both co-occur with and enhance the value of the traditional undergraduate degree.

Here we make the case for one possible solution that provides our students and their potential employers a promise of focused and intensive professional education *while* a student earns a B.A. or B.S.: the certificate program. We also argue that a certificate program is one innovative route to addressing a basic dilemma confronting JMC programs.

Many, if not all, journalism and mass communication administrators face the challenge of shrinking revenue from traditional sources, such as state funding, and growing expectations from students, alumni and industry about the quality and coverage of undergraduate professional education. Often we are told to "do more with less," yet successful innovations in tough times may rather be a case of "more with different." A certificate program can truly be not only different but also cost-effective and can raise the institutional and national stature of any JMC unit.

## Opportunities Emerging

In 2010 and beyond, program and university-wide decision-making cannot help but be affected by the economy (Brooks, 2010). Budgets are *very* tight and in many cases constricting unless supplemented by active programmatic fundraising or grant-seeking. The financial pinch especially impacts the ability to hire new tenure-track faculty, reducing options for growth of academic units. A host of JMC schools and departments are at the same time struggling with redesigning their curricula to be more modern, sophisticated, relevant and flexible.

Moreover, as programs grapple with the expansion of knowledge, it has become more difficult for them to provide full-service degree tracks under one roof. Completing a major in JMC no longer guarantees that graduates are prepared to step into one of

the many careers they may aspire to as “all platform journalists,” “public relations practitioners,” “advertising creators,” “visual communicators,” “political communication consultants,” etc. The modern media world demands professionals who are broader and deeper in their conceptual and applied skills just when we have fewer resources to provide additional curricula or intensify specializations in existing curricula.

Yet, creative solutions are not out of sight or reach. As James L. Stewart (2010), the editor of *ASJMC Insights*, recently observed, all JMC programs face central concerns of diversity, funding, technology, and leadership “as they attempt to respond to a rapidly changing environment that awaits students upon completion of their degrees.” But “while the upheaval in journalism is uncomfortable, maybe even frightening, it also affords opportunities. It is causing people to examine new possibilities.” In other words, instead of more with less, we should do more with different.

One obvious and frequent opportunity for expansion of offerings has been through greater interdisciplinarity. Being proactive with other units demonstrates a willingness to maximize resources and enhances our perceived centrality to the campus mission. By building closer personal relations with other program leaders, a JMC department opens up many new avenues for collaboration that benefit faculty, students and external constituencies.

There are, of course, stumbling blocks to reaching out past one’s discipline. For faculty, especially probationary tenure trackers, being interdisciplinary can set up impossible expectations from multiple units, entail riskier projects and distract from fulfilling indigenous tenure and promotion requirements. For units, one immediate issue with being interdisciplinary is such a strategy’s effect on credit-hour management.

At most universities, all academic units are under pressure to ratchet up the number of credit hours (per student) they have each year. The result can be counter-cooperative to being interdisciplinary: as one administrator of a campus unit stated, “Every time we allow our students to be ‘interdisciplinary’ by taking a course in another department, we lose a credit hour.” Even JMC units following accreditation guidelines encouraging a certain number of courses to be taken outside are not immune to such considerations.

### Daring to Be Distinctive

There is an option, we have found, to offering greater professional training, working within the limitations of a department’s faculty coverage, becoming more interdisciplinary, *and* maintaining (and even growing) your credit hours: the certificate.

The certificate is in essence a program of study housed within a unit, like a school of JMC, but that includes courses within other “allied” units. Students who complete the program earn an official certificate that they can list on their résumé—even frame and hang on their office wall.

Prospective employers tend to be impressed by the acquisition of specialized knowledge in a particular field, especially when documented or certified. “Expertise,” as all business people well know, has direct application to job performance. Also a selling point is the fact that the graduate went the extra mile to qualify for the certificate, adding further value to completion of a traditional major or minor.

As an example, we submit the creation of a new undergraduate certificate in Fundraising and Philanthropy Communication by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at The University of Iowa. For several years, Iowa SJMC has offered to undergraduate students a Public Relations Practice Workshop that correctly describes “fundraising” as “one of the most important—and most highly sought—skills needed for today’s entry-level positions.” At the same time, the UI Law School’s Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center, an interdisciplinary forum that provides educational resources to strengthen existing nonprofits and create new ones, has a philanthropy sequence that focuses on management, ethics, and legal issues. Finally, many other programs, from history to the arts, from sociology to communication studies, include individual courses related to fundraising, public and interpersonal relations and philanthropy.

We noted a gap in what was available on campus, however. Until now there has not been a formalized program at the UI in which students could gain the specialized knowledge and experience necessary to make them stand out to potential nonprofit employers in both fundraising (or, as it is better known in its profession, “advancement”) *and* in communication (with an emphasis in PR). Yet we had direct evidence that the SJMC was a good training ground for careers in institutional advancement—for example, 14 Iowa JMC grads now work at the UI Foundation.

Furthermore, after a major donation to the School that encouraged the development of a philanthropy program, we conducted a review (Haugland, Perlmutter & Nelson, 2010) of the nationwide state of philanthropy education and employment, and concluded:

- philanthropy and nonprofit studies are growing as an area of research and training in higher education.
- very few undergraduate, interdisciplinary, liberal arts-oriented philanthropy or nonprofit studies programs

are available (Mirabella, 2007).

- systematic training and research in philanthropy and nonprofit studies are needed for students who want to work for foundations, nonprofits, or charities, or in philanthropy/nonprofit employment in government or the private sector.
- while “communications” should be a strong component of interdisciplinary philanthropic training, other aspects, such as nonprofit and business skills (e.g., finance, accounting) will also be critical.
- widespread student interest and faculty goodwill exist on campus toward the enhancement of an interdisciplinary, undergraduate liberal arts philanthropy studies program—including from units outside the College of Liberal Arts such as Business and Law.
- there is a strong and growing need by nonprofits, from “small shops” (e.g., the local county historical society, a community theater) to “big shops” (hospitals, major museums, and university foundations) to hire and retain advancement professionals.

In short, we felt that the requirements for a certificate program’s initiation were identifiable: student interest and need, intellectual relevance and currency, interdisciplinary acceptance and openness and significant employment prospects.

## Structure of the Certificate

Certificates are proving a popular mechanism at The University of Iowa, with nearly 20 undergraduate and graduate options now offered in interdisciplinary areas. The certificates are developed and maintained by faculty members from at least three departments or areas (with one serving as the administrative home). Those for undergraduates require a minimum of 18 credit hours. The purpose of such certificates is to engage students in a focused study of an interdisciplinary topic that may complement other degree work or provide specialized training unavailable from other programs (see Appendix for a sample checklist).

The 18-21-hour certificate in Fundraising and Philanthropy Communication, approved to go into effect in fall 2011, utilizes existing resources as follows:

- I. *A required foundational communication and public relations platform (6-7 semester hours). These courses help prepare the student toward the theory and practice of philanthropy* (cf., Kelly, 1991; Kelly, 1998; Weinstein, 2009). Courses include:
  - Communication and Public Relations (3 s.h.)
  - Topics in Mass Communication: Philanthropy Studies Practicum (3 s.h.) OR Public Relations Practice Workshop (4 s.h.) *when the*

*focus is philanthropy studies. Students in this certificate program would need to have taken Communication and Public Relations as a prerequisite.*

- II. *A required overview of the nonprofit world (6 hours).*
  - Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness I (3 s.h.)
  - Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness II (3 s.h.)
- III. *Elective courses from a variety of academic departments appropriate to the certificate (at least 5 s.h.) organized in the following concentrations: Arts Philanthropy, Business and Organizational Philanthropy Leadership, Communication, Grants Writing, Persuasion and Psychology, Public Policy and Issue Decision Making, Social Work, and Sociology*
- IV. *A capstone JMC Internship in Philanthropy Studies (1-3 s.h.)*

## Centrality to University Undergraduate Mission

Service learning through a required philanthropy studies internship is a key component of the certificate. In making the case, we highlighted how our program fit into the University’s self-described ideals and mission—a *sine qua non* for developing an interdisciplinary effort. We particularly attuned our mission statement to Iowa’s aspiration *to create a University experience that enriches the lives of undergraduates and helps them to become well-informed individuals, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and productive employees and employers.* In fact, we felt that the more we succeed at educating successful professionals, the more imperative it becomes for us also to educate them as philanthropy-minded individuals.

The structure of the certificate also corresponds to the efforts of The University of Iowa Civic Engagement Program to support students’ community engagement whose goal is to “promote, value, and celebrate individual and collective contributions to the public good by creating opportunities for community involvement on and off campus and creating relationship-building programs that serve key constituents.”

Finally, we anticipate a future when philanthropy will be ever more important in sustaining nonprofit organizations and institutes of higher learning; we believe every UI graduate should be a “working philanthropist” upon graduation. That should be the case whether he or she makes donations to or volunteers with a charitable group in the community or becomes a professional fundraiser.

## Conclusions

Developing an interdisciplinary undergraduate philanthropy studies curriculum housed in the JMC School that draws on

the resources of key departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences as well as other UI colleges is both feasible and distinctive (brand Iowa!). We believe the certificate program is the best vehicle to house, maintain and grow such an effort while also attracting more students to take JMC courses (and thus boosting credit hours for the unit) and enhancing our interdisciplinary outreach.

Indeed, the creation of the program brought us considerable outside goodwill: As of this writing, more than a dozen other units submitted letters of support and pledged involvement, meaning their students can earn the certificate. All understood the intellectual and practical value of co-offering it. The SJMC's Professional Advisory Board singled out the philanthropy initiative as a major step forward for the School. Most notably, the UI Foundation has created a fundraising effort targeted toward supporting the expansion of the program. The start-up of the certificate itself was guided by a considerable major gift. The "buy in" has been wide and deep, which in the long run will help graduates, as well as Iowa SJMC.

There is no reason why the UI-JMC certificate should be unique. There are many other interdisciplinary partnerships where the research, information, strategic planning and communication skills offered in JMC programs can be linked to create useful certificates in subjects such as entrepreneurship, environmental communication, health promotion, leadership, and conflict resolution. (See, for example, Darling, 2009.) The concepts and combinations are without limit and present a real example that the opportunities for doing more with different are possible even in these challenging times.

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## Appendix: Sample Checklist for Implementing a Certificate Program

- Background
  - *Evidence of Need*
  - *Evidence of Available Resources*



- *Evidence of Student, Alumni, and Administrative Support*
- *Additional Research and Documentation*
- Purpose
- Rationale
- Mission Statement
- Goals of Certificate Program
- Student Recruitment and Enrollment Projections
- Curriculum
  - *Course Requirements*
  - *Interdisciplinary Electives and Tracks*
- Certificate Outcomes
  - *Outcome Assessment*
- Program Administration
  - *Academic Coordinator*
  - *Executive Committee*
  - *Faculty to Be Affiliated with Program*
- Resources Needed
- Contacts with Other Departmental Leaders
  - *Letters of Support*
- Proposed Timeline for Program Implementation
  - *Required Approvals*
  - *Promotion Plan through University and Student Media*
  - *Procedures for Recruiting Students*
  - *Intended Outreach to Academic Advisers*
  - *List of Potential Internship Host Organizations*
- Selected References and Appendices

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*The Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication* promotes excellence in journalism and mass communication education. A valuable resource for chairs, deans and directors, ASJMC is a non-profit, educational association composed of some 190 JMC programs at the college level. The majority of the association's members are in the United States and Canada.

Eight international journalism and communication schools have joined the association in recent years.

[www.asjmc.org](http://www.asjmc.org)