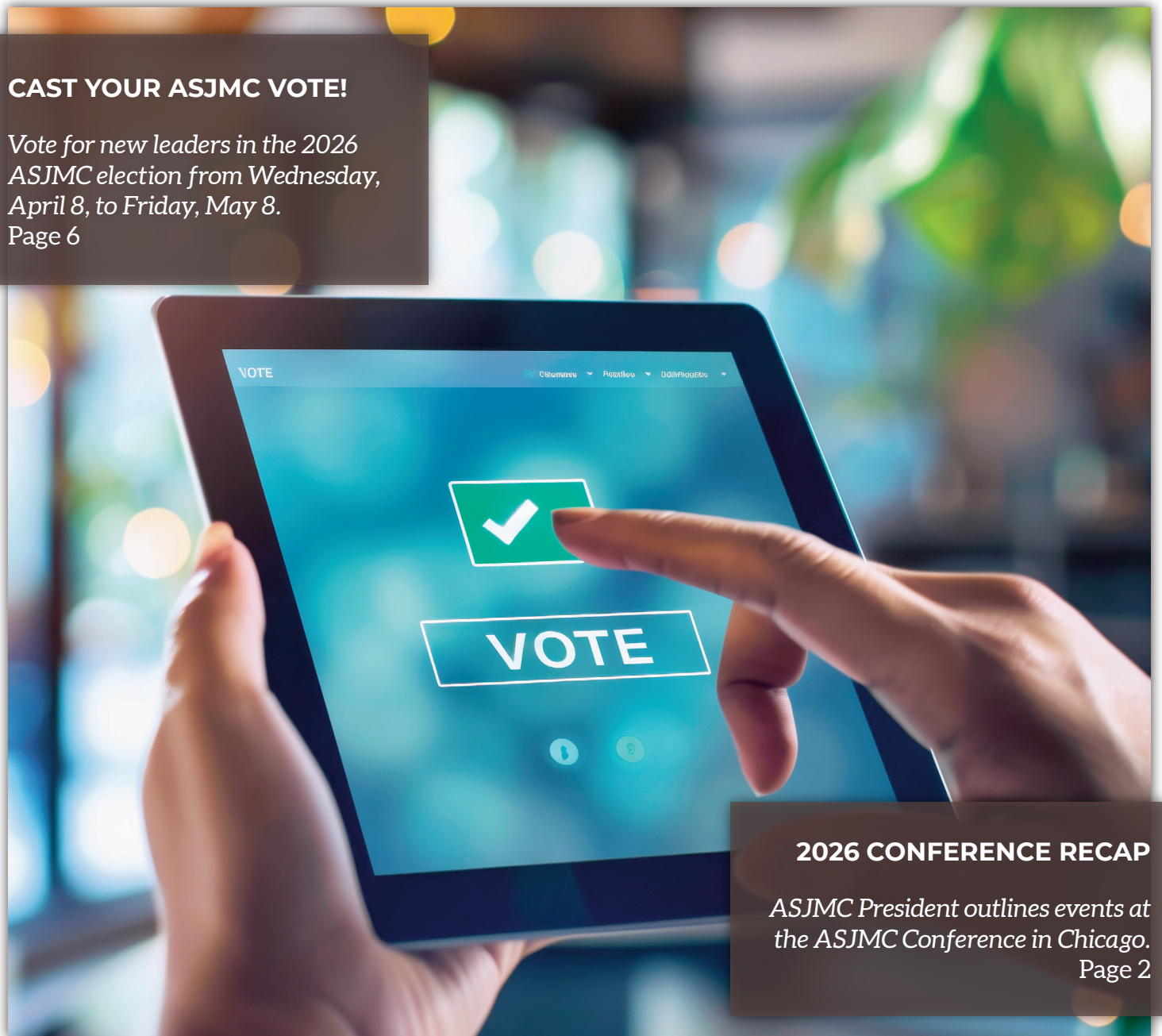




The Newsletter of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication  
April 2026

**CAST YOUR ASJMC VOTE!**

*Vote for new leaders in the 2026 ASJMC election from Wednesday, April 8, to Friday, May 8.  
Page 6*



**2026 CONFERENCE RECAP**

*ASJMC President outlines events at the ASJMC Conference in Chicago.  
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# A Note from the President

## Conference Recap and Look Ahead

The 2026 ASJMC Conference, themed “Strengthening Connections in a Time of Challenge,” provided attendees with an opportunity to call a timeout and discuss some of the things that are causing us long days and tough meetings. We were also able to take stock of what we can do to make things better and improve our approaches along the way.

A total of 81 new, experienced, and emerging leaders attended the ASJMC Conference in Chicago March 18 and 19. The six sessions and the mentorship and networking lunch were well attended, and the energy around ideas and solutions was palpable. As your president, I have to say the whole experience was tremendously gratifying.

The conference began with a keynote session on “The Useful, The Inspirational, The Lurking Threats” of artificial intelligence for educators. Al Tompkins, long-time educator, former news director and journalist, took the audience through a blizzard of new resources in artificial intelligence—new systems, programs, and agents that stand to revolutionize all industries, not just those in mass communication. Tompkins took on the big questions about AI directly, including the prospect of AI systems swallowing up jobs in our industries. His message: engage with AI, don’t avoid it, realize that your voice in this era is essential and very much needed.

Tompkins stressed that the landscape of artificial intelligence is changing faster than most people realize. More than a year ago, multiple generative AI systems were giving users far more options in producing content than the non-generative systems that preceded them. We saw the consumer launch of agentic AI within the past year. It’s a radical change from systems that took individ-

ual instructions and carried them out one-by-one. Agentic AI takes instructions and carries them out without further human input. The change is from a system that asks, “what do you want me to do next?” to one that determines the next steps and delivers a finished asset. The implications for research, media production and so much more are profound.

Tompkins showed the audience a dizzying variety of AI systems that create all manner of content. He said the key to best using them is knowing what you want, and don’t want, in the final product. Exacting prompt writing is key. For example, investigations using public records that took months can take hours now, if you know how to direct the inquiry.

Tompkins suggests four steps toward making effective prompts (from “4 Steps to Writing A-I Power Prompts):

- 1) Define your goals. Clearly articulate the objectives of your analysis. Frame your goals as specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) questions.
- 2) Define the scope. Specify the exact database you will be using. Identify the specific types of data you want to include in your analysis.
- 3) Define the criteria that a data point must meet to be included in your analysis. Also define the criteria that will cause a data point to be excluded.
- 4) Define output format (bar chart? Heat maps?). Define the level of detail you want in the analysis. (Executive summary? Full report?)

Tompkins also suggests using AI itself to

Continued on page 3

refine prompts and other content. Write prompts in Chat GPT, for example, and then use Gemini to critique the prompt and help you write a better one.

The pace of improvement of AI models is accelerating, and it is becoming much more difficult to tell AI from human-generated content. Some content creators are even resorting to certifying their products as human-created to distinguish themselves. Whether people are more likely to trust such content remains to be seen, but Tompkins says that whatever we do, we can't try to wall ourselves or our students from artificial intelligence. We must be there to teach and model ethical uses and impose guardrails. Don't avoid engagement. "We need you," he said.

The opening session the next day took on a set of challenges that many in the room know all too well but rarely have the time or space to fully unpack. Prominent among them was the "demographic cliff" affecting institutions mainly in the Northeast and Midwest, where declining enrollments are placing sustained pressure on universities and on the journalism and mass communication programs within them. The result has been budget cuts, program reductions, and difficult conversations with faculty and staff who are already stretched thin.

At the same time, leaders are navigating a shifting political landscape, with increasing amounts of legislation aimed at higher education. Many find themselves caught between faculty expectations to speak out and administrative directives to remain silent, creating a tension that is both persistent and, at times, deeply personal. Moments of crisis, such as the protests at Columbia University in 2025, bring these issues into sharp focus, forcing leaders to decide where to draw the line in defense of core journalistic values. Just as important, participants emphasized the need to proactively educate central administration about the impli-

cations of policy decisions, particularly those that could affect student or faculty speech or the First Amendment rights of student media. In some cases, leaders are also working to rebuild programs that have been cut too deeply, reinforcing the idea that advocacy, always a defining part of the role, is becoming more critical.

The second session created space for experienced leaders to reflect candidly on what they've learned over the course of their administrative tenures. One theme expressed was the unexpected isolation that comes with leadership. Moving from faculty member to dean or director can narrow one's circle of trusted colleagues, making it more difficult to find spaces for open, unfiltered advice. Panelists also spoke about the growing importance of fundraising, which has become a central responsibility for leaders in ways that many did not anticipate at the outset. At the same time, the day-to-day realities of leadership require a careful balance: absorbing criticism, communicating tough decisions, and keeping a sense of forward momentum even when circumstances are uncertain. The panelists discussed the need to "absorb chaos, project positivity, and inspire hope." It's a tall order, particularly in times of constraint, but one that reflects the expectations faculty and staff bring to the role. Participants also noted the importance of addressing pain points early, whether related to resources, workload, or organizational friction. Panelists suggested that there is a limited window to build confidence among faculty and staff that meaningful change is possible.

The third session unpacked the promise and difficulties of fundraising. Ann Searight Christiano, director of the Center for Public Interest Communications at the University of Florida, shared research underscoring that while emotional appeals to donate can be effective, they have limits. Donors are increasingly motivated

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## A Note from the President (continued)

by clear demonstrations of impact. Christiano said donors want to hear what their gift made possible. They react less positively to messages centered on scarcity or loss, like a message that warns that a promising effort will end unless they donate. Whether it is supporting student scholarships, enhancing facilities, or creating new experiential learning opportunities, the emphasis must be on outcomes and forward movement. Kyle Daniels, director of development for the Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications at Northwestern University, added that one of the more difficult but necessary conversations involves helping donors understand when their intended gift may not achieve the impact they envision. In these moments, honesty and transparency are essential, coupled with a willingness to work collaboratively toward alternative approaches that align donor goals with institutional needs. The discussion also addressed the added complexity of fundraising in states with anti-DEI legislation, where long-standing donor intentions, to help underrepresented students for example, may be outlawed by new policies. These conversations, as participants noted, require both empathy and clarity, as leaders look to provide alternatives that maintain the relationship with donors.

The final session turned attention to the dynamics that shape faculty experience, focusing on resilience and morale at a time of ongoing change. Dr. Katherine Greenwood, the University Ombuds at the University of Southern California, framed morale as a shared emotional climate, one influenced not only by major decisions, but by everyday interactions, relationships, and signals of support. Greenwood suggested that predictable responses to stress can be better understood through a framework known as SCARF (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness). Status

represented the threat of feeling overlooked or invisible vs. the reward of being recognized. Certainty represented the threat of shifting work requirements vs. clear guidelines. Autonomy was seen as prescriptive mandates vs. freedom in research. Relatedness was the dichotomy between silos and collegial networks, and fairness represented the threat of opacity in decision making vs. transparent and fair policies.

A key takeaway was that resilience is not simply an individual responsibility; it is something that can be cultivated collectively. Greenwood emphasized the importance of connection, purpose, competence, and coping in sustaining well-being over time. The session also offered actionable strategies for leaders, encouraging communication, validation, outreach, and empowerment. By strengthening trust, transparency, and a sense of shared purpose, leaders and institutions can better support faculty and build a more resilient academic community for the future.

The conference also featured a mentorship lunch, a discussion with members of the Accreditation Committee about the revised Standard Four (Advancing a Culturally Proficient Workforce), and the honoring of Lillian Coleman, who for 40 years has supported AEJMC and ASJMC as Project Director. For her support of many programs across the associations—most significantly the Institute for Diverse Leadership—Coleman received the 2026 Gerald Sass Award.

The 2026 ASJMC Convention sought to give participants some tools to manage the interesting times we're in. Thanks to insightful panelists and an active audience, we all made some progress toward that goal.

Hub Brown, University of Florida  
2025-26 ASJMC President





# ASJMC 2026 CONFERENCE

March 18-19, 2026 • Chicago, IL

### Highlights:

- 80 total attendees
- 18 speakers
- 6 IDL Fellows
- 6 sessions
- Mentorship and networking lunch



# ASJMC 2026 Election

**Voting is open from Wednesday, April 8, to Friday, May 8, 2026, at 5:00 pm EDT.**

Eligible ASJMC members will receive an email with access to the online ballot. Contact [Samantha@aejmc.org](mailto:Samantha@aejmc.org) with ballot questions.

There is no election for ASJMC president. Kim Bissell, Louisiana State University, will be installed as the 2026-27 ASJMC president during the ASJMC Business Meeting during the AEJMC Conference in New Orleans. Jared L. Johnson, Oklahoma State University, will move up as the 2026-27 ASJMC president-elect. View the list of 2026 election candidates below. View biographies of each candidate at <https://asjmc.org/election/>.

## Vice President (Vote for ONE on the ballot)



**Andrea Hickerson**  
University of Mississippi



**Erin L. Ryan**  
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

## Medium Program Rep (Vote for ONE on the ballot)



**Mas Biswas**  
North Carolina A&T University



**Jan Lauren Boyles**  
University of Arizona

## ACEJMC Rep (Vote for TWO on the ballot)



**Emily Corio**  
West Virginia University



**Tracy Lucht**  
Iowa State University



**Kimberly Moffitt**  
Howard University



**Johnny Sparks**  
Ball State University

## Is it Time to Match Classrooms, Workplaces on A.I. Skills?

Newsrooms are using artificial intelligence at a rapid pace this year, balancing the benefits of easing a mounting workload against possible ethical concerns of plagiarism and inaccuracy.

Public relations agencies are employing the technology to help spot and head off business crises and to draft press releases. Advertising agencies are leveraging A.I. to quickly build commercial campaigns and tailor messages to specific audiences.

But are colleges and universities — and especially journalism and mass communications programs — getting students ready for workplaces where the technology has already taken hold?

From anecdotal evidence, maybe not.

“Analyzing syllabi from ACEJMC-accredited programs shows uneven policies and mixed messages: Many instructors cast AI as a threat to originality and learning integrity, others permit tightly bounded use for mechanical tasks, and a smaller set treats AI as a topic for ethical and professional inquiry,” according to faculty at the universities of Kansas-Lawrence and Colorado-Boulder in a paper published in March on ACEJMC’s *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* website. “Such variability risks confusing students about classroom expectations and the realities of contemporary newsroom practice.”

(The paper: “When AI Enters the Syllabus: Journalism’s Crossroads of Threat and Opportunity”)

So, there’s work to be done to encourage programs and faculty to recognize that software like ChatGPT, Claude and others are already at work in our professions.

I am certain of this: A.I. is here to stay.

It’s comparable to some past technologies in how it disrupts our work, helps boost productivity and reshapes society. But A.I. may be more rapid, more global and more deeply in-

tegrated into decision-making than any previous revolutionary technology.

Artificial intelligence is the steam locomotive plowing into the media business as well as our colleges and universities. Like the automobile and electricity, A.I. is a battering ram changing society, commerce and our profession — for better or worse.

For ACEJMC, A.I. is a hot topic. During initial review of the nine schools seeking reaccreditation this year, every site-team chair was asked about A.I. and how it was discussed in the program. It was clear that no single approach had taken hold.

One school has introduced a course focused on generative A.I., working with computer sciences faculty in another college. The course gave students hands-on experience and tackled the ethical concerns raised.

At another school, students told the ACEJMC team that A.I. is discussed in class, but its newsroom application isn’t covered.

This presents an opportunity for accredited programs to help meet the needs of our professional colleagues and get students prepared for the workplace. It seems as if 2026 is the tipping point for A.I. in our professions, and I hope ACEJMC can help chart a course to the future.

Take, for example, *The Plain Dealer* and *Cleveland.com*. This year, the Advance Local-owned daily jarred some in the profession by going all-in on A.I. for news gathering and, most importantly, for writing stories that are edited by journalists.

“I continue to be excited about artificial intelligence as a journalist’s tool,” *Cleveland Editor* Chris Quinn wrote in a column. “My hope is that experiments we will do this year in using A.I. as a rewrite desk will free up significant blocks of time for reporters – hours they can use for old-fashioned sourcing.”

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## ACEJMC (continued)

Like many of my colleagues, as a reporter I thought that the writing was just as important and enjoyable as chasing a story, running down leads and doing research. But, good writers need time to craft their story — sometimes many hours — and using A.I. might be an acceptable shortcut.

Bloomberg News and the Associated Press use A.I. to turn mountains of data into short stories, mostly corporate earnings reports. As a retired Bloomberg editor, I know reports of some companies can be distilled into a few sentences using the technology. But a human eye is needed to check accuracy.

The AP used A.I. more than a decade ago to generate stories about more than 10,000 minor league baseball games. More recently, the wire service set rules that restricted generative A.I.-style writing.

Not all forays succeed. Four years ago, CNET introduced an A.I. “engine” to generate stories with no-name bylines like “CNET Money.” Editors assumed the output was reliable, but an audit of 77 articles discovered 41 had mistakes, from simple slips to substantive content issues. That’s a 53 percent error rate.

More recently, A.I. company Nota scrapped its 11 local news sites after Axios and Poynter reported that more than 70 stories published over six months used the reporting, writing and photos from other journalists without attribution. One now-dismissed editor told Poynter, Nota News lacked “clear” editorial guidelines.

For broadcasters, the Radio-Television Data News Association recommends stations put in place a clear policy for A.I. in news gathering, story editing and transmitting stories across platforms. “Because this is an emerging and fast-changing area, newsrooms and RTDNA might find it necessary to review guidelines regularly.”

Stations are using A.I. to convert taped interviews into written texts, create and provide timelines, clean up video and audio, provide captions and sometimes to extend music tracks.

On the mass communications side, public re-

lations giant Edelman uses A.I. to analyze public sentiment, detect reputation risks early and track how stories spread across platforms. Weber Shandwick drafts press releases, generates social media posts and crafts first drafts of speeches for its clients.

The Public Relations Society of America, a longtime ACEJMC member, updated its ethics code last year to address A.I. use. It leans heavily on transparency and professional oversight, to avoid spreading misinformation or leading to inadvertent copyright infringement.

“The question isn’t whether to use AI—that ship has sailed,” PRSA said in a statement. “The question is whether we’ll use it ethically, strategically and in ways that strengthen rather than compromise our profession.”

Advertising firms such as Ogilvy use A.I. to tailor ads to specific audiences and predict which messages will perform best. WPP, the world’s biggest ad agency, speeds creation of text, visuals and videos, drastically cutting planning and production times. Projects that historically took weeks can be wrapped up in hours.

Two years ago, ACEJMC approved a strategic plan that mentioned A.I. in Goal 1, to use the accrediting process to improve the quality of programs and the profession. Objective 3 is: “Help programs prepare students to guide trustworthy communications in a world dominated by A.I. and machine learning.”

I plan to appoint a task force from within the ACEJMC community to take a closer look at the issue and develop suggestions and ideas to ensure our programs are on the right track helping students get ready to enter workplaces heavily invested in A.I.

The Council does not and will not prescribe specific steps, but I’m optimistic the discussion will help shape how accredited programs prepare students to join our professions.

Steve Geimann,  
President, Accrediting Council on  
Education in Journalism and  
Mass Communications



# AEJMC 2026 CONFERENCE

**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA  
AUGUST 5-8  
(PRE-CONFERENCE DAY IS AUGUST 4)**

**JAZZ & JAMBALAYA:  
NURTURING HARMONY AND  
HEALTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Early Conference Registration Begins April 22**

- Regular, Associate Rate: \$295.00
- Student, Retiree Rate: \$185.00

**New Orleans Marriott Hotel**

555 Canal Street | New Orleans, LA 70130  
Rates: \$189.00 (standard)

[www.aejmc.org/aejmc-events/conference](http://www.aejmc.org/aejmc-events/conference)



## **Preliminary ASJMC Sessions Schedule at the AEJMC 2026 New Orleans Conference**

**August 5-8 (Pre-conference day is Tuesday, August 4)  
New Orleans Marriott Hotel**

ASJMC hosts sessions during the annual AEJMC Conference.

Save these dates and plan to attend:

### **Executive Committee Meeting (Closed Session)**

Wednesday, August 5 | 7:30 to 9:45 a.m.

### **ACEJMC Session @ acejmc**

Wednesday, August 5 | 10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

### **ASJMC Current Issues Session**

Wednesday, August 5 | 1:45 to 3:00 p.m.

### **General Session/ Keynote Session**

Thursday, August 6 | 9:45 to 11:00 a.m.

Session details will be featured in the July issue of the ASJMC Administrator.

# AEJMC



## 2026 Conference Opportunities Member Program Advertising Rate Card

**Jazz & Jambalaya: Nurturing Harmony  
and Health in Higher Education**  
August 5-8, 2026 | New Orleans Marriott  
555 Canal Street | New Orleans, Louisiana 70130



### Who We Are

AEJMC has the largest audience of journalism and mass communication educators at the college/university level, all in one location. Reach some 2,000+ educators and administrators over four days by advertising at our 2026 AEJMC Conference, August 5-8. Reach a circulation of 2,000+ and get into the hands of conference attendees by placing your ad in our conference program. We are excited to be in New Orleans for the 2026 Conference.

### Conference Program Advertising Options

Size	Color Ad Packages	BW Ad Packages
1/2 Page Color	\$1200	\$600
1 Full Page Color	\$1350	\$675
2 Full Pages Color	\$2700	\$1350
3 Full Pages Color	\$4050	\$2050
4 Full Pages Color*	\$4680	\$2700
5 Full Pages Color*	\$5850	\$3375

(\*You get a discount on all color pages after the 3rd page)

Size	Color Ad Packages	BW Ad Packages
1 set of Facing Pages	\$3400	\$1800
2 sets of Facing Pages	\$6800	\$3600

Covers [Full Page]	Color Only
Inside Front Cover	\$2000
Inside Back Cover	\$2000
End Page	\$1800
Back Cover	\$2800

**Bleed Option [Full Page Only]** +\$500 per page

For more information on conference advertising opportunities, contact Samantha Higgins, AEJMC Communications Director.

#### Special Ad Placement

May be secured with an additional \$250 flat fee for special placement requests. Restrictions may apply.

#### Closing Dates

Space Reservation deadline is **May 15, 2026**. Advertiser will be held responsible for reserved space canceled after the closing date.

#### Mechanical Requirements

Advertisers are to submit Press-ready PDF files (at least 288 DPI) with fonts embedded. Recommended screens are 120-150 with 133 preferred by **June 1, 2026**. Ad content is subject to approval of the publisher. Advertisements should be sent via the ad upload link you will receive from AEJMC.

#### Payment Options

Payment in advance is appreciated but not required. Invoices, if payment is not received in advance, advertisers will receive an email confirmation. No agency or cash discounts are given.

#### Page Unit Sizes

**Spread**  
Finish Size – 16" X 10"

**Full Page**  
Finish Size – 7" X 10"

**Half Page**  
Finish Size – 7" X 5"



## Contact Us

[Samantha@aejmc.org](mailto:Samantha@aejmc.org) | [AEJMC.org](http://AEJMC.org)

# AEJMC



## 2026 Conference Opportunities Member Exhibit Rate Card

### Jazz & Jambalaya: Nurturing Harmony and Health in Higher Education

August 5-8, 2026 | New Orleans Marriott  
555 Canal Street | New Orleans, LA 70130



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### Conference Exhibit Options

#### Standard Expo Display

- 1 Table Top - \$720
- 2 Table Tops - \$1440
- 3 Table Tops - \$2160\*
- 4 Table Tops - \$2880\*
- 5 Table Tops - \$3600\*
- 6 Table Tops - \$4320\*

#### Digital Expo Display

- 1 Display - \$1822
  - 2 Displays - \$2542
  - 3 Displays - \$3262\*
  - 4 Displays - \$4500\*
- [includes 2 monitors in setup]

\*Reserve 3 or more table top displays, and receive a complimentary table runner with the logo of your choice.

### Exhibit Hours

Wednesday, August 5 • **Noon to 5 p.m.**

*Networking Refreshment Break - 2 p.m.*

Thursday, August 6 • **9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

*Networking Refreshment Breaks - 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.*

Friday, August 7 • **9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

*Networking Refreshment Breaks - 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.*

### Exhibit Setup

Exhibits must be set up on Wednesday, August 5, beginning at 8 a.m. and finished by Noon.

The Exhibit Area will officially open Wednesday, August 5, at Noon. All displays are to be taken down on Friday, August 7, after the exhibit areas closes at 5 p.m. Your display should be staffed during all official exhibit hours.

### Exhibit Equipment & Services

To maximize visibility and create more meaningful connections, AEJMC is excited to offer **hallway-style tabletop exhibits** designed to seamlessly integrate exhibitors into the daily flow of the conference. This format places exhibitors in **high-traffic areas**, encouraging frequent interaction, spontaneous conversations, and enhanced networking opportunities throughout the event.

Each tabletop exhibit includes **one 6' table, two chairs, and one wastebasket**. Rather than traditional pipe-and-drape booths, this streamlined setup allows for an open, approachable presence that keeps exhibitors front-and-center as attendees move between sessions.

Select tabletop exhibits will be located in a **lockable hallway**, providing added **evening security** and allowing displays and materials to **remain set up overnight** for added convenience and continuity. All displays should be designed for tabletop presentation and must not obstruct hallway traffic or neighboring exhibits.

Each tabletop exhibit includes space for up to **two exhibitor representatives**, with additional representatives available for **\$75 per person**. Exhibit locations are assigned on a **first-paid, first-assigned basis**. Tabletop exhibit packages are subject to change, and exhibitors will be notified in advance of any updates.

Cancellations received in writing by June 1, 2026, will be refunded minus a \$75 administrative fee. Refunds are not available after that date. For more information on conference exhibiting opportunities, contact Cassidy Baird, AEJMC Events Coordinator.

## Contact Us

Cassidy@aejmc.org | AEJMC.org

**2025-2026 ASJMC Executive Committee**

- President • **Hub Brown**, University of Florida
- President-Elect • **Kim Bissell**, Louisiana State University
- Vice President • **Jared L. Johnson**, Oklahoma State University
- Past President • **Emily Metzgar**, Kent State University
- AEJMC President • **Bey-Ling Sha**, Texas Tech University
  
- Small Programs • **Kevin Qualls**, Murray State University
- Medium Programs • **Brad Yates**, University of West Georgia
- Large Programs/XL Programs • **Gerry Lanosga**, Indiana University

**ACEJMC Representatives**

- Jason Shepard**, California State University, Fullerton
- Mark Lodato**, Syracuse University
- Felicia McGhee**, Florida A&M University
- Andrea Miller**, University of Oklahoma

**JOB HUB**

**AEJMC 2026 CONFERENCE**

*New Orleans | August 5–8, 2026*

**UPLOAD • CONNECT • INTERVIEW**



- Upload job positions: June 1 – July 15
- \$250 first ad | \$150 each additional ad
- Private candidate resume access
- Schedule interviews for conference week
- Limited interview room blocks available

[AEJMC.org/aejmc-events/conference/opportunities](https://AEJMC.org/aejmc-events/conference/opportunities)

**EMPLOYERS** Questions: [kyshia@aejmc.org](mailto:kyshia@aejmc.org) | Subject: AEJMC Job Hub 2026 Employers