



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



**PRESIDENT'S
NOTE**
Facing
the Future

ASJMC SCHEDULE

ATTEND SESSIONS
AT AEJMC 2026
CONFERENCE

ELECTION

Andrea Hickerson
Elected Vice President

A Note from the President

Facing the Future

One does not go into a commencement speech expecting to get booed.

Certainly Gloria Caulfield, a real estate executive, didn't expect that to happen when she was addressing the graduating class at the University of Central Florida's Nicholson School of Communication and Media and the College of Arts and Humanities in May. You probably saw the clip. Caulfield became part of a national conversation when she suggested that the rise of artificial intelligence "is the next industrial revolution," and got loudly booed. It was a live demonstration of two things being true at the same time: we may as well acknowledge that AI is already revolutionary, and that is not playing well when you read the room.

In schools of journalism and mass communication, the excitement, the potential, and the anxiety over artificial intelligence—what to say about it, how to teach about it, what to lean into and what to warn about—is a sizeable challenge, at a time when we were all set for challenges. We were dealing with threats to journalism's viability, keeping up with rapid technological change, declining public trust, and pressure from government well before AI barged into the room and changed the subject.

It seems like there are new things to worry about coming at us every day, but in many ways, we have been here before.

In my more than 35 years in journalism

and mass communications education, economic upheaval has been a constant theme. I can't remember a time when we weren't discussing downward pressure on journalism and communication salaries and contracting job markets with our students. That's not even considering the four economic recessions since 1990, which accelerated those trends. During that time, I've visited many schools and colleges as a member of accreditation site visit teams, and I've heard a lot of common themes that amount to a response to those conditions. Programs have doubled down on making sure students left their classrooms and labs as better writers who were technically proficient, who didn't need additional training when they walked into a newsroom or strategy suite. Many of our institutions have bolstered their career services operations, investing far more time and resources than was the case in 1990. Those operations got better at forging and maintaining ties with industry, smoothing student transition into the workforce. We are also encouraging our graduates to see the fields of mass communications more broadly, recognizing over the years that more and more mass communications careers are getting started outside traditional mass communications outlets.

It's still difficult for many of our students to get started in our fields. But imagine how hard we would have made it for them if we didn't change.

Continued on page 3

Our history suggests that we don't have to fear or lament what's coming. We can be thoughtful but assertive about things like AI and declining trust. We can be, as soccer fans like to say, on the front foot. We must do more than say that AI is the future, especially because it alone is not. We'll need to have fast-changing curricular approaches that match our ethos—putting tools in students' hands and pressing them to be better and more authentic communicators, freed to be more creative and efficient. And matching what we've done in previous years, the fast-changing approaches must include an active and living ethical component that challenges students to develop, to borrow from Hemingway, their own built-in, shock-proof, constantly updating ethical compass.

There's more that we can do. There's work to be done to re-establish public trust in media. Through our research, we can explore new ways to build better connections with communities in need of information. There's more potential for our students to go into those communities and tell the stories of the people, because the decline of local news means there are stories that aren't being told. On campus, our programs can do more to lead the discussion on media literacy and ethics, especially in artificial intelligence. There are many more opportunities, if we are willing to explore them and

avoid the defensive crouch.

At this year's AEJMC Convention in New Orleans August 5-8, two ASJMC sessions will explore our challenges and opportunities, continuing a conversation we began in Chicago in March. On Wednesday August 5th, our Current Issues panel will bring higher education leaders together to discuss how they're navigating political pressure, polarization, challenges to academic freedom, external mandates, and much more. We'll discuss how leaders are facing these challenges and finding ways to do so without compromising core academic values. On Thursday August 6th, the ASJMC General Session will address how journalism and mass communication leaders are positioning their institutions for the future. We'll address what current trends may mean for such things as curriculum, strategic planning, and workforce preparation. Of course we'll acknowledge future potential dangers, but we will also discuss opportunities to benefit our students, scholars, professions, and communities.

I look forward to those conversations, and I hope to see you there. I hope that when we read that room, we see optimism about what's ahead.

Hub Brown, University of Florida
2025-26 ASJMC President



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ASJMC 2026 Elected Leaders



2026 ELECTION RESULTS

ASJMC is pleased to announce the results of the 2026 election. **Kim Bissell**, Louisiana State University, will be installed as ASJMC President during the 2026 AEJMC Conference. **Jared L. Johnson**, Oklahoma State University, will move into the President-Elect position.

The official start date for new officers is October 1, 2026.

2026–2027 ELECTED LEADERS



Vice President
Andrea Hickerson
University of Mississippi



Medium Program Rep
Jan Lauren Boyles
University of Arizona



ACEJMC Reps
Kimberly Moffitt
Howard University



ACEJMC Reps
Johnny Sparks
Ball State University

Congratulations to our 2026–2027 ASJMC elected leaders!
We look forward to a year of collaboration and impact.



ACEJMC Names Task Force to Weigh AI's Benefits, Risks

Artificial intelligence is rapidly disrupting our professions, changing how journalists gather and deliver news while redefining public relations and advertising campaigns.

For mass communications educators, this transformation presents an opportunity and poses a dilemma: how to prepare students for a workplace increasingly influenced by automation, algorithms, and generative technologies while preserving the ethical foundations and human judgment at the core of the profession.

I think ACEJMC — with its industry and academic representatives — can be helpful, especially as anecdotal evidence from faculty members at the universities of Kansas-Lawrence and Colorado-Boulder found uneven policies and mixed messages in a study of syllabi from accredited programs.

“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.” They added: “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,” was published in March on ACEJMC’s *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* website.

So, there’s work to be done, especially as software like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and others are already at work in our professions.

Accredited programs can seize this moment to better serve our professions and prepare students for a rapidly changing workplace. As this year has become a tipping point for AI, I hope ACEJMC helps lead the path forward.

At the May 5 Accrediting Council meeting in Washington, I named a task force to discuss and recommend Council action on using artificial intelligence.

The task force members are:

- Chair Jason Shepard, interim dean of the College of Communications at California State University at Fullerton, whose Council term just ended
- Michael Cherenson, executive vice president, public relations at SCG Advertising and Public Relations, Council member
- Laura T. Coffey, former president, Society for Features Journalism, Accrediting Committee member
- Suzanne Horsley, associate professor, College of Communications and Information Sciences, University of Alabama, former Council member
- Jessica Pucci, senior associate dean and professor of practice at the Cronkite School of Communications, Arizona State University, Council member
- Tara Puckey, president/CEO of the Radio Television Data News Association, Council member

Jason and the task force plan to meet virtually over the summer with a preliminary discussion to be shared with the Council at its Aug. 29 business session. Then, they will work over the winter and deliver a report at the spring meeting in 2027.

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ACEJMC (continued)

As the task force begins its work, more publications and businesses are jumping into AI.

Much attention has focused on the Plain Dealer and Cleveland.com, which jarred some in the profession by going all-in on AI for news gathering and, most importantly, for writing stories that are then edited by journalists.

“My hope is that experiments we will do this year in using AI as a rewrite desk will free up significant blocks of time for reporters – hours they can use for old-fashioned sourcing,” Cleveland Editor Chris Quinn wrote in a column published in the Advance Local’s newspaper.

Advance isn’t alone. Gannett and regional publishers used AI systems to expand sports briefs, weather updates, event listings and local government summaries.

Hearst Newspapers has tools such as “Assembly,” an AI-based monitoring system, to transcribe, detect keywords and summarize city council and school board meetings. Reporters use the transcripts to write stories.

Hearst newsrooms also use a Slack-based assistant called “Producer-P” to generate URLs, notification summaries and headlines that work with internet search engines to improve visibility.

As a reporter I thought the writing was just as important and enjoyable as chasing a story, running down leads and doing research. But, good writers need time — sometimes many hours — and using AI might be an acceptable shortcut.

Not all ideas succeed. Four years ago, CNET used an AI “engine” to pump out stories

with bylines like “CNET Money.” Editors assumed reliable results, but of 77 articles reviewed, 41 had mistakes, from simple slips to substantive content issues. That’s a 53 percent error rate.

Earlier this year, AI company Nota shuttered 11 local news sites after Axios and Poynter reported that more than 70 stories over six months used the words and images from other journalists without attribution. One now-dismissed editor told Poynter that Nota News lacked “clear” editorial guidelines.

Broadcasters use AI to convert taped interviews into text, create and provide timelines, clean up video and audio, provide captions and sometimes to extend music tracks. The Radio-Television Data News Association, an ACEJMC member, recommends stations put in place a clear policy for AI in news gathering, story editing and transmitting stories. “Because this is an emerging and fast-changing area, newsrooms and RTDNA might find it necessary to review guidelines regularly,” the association said.

Public relations giant Edelman uses AI to analyze public sentiment, spot risks to corporate reputations and track how stories circulate. Weber Shandwick writes press releases, social media posts and first drafts of speeches for its clients.

The Public Relations Society of America, a longtime ACEJMC member, updated its ethics code last year on AI use. It leans heavily on transparency and professional oversight, to avoid spreading misinformation or leading to inadvertent copyright infringement. Mike Cherenon was part of the group that crafted the new language.

“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 AI to target 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.

ACEJMC is closely watching AI During the initial review of the schools seeking reaccreditation this year, every site-team chair was asked about AI 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 AI, 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 AI is discussed in class, but its newsroom application isn’t covered.

Two years ago, ACEJMC approved a strategic plan that mentioned AI 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 AI and machine learning.”

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.

Council Offers Training for Site Teams, Assessment at AEJMC

The Accrediting Council will offer a pre-conference workshop Aug. 4 at the AEJMC meeting in New Orleans to discuss site-team participation and improving compliance with Standard 3: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.

The 8 a.m.-noon session will feature veteran site team leaders and other volunteers discussing how to prepare for the on-campus evaluation of accredited programs.

ACEJMC is recruiting qualified team volunteers at conferences of other journalism and mass communications groups, to prepare for reviews scheduled for 2027 and beyond.

The pre-conference session also will address Standard 3, which is most often found in noncompliance for schools seeking accreditation or reaccreditation each year. In the past 11 review cycles, the standard recorded 59 noncompliance determinations. In the recent 2025-26 cycle, two of eight programs were reaccredited with Standard 3 out of compliance — that’s a quarter of the total.

The training will offer guidance for evaluating the programs assessment plans, while also reviewing best practices for developing and implement a plan that will “close the loop” and use findings to encourage continuous improvement.

Then, join us on Wednesday, Aug. 5 at 10:15 a.m. for the annual accreditation update session where we’ll discuss the year ahead and answer questions from AEJMC members.

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



ASJMC Sessions Schedule at the AEJMC 2026 Conference in New Orleans

**New Orleans, LA | New Orleans Marriott
August 5-8, 2026**

Wednesday, August 5, 2026

7:30 to 9:45 a.m. / W002

ASJMC Business Session

ASJMC Executive Committee Meeting

(Closed session reserved for the ASJMC Executive Committee.)

Moderating/Presiding

Hub Brown, University of Florida, President, ASJMC 2025-26

1:45-3:00 p.m. / W053

ASJMC Current Issues Panel

***Leading with Integrity: Navigating Political Pressure, Public Scrutiny,
and Institutional Values in Higher Education***

Moderating/Presiding

Hub Brown, Dean, College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida, 2025-26 ASJMC President

Panelists

Jennifer Greer, Dean, University of Kentucky

Susan Keith, Associate Dean for Programs, Rutgers University

Emily Metzgar, Dean, Penn State University

Andy Billings, Senior Associate Dean for Faculty, University of Alabama

Tom Reichert, Dean, University of South Carolina

Institutions of higher education are operating in an era of unprecedented political scrutiny, ideological polarization, and public distrust. Across the country, university leaders are increasingly being asked to navigate external pressures related to curriculum oversight, academic freedom, governance, faculty hiring, diversity initiatives, presidential searches, program elimination, and legislative intervention into teaching and research. In many cases, administrators are balancing competing expectations from governing boards, elected officials, donors, faculty, students, alumni, and the broader public—all while attempting to preserve institutional mission, transparency, and integrity.

This panel brings together senior higher education leaders—including presidents, provosts, and deans—who have faced these challenges firsthand.

Through candid discussion and practical reflection, panelists will examine how universities can respond to mounting political and institutional pressures without compromising core academic values. Topics may include navigating board relationships, communicating through controversy, responding to external mandates, protecting faculty governance and academic freedom, managing reputational risk, and leading with transparency during periods of institutional uncertainty and change.

Designed for faculty members, department chairs, administrators, and scholars of journalism, media, and higher education, this session will explore not only the realities of contemporary university leadership, but also the broader implications for democratic discourse, public trust, and the future of higher education itself. Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of the ethical tensions facing today's academic leaders and strategies for navigating them thoughtfully, collaboratively, and responsibly.

Thursday, August 6, 2026

9:45 to 11 a.m. / Th029

ASJMC General Session

The Road Ahead: How Are JMC Leaders Managing the Future?

Moderating/Presiding

Hub Brown, University of Florida, ASJMC President 2025-26

Panelists

Andrea Miller, University of Oklahoma

Mark Lodato, Syracuse University

Brian Butler, University of Alabama

Battinto Batts, Arizona State University

Dave Kurpius, University of Missouri

If the last several years are any indication, the road ahead for journalism and mass communication programs promises to be challenging. Culture war attacks on higher education have made it harder to deliver curriculum, remain internationally competitive with faculty and graduate students, and support diverse scholarship. The demographic cliff is here, downsizing incoming cohorts of students. The industries of journalism and mass communication are changing even more rapidly than before, challenging programs to adjust curriculum to keep up. At the same time, there is opportunity, as new career paths are being formed, artificial intelligence aids some industries even as it disrupts others, and the need on the part of the public for information and connection is as clear as ever. How do leaders of journalism and mass communication institutions see the future? What are they preparing for? How is the changing environment affecting their SWOT analysis? Journalism and mass comm leaders will discuss these issues and share how their programs are preparing.



Peter Joseph Gliviczki,
Western Illinois



Jasmine McNealy, Florida



Amanda Weed, Kennesaw State



The Institute
for Diverse
Leadership in
Journalism and
Communication
is co-sponsored
by AEJMC and
ASJMC.



Adam Maksl, Indiana



Amber Hinsley, Texas State



Hua Jiang, Syracuse



Monica Chadha, Arizona

THE 2026-27 IDL JENNIFER MCGILL FELLOWS

Gerald Sass Distinguished Service Award

ASJMC 2026 Awards

Congratulations

Lillian Coleman

AEJMC/ASJMC
Project Director

Winner of the

Gerald Sass Distinguished Service Award

An ASJMC Award for Outstanding Service



Lillian Coleman has been named the recipient of the 2026 Gerald Sass Distinguished Service Award.

The ASJMC and AEJMC leadership honor Coleman for her exceptional leadership, four decades of dedicated service, and lasting contributions to the associations. Her leadership of the Institute for Diverse Leadership and commitment to advancing equity, excellence, and professional development have helped strengthen the academy and develop future leaders.

Coleman was presented the award at the ASJMC 2026 Conference in Chicago, Illinois.

The Sass Award was established in 1946 by the American Society of Journalism School Administrators (ASJSA) as the Citation of Merit Award to recognize outstanding service. The award was originally presented to media organizations but was changed in 1978 to honor individuals.

ASJMC

Membership Renewal



■ **Look for your upcoming ASJMC yearly membership renewal in October. Please renew as soon as it's received.**

Contact Saviela Thorne, ASJMC Membership Coordinator, with membership questions:
saviela@aejmc.org

asjmc.org/asjmc-membership/

Call for Nominations Journalism & Mass Communication Administrator of the Year Award

*Sponsored by the Scripps Howard Fund
and AEJMC*

PRIZE: \$10,000 and a distinctive trophy

ELIGIBILITY:

Full-time administrator of a journalism, mass communication or communication program who, over a period of years, has consistently demonstrated an environment of leadership excellence by ongoing contributions to the improvement of learning and teaching. Open to accredited and non-accredited schools.

CRITERIA:

The judges will consider the following criteria when evaluating nominees:

- On-going industry engagement;
- Success in building connections across the university;
- Fostering an environment where experiential education is encouraged and prevalent;
- Leading and empowering faculty to update curriculum and build equity and diversity in the school;
- Encouraging leadership and innovation within the program;
- Successful fundraising efforts to enhance the school/program;
- Development and implementation of strategies for faculty/student engagement across the school, university and academy.

HOW TO NOMINATE:

1. Faculty from a school **may** submit a nomination from their program. **Only one nominee from each school is allowed.**
2. Nomination consists of a **two-page letter by a faculty member or group of faculty members of the school** that provides specific examples of the nominee's merit based upon the criteria above, and a **full curriculum vitae** of the nominee. [The selection committee may also nominate administrators for this award.]

DEADLINE: Submissions must be received electronically by 5 p.m. Eastern on Oct. 15, 2026. Submit materials **in a single PDF** via email to Lillian Coleman at lillian@aejmc.org. Type "2026 SHF Administrator of the Year Nomination" in the subject line. Questions may be directed to Lillian Coleman at lillian@aejmc.org.

Call for Nominations Journalism & Mass Communication Teacher of the Year Award

*Sponsored by the Scripps Howard Fund
and AEJMC*

PRIZE: \$10,000 and a distinctive trophy

ELIGIBILITY:

Full-time faculty member teaching journalism who, over a period of years, has consistently demonstrated an environment of excellence by ongoing contributions to the improvement of student learning. Open to nominees who teach students how to gather, assess, create, and present news, information and commentary via print and electronic media. Nominees may be from accredited or non-accredited schools, but must consistently teach primarily journalism courses.

CRITERIA:

The judges will consider the following criteria when evaluating nominees:

- On-going industry engagement inside and outside the classroom;
- Utilization of experiential learning to provide students opportunities to get out of the classroom and into "real world" settings;
- Innovative teaching practices;
- Influences on curriculum;
- Mentoring and advising students in matters of both career and curriculum;
- Mentoring faculty with regard to instruction;
- Leadership in educational activities in department, school, university and/or academy.

HOW TO NOMINATE:

1. The unit head **must** submit the nomination from the program. **Only one nominee from each school is allowed.** The selection process is at the school's discretion.
2. A nomination consists of a **two-page letter by the unit head** that provides specific examples of the nominee's merit based upon the criteria above, and a **full curriculum vitae** of the nominee.

DEADLINE: Submissions must be received electronically by 5 p.m. Eastern on Oct. 15, 2026. Submit materials **in a single PDF** via email to Lillian Coleman at lillian@aejmc.org. Type "2026 SHF Teacher of the Year Nomination" in the subject line. Questions may be directed to Lillian Coleman at lillian@aejmc.org.

2025-2026 ASJMC Executive Committee

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- 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

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EMPLOYERS Questions: kyshia@aejmc.org | Subject: AEJMC Job Hub 2026 Employers