

AEJMC Environmental Scan
SWOT Analysis

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“Journalism and Mass Communication Education: 2001 and Beyond”

Compilation of reports from two 1998 presidential task forces (Teaching and Learning in the New Millennium and Professions in the New Millennium), the New Media Summit in 2000 and the Subcommittee on Inclusivity in the New Millennium.

Strengths

- 1) The financial health of the association
- 2) Professional constituencies that demand well-educated graduates with core knowledge and skills delivered by association members

Weaknesses

- 1) A perceived gap between the industry and the academy, especially regarding technology adoption
- 2) Lack of diversity in association membership and leadership
- 3) Perceived lack of long-range commitment to diversity in the association

Opportunities

- 1) Members who have the expertise to take advantage of the rapidly-evolving environment of higher education (distance education, new teaching technologies, Internet 2 collaborations, etc.)
- 2) Association’s ability to use new media to help members learn how to teach about new media (“Resources for Teaching...” on association web site, etc.)
- 3) Opportunity to provide a national forum for discussion to help universities monitor compliance with accreditation standards and federal regulations as regards diversity and inclusivity

Threats

- 1) Instability and turmoil in constituency industries that could affect demand for JMC graduates and financial support for JMC programs and the association
- 2) Low numbers of diverse Ph.D. graduates moving into JMC education, which threatens the future diversity of association membership

“AEJMC Members Supportive, Involved – But Questioning the Future” Spring 2004 Membership Survey on Involvement/Resource Issues

Survey results from 150 AEJMC members (30% response rate)

Strengths

- 1) Those who are members are active and involved participants in the association
- 2) Members think association participation and conference attendance is important

Weaknesses

- 1) Cost of conference attendance is perceived to be high
- 2) Conference locations are dreadful
- 3) Conference is too huge and is daunting for new members
- 4) Small school faculty members feel at a disadvantage in their ability to interact with those from larger schools
- 5) Perception that the best and brightest faculty and students from top programs no longer submit their best work to AEJMC – the scholarship that is presented is of low quality

Opportunities

- 1) Non members might respond if association offered more membership benefits to encourage people to join and attend the conferences
- 2) Most schools still support conference attendance for members if they have an active role in the conference (paper presenter, respondent, committee member, etc.)

Threats

- 1) Likely reductions in financial support from schools to help members defray the costs of attending conferences
- 2) Growing proportion of members who represent small schools that don't support research and don't subsidize conference participation
- 3) Members who belong to multiple associations who perceive that their limited time is best spent participating in associations with higher prestige, better research, more cutting-edge work, opportunities to interact with more stimulating colleagues

“Report on the 2005 Publication Committee’s Survey of Members”

Survey results from 258 respondents (40.2% response rate) asked about their perceptions of the quality of mass communication journals and the factors that affect their decisions on submitting manuscripts to journals. The study’s population was AEJMC members who have published one or more refereed journal articles and highly productive mass communication scholars as identified in productivity studies.

Strengths

- 1) Eighty-five percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement that *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* (the flagship association scholarly publication) publishes high-quality mass communication scholarship.
- 2) The only other association/division-published title for which opinions were sought (*Mass Communication and Society*) had 59% agreement with the statement that it publishes high-quality mass communication scholarship.
- 3) *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Newspaper Research Journal*, and *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* (all association or division titles) were mentioned in the list of three journals in which the respondents most often published. (*JMCQ* = 62 mentions; *NRJ* = 28 mentions; *JMCE* = 28 mentions).

Weaknesses

- 1) Those who identified themselves as doing cultural studies had a significantly lower evaluation of *JMCQ* than the overall membership, although the majority of that group (77.1%) agreed that *JMCQ* publishes high-quality scholarship.
- 2) Some of the open-ended comments were critical of the flagship journal (“I would never submit to *JQ* – almost all of the articles are atheoretical surveys or content analyses that add little to understanding of mass comm.”)

Opportunities

- 1) There may be an appropriate role for a new association-wide refereed journal to expand the areas of scholarship covered by the organization’s journals, especially related to research in the cultural-studies tradition.
- 2) Newer faculty members are most likely to consider acceptance rate, the recommendation of their institution’s senior faculty, the recommendation of their mentors, and the journal’s turnaround time when selecting where to submit manuscripts. This suggests some factors that the association’s flagship and other journals might consider in trying to attract high-quality research from up-and-coming scholars.

Threats

- 1) Scholars working in the cultural/critical studies area may find it attractive to start a referred journal that meets their needs rather than work within the revised format for *JMCQ*, strengthening the perception that the flagship journal of the association does not adequately reflect an entire area of scholarship in the discipline

- 2) The most important reason scholars choose to send manuscripts to a particular journal is the publication's track record in publishing scholarship in their area. This suggests that it might be difficult to change the perception of the association's flagship journal among cultural/critical scholars.

“Journalism Educators Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” Daniel Riffe, Kandice Salomone and Guido H. Stempel III, AEJMC January 1999.

Report of results of 1996 survey of AEJMC regular members (1,144 for 56% response rate), retired members (112 for 51% response rate) and grad student members (310 for 44% response rate). Questions asked about characteristics of respondents, compensation, workload, institution and colleague support, scholarly productivity, job satisfaction and workplace concerns.

Strengths

- 1) There is greater diversity (gender, race, teaching areas) among grad student members than in the other two groups, suggesting a move toward greater diversity of AEJMC if those grad students remain members
- 2) Scholarly productivity of current faculty shows mix of convention papers, journal articles, books, book chapters and trade publications, demonstrating active membership as regards publication
- 3) The great majority of grad student member respondents have done research
- 4) Grad student member respondents rate institutional support for their research as high
- 5) Forty-six percent of retired faculty member respondents held office in national organizations during their careers

Weaknesses

- 1) Grad student member respondents rate institutional support for travel as low
- 2) White grad student member respondents are more satisfied with their programs than students of color
- 3) Allocation of time by grad student member respondents to participation in their professional association is lowest of 6 items

Opportunities

- 1) High level of research productivity among grad student member respondents suggests important future role for a research-oriented professional association
- 2) Grad student member respondents correlate satisfaction with high levels of support from faculty in teaching and research – suggests a role for the association to attract grad student members through an aggressive mentoring program, etc.

Threats

- 1) Higher percentage of retired faculty member respondents have held national office than have current faculty member respondents – suggests falling level of commitment to the association
- 2) Current faculty member respondents think their institutions support teaching more than research – potential problem for future research mission of the association.

Report of the Task Force on the Status and Future of Doctoral Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (2006)

Assembled by former AEJMC President Theodore Glasser and charged with identifying and analyzing issues that influence future generations of our peers in mass communication scholarship and education.

Seventeen scholar-teachers from AEJMC-affiliated programs worked on this project, which resulted in two presentations at the AEJMC national conventions in 2003 and 2004, and a final, written report.

Strengths

1. Connections with CCA in initiative on NRC recognition
2. Association interest in graduate education, GEIG, awards for grad students (e.g. Barrow and MacDougal, dissertation award)
3. Dissertation Abstracts

Weaknesses

Digital revolution making JMC an antiquated name and concept?

1. Rewards to tenured researchers, not to non-tenured or non-tenure-track teachers
2. Slow progress toward diversity (minority students at 18% in 2005, faculty at 10%); pipeline issues – how get them into UG so they can go on to Grad?
3. Curricula and faculties largely oriented to the comfortable & familiar theories of the past, or borrowed from allied disciplines
4. Comparatively low JMC salaries
5. Uneven, though increasing, attention to pedagogy in doctoral ed experience
6. Lack of multiple research platforms and new methodologies including methodologies from the humanities
7. Minimal inclusion of ethics, law, history, pedagogy in required curriculum
8. No second-language proficiency requirement
9. Disconnect: Traditional journalism orientation of programs and faculties not in step with demand and job opportunities
10. Heavily professional orientation of undergraduate preparation – poor prep for grad school?
11. Need for assessment tools aimed at graduate education

Opportunities

1. Theory development: intellectual infrastructure for communication applications in other disciplines
2. Break rather than rake theoretical grounds (become theoretical pioneers)
3. New delivery modes via distance technology, e.g., Use of AEJMC Web presence to disseminate research
4. Enhancing diversity
5. Becoming entrepreneurial, interdisciplinary, able to explain, self-promote, recruit
6. “Silos” of disciplines coming down, interdisciplinary increasing
7. Identifying how JMC ED is special, how it can add value in its potential centrality

8. producing citizen scholars
9. Collaborative and communitarian models
10. Students' interests in com tech/new media, international, public relations
11. Including undergrads in convention research sessions

Threats (Trends)

1. Escalating higher education costs, decreasing state subsidies for faculty hires, etc
2. Administration preference for flexibility, trend away from tenure-track and other stability measures
3. Demand that faculty externally fund their research
4. Increased emphasis on outcomes-based assessment
5. Global competition for doctoral students post 9-11 (2005 report – international students at one-third, faculty at 1 %)
6. On-line universities “stealing” enrollments
7. Non-JMC programs churning out experts in new tech, better prepared than JMC PhDs, doing the ground breaking in teaching and research in new tech

I. Summary: Ethical Issues and Dirty Little Secrets in Journalism and Mass Communication Research by Paula Poindexter. Paper presented at the Plenary Session, AEJMC Annual Convention, Kansas City, MO, July 31, 2003.

In 2003, 217 AEJMC members responded to an e-mail survey on ethical research and the results were presented during the plenary session at the annual convention in Kansas City, MO. Almost two-thirds of the respondents said they had observed unethical research behavior in their institutions and over half had personally faced an ethical issue.

Strengths:

1. Member awareness of the importance of ethics in research
2. Member awareness of concerns 46% of responses identifying ethical lapses such as research incompetence, data issues, IRB approval requirements, plagiarism, faculty involvement in student research, and biased research represented 46% of all responses.
3. Although the majority of respondents said their department did not have a statement on conducting ethical research, there was agreement that the following constituted unethical behavior: omitting data that did not conform to research expectations; submitting the same article to get additional publication credit; getting publication credit for no work done; revising hypotheses after the results were in.

Weaknesses:

1. There was less agreement about the student component of the ethical research equation: 35% said it was definitely or probably unethical to co-author an article from a master's thesis; 39% said it was definitely or probably unethical to co-author an article from a Ph.D. dissertation. Other student-centered unethical research behavior revolved around authorship and exploitation. One-third said it was unethical when students don't get credit for research; another 4% said it was unethical when faculty pressure students for co-author credit. Coercing and exploiting students, which represented 29% of the responses, was also considered unethical.

Opportunities: 1. As a result of this study of AEJMC members, the Standing Committee on Research recommended Guidelines for Conducting Ethical Research which can be found at http://aejmc.org/_officers/officer_resources/research/ethical_research.php.

What's Right and What's Wrong with the Reviewing Process: AEJMC Members Evaluate Peer and Tenure Review by Paula Poindexter. Paper Presented at the Plenary Session, AEJMC Annual Convention, San Francisco, August 2006.

In 2006, 641 AEJMC members who held journalism and mass communication faculty positions completed a Web-based survey on the reviewing process and the results were presented during the plenary session, Threats to the Integrity of the Review Process at the annual convention in San Francisco. (Additional, related notes from "Threats to the Integrity of Peer Review: The Role of Reviewers, Editors Authors," presented by Jack McLeod as part of the above-mentioned presentation.)

Strengths:

1. Response indicated awareness and concern about the process
2. Various academic associations have critically examined the peer review process and found various problems.

Weaknesses:

1. When respondents were asked if the integrity of any review processes had been compromised, four review processes headed the list: tenure (38%), promotion (37%), convention papers (32%), and journal articles (30%).
2. At least half of the respondents objected to reviewer comments for the following reasons: lack knowledge, not helpful, trivial, rude, method bias, and topic bias.
3. At least half of the respondents objected to editor comments in two areas: lack of knowledge and not helpful.
4. Many reviewers react more favorably to familiar topics & approaches
5. Young scholars advised to save big ideas until after tenure – and learn to do “more of the same”

Threats:

1. A larger percentage of females than males said the following factors threatened the integrity of the journal article review process (factors listed from largest to smallest gap): bias against methods (47% vs. 27%); bias against topic (46% vs. 27%); conflict of interest (48% vs. 32%); failure of editor to state reasons for rejection (34% vs. 18%); failure of editor to overrule reviewers (39% vs. 28%); legitimacy of authorship (18% vs. 7%); reviewer incompetence (51% vs. 41%).
2. These and other types of peer review exert strong influence on the career development of young scholars, especially racial & ethnic minorities and women
3. Annual review committees and mentoring are highly flawed
4. Tenure & promotion committees can make mistakes
5. A gender gap was also apparent when tenure issues were addressed. Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to have tenure, have been reviewed for promotion, and served as a member of a tenure promotion committee or as an administrator recommending tenure.
6. But female respondents were four times more likely than male respondents to agree that in the tenure review process, women were evaluated more negatively than men.

7. In danger: Research on non-mainstream topics & research methods; unfair treatment of innovative & creative research ideas with new concepts & approaches

Opportunities:

1. Recommendations for strengthening the integrity of the journal article review process focused on the quality of reviewers as well as the importance of the editor's independent assessment.
2. To strengthen the integrity of the tenure review process, consistency, transparency, and explicit criteria were recommended.
3. Recommendations: for a committee or task force on reviewing, for a code of ethical standards & practical suggestions for journal reviewers
4. Recommendation of an Ombudsman to handle complaints regarding the reviewing process
5. The new journal, Communication Methods and Measures seeks ways to incorporate post-publication online discussions to stimulate use of published articles

Improving the Education of Tomorrow's Journalists – A Report of Carnegie Corporation of New York (2005)

The president of the Carnegie Corporation Dr. Vartan Gregorian commissioned the McKinsey & Co consulting firm to interview news industry leaders about the “state of journalism education and what journalism schools might do to elevate the profession's standards and status.” Dr. Gregorian's goal was to “give a baseline foundation for America's leading deans to craft a curriculum that will advance a free and independent press that assures an informed public and a vital democracy.” McKinsey, which conducted the study pro bono, identified the following priorities for journalism education, even though some of the news leaders interviewed “believe a degree in journalism is unnecessary.”

Although news leaders thought journalism schools did a good job of teaching basic reporting, some felt there could be improvement in “imparting values, building critical thinking and analytical skills and developing specialized expertise.”

For our purposes, this is the report that the Carnegie people used when they decided to give out more than 10 million dollars over two years to improve journalism education and its standing on university campuses.

Strengths

1. Liberal arts, multi-disciplinary context of university for journalism education

Weakness

1. Scandals – plagiarism, payola, etc
2. Of this Carnegie Report: Involving and relying on the opinions of the traditional biggies: UC Berkeley, Columbia, Northwestern & Annenberg USC. Report repeats same old complaints and offers some of the same old “innovative solutions” like more profs from the profession
3. Lack of cultural awareness and diversity of journalism profession staffs and management
4. Lack of faculty prep for solid ethics education

5. Continuing conflict: theory vs practice

Opportunities

1. Become conscience and voice of moral authority – talking back to media, not just promoting traditional media news values
2. Merging solid professional basics and analytical thinking
3. News leaders put forth the following prescription (which might also be considered under threats, in that the implied demand is for more of the same, only better done):
 1. Teach basic reporting and writing skills, as well as the paramount importance of getting the facts right.
 2. Develop news judgment and analytical skills, including the ability to separate fact from opinion and use statistics correctly.
 3. Master specialized expertise and critical language skills.
 4. Raise admissions standards and help the best and brightest land challenging jobs.
 5. Teach students to embrace and uphold the ethics of journalism.
 6. Infuse ethical ramifications of journalism throughout the curriculum; don't limit ethics to ethics classes.
 7. Firmly ground students in the history of journalism and its role in society.
 8. Take on a larger role in providing continuing education for the profession.
 9. Help bring more diversity to newsrooms.
 10. Focus on turning out top quality journalists, not in critiquing the news industry or developing new reporting techniques.
 11. To better prepare students for the 24/7 news business, consider taking a page from the medical school model of grueling internships and residencies.
 12. Consider dual-degree programs with other professional schools and academic departments.

Threats (Trends)

1. Concept of “university vs real world” in this report and fostered among students & parents
2. US – unhistorical atmosphere and attitudes reflected in graduates, journalists and consuming public
3. Public's information/media overload leading to mistrust of media
4. Information without context, choice without knowledge
5. Fragmentation, audience segmentation
6. Media oligopolies
7. Not enough convergence thinking
8. Philanthropy resentments of journalism

Assessing Efforts and Policies Related to the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Faculty at Accredited and Non-Accredited Journalism and Mass Communication Programs (2005)

Edited by Federico Subervi and Tania Cantrell, the study sought to understand processes and challenges in recruitment and retention of minority faculty in U.S. journalism and mass communication schools and programs. It found that accreditation makes a difference, finances don't guarantee greater diversity practices,

and unit autonomy and the offering of graduate programs are significant, positive influences on recruitment, retention and promotion of faculty of color.

Strengths

1. Despite limited successes, initiatives toward diversity in grad students & faculty, more aggressive among accredited units than non-accredited

Weaknesses

1. Apparent reluctance on part of large percentage of schools to participate in research on the topic
2. Weak and/or inconsistent efforts to advertise in minority-rich markets or to use AEJMC groups like MAC Division and/or Commissions on Status of Minorities and of Women
3. Weak and/or inconsistent structures in place to retain and promote

Opportunities

1. Inducements: salary supplements, spousal job accommodations, research support, etc
2. Mentoring and other retention strategies

Threats - Trends – changing demographics

1. Competition for small number of emerging professors
2. Minority graduate/doctoral students at 18% in 2005, faculty of color at 10%
3. Public respect at an all-time low / “crisis of confidence
4. Investment in journalistic elements at all-time low
5. Pressures regarding content, coverage, and the business side
5. Ambivalence on part of professional journalists – wanting well-trained professionals, but giving lip service to the value of the university model