

spig news

2025 No. 2: *The official newsletter of the AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group*



Photo by Ecaterina Stepaniuc

SPIG Head Mas Biswas presents the Dalton-Landon Service Award to family members of the late Pam Parry during August's AEJMC Conference.

Welter named TOY; Parry service honored

By Doug Mendenhall
Abilene Christian

The annual celebration of SPIG's two most important awards included a farewell to a longtime stalwart and a welcome to a new member.

Tamara Welter of Baylor was honored with the Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year Award for exemplifying continuous learning and industry engagement.

Last year's TOY, Newly Paul of North Texas, said Welter's nomination included comments about her warmth, compassion and readiness to collaborate with colleagues.

Welter only last fall left Biola for a position at Baylor. She said that

in that first fall semester she was hit hard by the death of her father, James Douglas Tarpley, in October.

"We were very close," she said. And the two pursued similar paths in their careers. "He was also an educator. Of higher ed. Of public relations."

Welter said, "He was an educator down to every pulse of his heart."

She said that in classes she can still hear herself speaking at times and think, "My dad would have said it that way."

She said she wishes she could still ask her father questions, even if he didn't have the full answer. "He al-

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Ecaterina Stepaniuc

head notes

We're about so much more than just scholarship

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as head of the Small Programs Interest Group for 2025–2026. When the late Pam Parry introduced me to SPIG back in 2020, I expected little more than a group of scholars who gathered at conferences to network. I soon discovered much more. This outstanding community has helped me grow as a teacher and become a more equipped scholar.

Before sharing plans and goals for the coming year, let me tell you a little about myself. I am an assistant professor at North Carolina A&T State University, now in my seventh year on the tenure track. I earned my doctorate in 2018 from the University of Southern Mississippi.

My research interests include media framing of democracy in Moldova and strategies faculty can use to foster student engagement. I teach multimedia courses that emphasize media software tools and content production.

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from the front page

Head: SPIG stays active year-round

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Each summer, I travel home to the Republic of Moldova, where I organize English camps for children in my native village of Costești.

SPIG has become a defining part of my professional life. I have served on panels, published in *TJMC*, and assisted with panel proposals for AEJMC 2025.

In 2023, I was honored to receive the Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year Award.

These experiences reflect how deeply SPIG matters to me, and I remain committed to serving with passion. What I love most about SPIG is that it's not just about annual conferences. We stay active year-round through our mentorship program, virtual sessions on AI, and lively exchanges on the Listserv.

At our recent business meeting and 30th-anniversary celebration, I was struck by how much value each member finds in this group.

A highlight of the event was watching Parry's relatives accept the Dalton Landon Foundation Service Award in her name. Moments like this remind us SPIG is more than an academic program – it's a community that honors its leaders and carries their legacies forward. Looking

Here, you learn, grow, and gain the support of a true community. I encourage you to stay involved

ahead, we will continue to tackle issues shaping higher education.

On Oct. 6, Liz Atwood of Hood College will lead a Zoom discussion from 3:30-5 p.m. Eastern, offering SPIG members a chance to share experiences, ideas, and research opportunities on navigating classroom discussions and free speech in today's highly partisan environment.

I hope to organize several virtual workshops on the use of AI in journalism teaching, an area where educators remain divided. By fostering open, informative discussions, we can better understand the challenges, and guide our students in the ethical use of the software.

Our mentorship program, led by Christina Smith of Georgia College & State University, will also continue to support junior faculty and graduate students.

In March, I joined one of the mentor/mentee sessions and was

inspired by the commitment and enthusiasm in the room. It is clear this program is making a real difference.

SPIG's leadership team is also hard at work. Vice Head Newly Paul from North Texas will soon reach out about panel proposals for AEJMC 2026. She has also kindly agreed to assist Michael Longinow with *TJMC* submissions, helping streamline the process and speed turnaround times. **A quick reminder: deadline for the December edition is Sept. 29.**

Membership remains steady at 90+ members, and we are eager to grow. Indah Setiawati of Butler University has proposed a recruitment campaign to expand our reach.

In addition, Second Vice Head Tamara Welter, this year's Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year, will oversee the 2026 teaching award competition.

As you can see, SPIG is a program worth investing in. Here, you learn, grow, and gain the support of a true community. I encourage you to stay involved and take full advantage of the incredible resources and opportunities SPIG provides.

Reach out to estepaniuc@ncat.edu if you'd like to lead a workshop or share ideas for the program.

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from the front page

Welter, Parry receive SPIG awards

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ways found a way to ask the good questions,” she said.

Entering fully into the learning process is what an educator should do, Welter said.

She also talked about some of fondest moments with past students.

For example, when a student who graduated shared with her that no one ever believed she could finish this degree, “But you did.”

And when another student, hearing impaired, was rejected by a different program that didn’t believe he could do the work. However, despite that disability, he created compelling videos. Welter said she worked with this student and knew things didn’t come easy for him. But, she said, he recently shared with her a video of himself, leaving the White House Oval Office.

Dalton-Landon Service Award

Pam Parry, who died unexpectedly in February, was recognized as the 2025 recipient of the SPIG Dalton-Landon Award, named for two pioneers of the interest group.

Incoming SPIG Head Ecaterina Stepaniuc said she developed a special relationship with Parry, who was a faculty member and administrator at Southeast Missouri State.

“I know she’s meant the world to all of us, but she was a little bit more to me,” Stepaniuc said.

The two met when Stepaniuc, who is from Moldova, was a new graduate of Southern Mississippi who couldn’t find a job. A colleague connected her to Parry, who graduated from the same program.

Parry called on a Saturday.

“We had probably the most honest conversation I’ve ever had,” Stepaniuc said. She told Parry she just



Former SPIG Head Pam Parry

needed a chance.

“Kate, I have an opening, but I already offered it to someone,” Parry told her.

However, that applicant had asked for a few days, so Parry told Stepaniuc, “It doesn’t pay much, but it’s yours if they don’t take it.”

Stepaniuc ended up moving to SEMO with a 4-month-old baby, and said Parry fought the next year to turn this to a tenure-track position.

“There’s one thing I’m good at: I’m good at finding good people and at hiring good people,” Stepaniuc said Parry told her.

Stepaniuc said she had visited in Parry’s home in Missouri, and last year the two shared a hotel room at the AEJMC conference. “We had the best time.”

That’s one person’s story, but Stepaniuc said that because Parry was

real and authentic, “I know a lot of you have been touched deeply by her.”

In honor of Parry, Stepaniuc created a spiral-bound book collecting notes posted online or elsewhere by SPIG members and others after her death.

The book, labeled “In loving memory of Pam Parry” was presented to three family members who traveled to San Francisco to join the ceremony. Those included one of her three brothers, Bob Parry, and his wife, Mindy.

Also present as Parry’s sister, Sue, a middle-school math teacher. “My entire life I always wanted to be like my big sister,” she said.

That was even though, as Sue Parry said, “My sister’s love of furthering her education made no sense to me.”

She said her big sister always wanted to connect with students and with colleagues. “If you didn’t know her, you missed out,” she said.

She remembered Pam Parry going to a craft show and seeing a plaque that read, “Be the exception.” She bought a plaque for each of them.

Pam Parry was exceptional, she said. “I wish she was here today to see that people recognized that.”

SPIG Spotlights for 2025

Pam Parry also was among a series of social media spotlights of SPIG members created by Stepaniuc that are being published throughout the year. Others are:

Brian Steffen
Doug Mendenhall
Mitzi Lewis
Michael Longinow
Kim Fox
Jim Sernoe
Jon Bekken
Cathy Strong

The published profiles are available on the SPIG website.

How to donate

Memorial donations honoring Pam Parry can be made to “Ann Parry Scholarship of Engaged Citizenship” at Southeast Missouri State: www.semo.edu/giving
Specify Parry in the “Other” line of the “Donate your gift” menu’.

spig preconference in san francisco

Session 1: Study abroad helps small programs expand world

By Joseph B. Treaster
Miami

Just a short time before classes would begin in campuses around the world, professors from around the United States were talking about study abroad during the SPIG preconference of the annual AEJMC Conference.

They'd been taking college students on exciting glimpses of places around the world for years.

Panelists included Vivian Martin and Darren Sweeney of Central Connecticut State and Shenid Bayroo of St. Joseph's. The session was moderated by Rachele Kanigel of San Francisco State.

Study abroad is a serious project for them. Most of them work on their summer programs in bits and pieces all year long. They think the experience is good for their students, and the professors say they love the discoveries they make in villages and big cities around the world.

The professors said they love to see the way their students grow in just a few weeks – often three weeks, sometimes four or five weeks – in another country.

Study abroad often seems to colleagues, the professors said, like a glamorous perk. Universities encourage professors to organize trips abroad. Then universities cover all expenses for professors and pay them the same as for teaching extra classes at home.

At some universities, wives and family members can go along on study abroad trips. But in most cases the study abroad leaders are too busy to consider bringing along their families.

"They have no idea how much



work is involved," said Kanigel, a journalism professor at San Francisco State, of colleagues who don't take students abroad. But, she said, "It's one of the most enriching things I do."

"The way I can work with my students abroad," she said, "Is much deeper and more profound."

Kanigel and the other SPIG panelists said they work "pretty much all year" from the time they put up their first posters of their trip until they and the students return home from places such as London, Paris, Singapore, Shanghai and villages in countries around the world.

Kanigel took a handful of students last summer to the town of Arles on the Mediterranean coast of France, not so far from the vineyards of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. She and the students saw the yellow house where Vincent Van Gogh worked, and they photographed ordinary people in the streets.

Many universities offer students

study abroad for a semester at universities overseas in places like Madrid, London and Berlin. The student's home university organizes the study, pays the tuition and the student is off, pretty much on their own, for a semester or more. Students usually pay the same tuition that they would have paid at their home campus.

But the professors in San Francisco were talking about shorter study abroad programs that operate over the summer, around Christmas and New Year's breaks, and other times of the year when regular classes are not running.

These are shorter than semester experiences and are chances to work closely with professors rather than make their own way on a campus in a new land.

The usual way the shorter programs work is that a faculty member or two volunteer to take students somewhere. They develop a destination, a purpose, a syllabus and a budget for the class with the approval of the university's administration. They also set up housing for the group, estimate the cost of meals and lay down a day-by-day plan.

For many schools, the shorter programs are a world focused on themselves. Professors work on recruiting and other aspects of the courses around the year. They hold sessions to get students acquainted with the destinations and what's going on there at the time of the trip.

Some schools make them into bigger projects.

At Central Connecticut State in

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Study abroad cost vary by depth

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Bristol, just minutes from the state capital of Hartford, Martin said she teaches a three-credit course. Students in the class agree on a place they want to go for study abroad, then study it and what's going on there for a semester.

They get a grade for the study.

Then they go off to the country and find out what the place they've been studying is really like. That's their final. They discover the essence of their country.

Other students who study for three or four weeks in Paris, say, or London, do the same thing. But Martin said students who don't study their study abroad setting for a semester can't come close to those who do for depth and under-

standing.

Both kinds of study abroad are enriching. But the depth of the course with a semester of study as preparation may be richer and, in most cases expensive.

At some private schools, where tuition and other costs can ring in at about \$100,000 a year, costs for three or four or five weeks in study abroad can run to nearly \$20,000. In some universities tuition for study abroad for six credits can run to \$13,000 or \$14,000.

In some SPIG programs with courses woven into the semester, there are no costs for credits. The credits are taken as part of the spring semester load. The costs for the study abroad are flights, housing, food, guides and other things

directly tied to the trip.

The SPIG programs discussed are study abroad in depth. In many other cases, universities offer students a chance for three or four or five weeks in London, Paris, Milan, Barcelona or sometimes Beijing, Singapore or Kuala Lumpur.

And the students discover as they rip along.

Some universities require two professors to lead each course abroad and to work with a professional organization in their destination country that assists university group with getting a feel for the special qualities of countries and can help with police issues and with connecting with hospitals. That approach leads to higher costs for students.

Session 2: Past winners share tips for teaching that works

By Ecaterina Stepaniuc

North Carolina A&T State

For its 30th anniversary, SPIG spotlighted what it values most: creative teaching in journalism and mass communication. During the second pre-conference session of the afternoon, three former SPIG Teachers of the Year shared practical strategies for engaging Gen Z students and preparing them for the media industry.

The panel, moderated by Cindy Simoneau, chairperson at Southern Connecticut State University and SPIG's 2016 Teacher of the Year, opened with insights she collected from past recipients. Simoneau said a personalized approach and hands-on assignments remain central to

strong teaching across small programs.

Adapting writing for a new generation

Doug Mendenhall of Abilene Christian was the first to present, reflecting on how writing instruction has shifted since he began teaching in 2008.

Back then, students arrived in class already immersed in newspapers, magazines, and television news. Today, he said, professors must adapt to new media habits and find ways to make writing resonate with digital-native students.

One challenge, Mendenhall noted, and attendees agreed, is that

students often shy away from interviewing strangers. To address that, he designs assignments that build confidence in interviewing and interpersonal communication.

His advice for teaching media writing is simple: make writing less intimidating, focus on ethics, spend less time drilling AP style, and get students out of the classroom.

"Don't just talk about writing," he said. "Write something. Anything. Everything."

He also stressed focusing on fundamentals before introducing AI tools.

Student feedback affirms the success of his approach. One student

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TOYs focus on innovative projects

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wrote that assignments blended professional skills with memorable experiences, adding: “The projects we did in class were useful for all areas of life, such as the portfolio, cover letter, and how to conduct a good interview. The assignment we did where we followed Professor Mendenhall around campus and learned about ACU’s history was very entertaining.”

Software meets storytelling

Ecaterina Stepaniuc of North Carolina A&T highlighted the role of experiential learning in preparing students for the industry.

She described her newsletter project, *JOMC Connections*, which showcases student reporting and design skills while spotlighting Crosby Hall achievements.

By introducing Adobe InDesign early in the semester, Stepaniuc helps students develop both technical proficiency and storytelling ability. AI tools are incorporated only after stories are written, with students encouraged to use them for editing tasks such as grammar and AP style checks.

This project, she said, addresses a gap in journalism education and underscores the power of experiential learning. Digital natives learn best through hands-on experience,



a principle reflected in Bloom’s Taxonomy and evident in today’s media students.

She said her students find value in the project. One noted in course evaluations that it was “a testament to patience and grace,” with the final product offering a rewarding sense of accomplishment. Stepaniuc said projects such as this give students confidence, industry-ready skills, and a professional experience they can carry into the newsroom.

Connecting theory to practice

Jackie Incollingo of Rider emphasized the importance of assignments that align with students’ interests.

In her digital media theory course, students analyze their own social media feeds through the lens of theorists such as Erving Goffman. That simple tweak, she said, gets students to see how abstract theory connects to their everyday lives.

In an in-depth reporting course, Incollingo designed a project around a campus issue – parking and ticketing revenue. She staged a classroom press conference with university officials, giving students a chance to question real sources in real time. Students responded enthusiastically, she said, gaining both engagement and field-ready reporting skills.

Across each presentation, a common theme emerged: when professors focus on student success, they adapt, innovate, and find ways to connect. For SPIG, celebrating three decades of advancing small programs, the message was clear. Great teaching thrives on experiential learning and commitment to students.

The session closed with a tribute to the late Pam Parry, a longtime SPIG member and leader who nominated the panel last October.

Stepaniuc read from a student’s note that captured Parry’s teaching philosophy: one rooted in care and belief in her students’ potential: “Dr. Parry had a way of making her students feel like we mattered – not just as writers, but as people.”

spig preconference in san francisco



Photo by Masudul Biswas

Moderator Jackie Incollingo is flanked by winners Marti Maguire of William Peace, left, and Vivian Martin of Central Connecticut State.

Session 3: Idea contest offers GIFTs to unwrap in classroom

By Mas Biswas
North Carolina A&T State

A display of Great Ideas for Teaching anchored the final session of the SPIG preconference workshop in San Francisco.

Seven journalism and communication educators were selected through a competitive process to present their innovative teaching practices in this session. Their ideas touched on a wide range of topics.

Two entries ranked in a tie for first place came from Marti Maguire at William Peace and Vivian Martin at Central Connecticut State.

Maguire shared her teaching

ideas on “debating issues in communication,” while Martin explained how she uses card games to make journalism history more engaging.

Other presentations included:

- David Painter at Rollins College discussed an annotated bibliography assignment in a research class in which students practice ethical integration of Artificial Intelligence.

- Ted Petersen at Florida Technology Institute talked about an engaging class assignment with a good learning outcome in an audio production class. In that assignment, students in a group attempt to model an NPR story.

- Jeremy Sarachan of St. John said he takes his students in media economics class to local bookstores for an applied assignment.

Based on the information that students gather during these visits, they need to respond to assignment prompts.

- Jennifer Wilson at Drake presented a creative class assignment on branding in which students need to use multiple skills – script or copywriting, design and/or multimedia – to create a social media content.

- Jackie Incollingo of Rider moderated the GIFT session.

more news from san francisco

Even with the industry sliding, journalism education strong

By Newly Paul
North Texas

The uncertain outlook of journalism as a profession, the lack of trust in the media, and declining enrollment in colleges across the country has made it important for journalism programs to adapt and innovate to survive, panelists at the AEJMC conference in San Francisco said.

The four – Michael Longinow from Biola, Jeffrey Ranta from Coastal Carolina, Damilola Oduolowu from Missouri, and Elizabeth Atwood from Hood College – were speaking at a joint session organized Saturday by SPIG and the Internships and Careers Interest Group.

This panel examined how journalism pedagogy should change while retaining journalism skills, given the changes in the field and in higher education as a whole.

Using examples from their own institutions, the speakers discussed ideas to promote journalism education.

“We need to sell the value of journalism education,” Atwood said. “We should be proud of it.”

The panelists highlighted how journalism programs had changed at their home institutions. At Hood, the Communication Arts Program will move from the Department of English and Communication Arts into the college’s business school.

Atwood said she was hopeful that this move could offer new funding opportunities, but the primary challenge was one of cultural change and a shift away from liberal arts to more of a business focus.

Longinow, who teaches at Biola, described how the journalism department started in 2007 and grew to 80 majors in two years, and then



Photo by Newly Paul

Elizabeth Atwood of Hood College said journalism education is something that programs and faculty should own and be proud of.

how the pandemic led to its eventual dismantling. The school now offers a communication major with concentrations in journalism, public relations and communication studies.

“From 2007 to 2022, the journalism program sold itself as distinct from Comm Studies and PR, but now it sells itself as Communication – embedded within a theory-based program that also includes PR,” he said.

Oduolowu said that despite its stellar reputation, the journalism program at Missouri is also experiencing some shrinkage.

The panelists all agreed that despite these changes, journalism remains a valuable degree. Atwood emphasized that the hallmarks of journalism education are still in demand – building skills for research and analysis as well as the ability to synthesize information and present it in a persuasive way.

Oduolowu said journalism is not dying; it is evolving and remains as relevant today as before.

“Journalism is not just a job title but is a way of thinking and solving problems,” he said.

Regardless, students often question whether they can get a job after they graduate, considering the increasing pressure of student loans and the current political climate.

Atwood said journalism salaries have always been on the lower end, with employment of news analysts, reporters, and journalists projected to decline 3% from 2023 to 2033. In addition, journalism is not valued by the public.

“We have a PR problem because journalists are not trusted,” she said. “How do we persuade people to take on this major?”

One way to do this is to emphasize that journalism has skills to offer non-journalists. Writing, production and social media management are skills taught in journalism classes that can be used in PR, marketing, sales and law-related jobs.

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Education can help restore trust

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"I don't want to discourage those who still want to do journalism, but these options are open," he said.

A solution proposed by Oduolowu is to emphasize the quality of the instruction being provided.

"We tell students that you will be taught by the best," he said. When students understand that the professors aren't asking them to do anything that they haven't done before, they feel more invested and interested in the classes.

He also suggested that small programs can form collaborations with local and global papers and radio stations, in which students can produce something and have their work seen by others.

"When students do real work, not just for class . . . they feel a sense of pride. . . . They feel a sense of fulfillment and feel that their work is impactful," he said.

Oduolowu added that it is important to have representation at

journalism organizations and compete for student awards to build up morale.

To socialize into the profession, students should be connected with associations such as Society of Professional Journalists and Radio Television Digital News Association and attend their conferences, where they are able to network with journalists.

"It is important to market journalism in a way that interests students and connects them with their interests such as activism and entrepreneurship," Oduolowu said.

Ranta emphasized the need to restore trust in the media. He proposed three frameworks to achieve this: seeking and offering balanced coverage, controlling editorial urges, and returning to ethics.

"If we fail to embrace the fundamentals, we fail as an institution," he said.

He suggested professors adopt assignments that implement bias checks. He also said they should use class time to implement cross-com-



Photo by Newly Paul

Damilola Oduolowu suggested that small programs seek out collaborations with local or global media outlets to find places for students to have their work seen.

parison of issues coverage and teach students faithfulness to their own ethics so that they can consider other ideas without threat and build consensus.

Business: SPIG ends year of new faces, services

The annual business meeting of the Small Programs Interest Group was conducted Friday during the AE-JMC conference in San Francisco with outgoing Head Mas Biswas presiding. Agenda items presented and discussed included:

Incoming SPIG Head is Ecaterina Stepanuic of North Carolina A&T, and the chair of the Teacher of the Year Committee will be this year's TOY winner, Tamara Welter of Baylor. A complete listing of SPIG officers for the upcoming year can be found on page 2 of SPIG News.

Five faculty research papers were submitted, and two were accepted for an acceptance rate of 40%, slightly tougher than the Research Committee's guideline of 50%. All five submissions were in the form of extended

abstracts.

Chaired by Christina Smith, the SPIG Education Committee during the past year launched an informal mentorship program in collaboration with the Commission on Graduate Education. Six students were paired with a SPIG member and the group met monthly via Zoom to discuss topics including syllabus planning, work-life balance and hiring techniques.

In April the committee also sponsored an online panel on A.I. and media teaching, with about 10 people in attendance. A recording was shared with SPIG members.

The SPIG journal *TJMC* saw a change of leadership, with longtime editor Catherine Strong of Massey turning over the reins to co-editors Michael Longinow of Biola and Newly Paul of

North Texas.

"The first two editions were bumpy and clunky but we got them out," Longinow said. Encouraging submissions by graduate students and younger faculty, the journal has increased its focus on pedagogical innovation. Deadline for the next edition is Sept. 29.

SPIG began the year with a balance of \$6,084 and ended with \$6,397. The group took in \$620 and spent \$307.

Communication about the interest group and *TJMC* will continue via the Listserv and newsletter as well as Facebook and X, and a Bluesky account has been created.

The meeting concluded with the official transfer of SPIG leadership from Biswas to Stepanuic and a show of appreciation for Biswas' efforts.

— Jackie Incollongo

more news from san francisco

Carving out time for research keeps young faculty on track

By Jackie Incollingo
Rider

Teaching and advising students is often the primary focus for faculty with multiple courses at smaller institutions.

However, panelists provided tips and strategies to make sure research also finds a place for newer tenure-track faculty struggling with balance.

The Thursday session, “The Wobbly Three-Legged Stool – Finding Time for Research,” was cosponsored by SPIG and the History Division and moderated by Elizabeth Atwood of Hood College.

Speakers emphasized the need for careful planning and strategizing; intentionally setting up uninterrupted times for research and writing; and finding constructive collaborations.

Caitlin Cieslik-Miskimen of Idaho said new faculty should seek transparency from Day 1 about expectations for promotion, and then “develop a road map that really aligned . . . I can’t emphasize enough the strategy of building a game plan.”

Similarly, Tamara J. Welter of Baylor advised new hires to study promotion and tenure guidelines – as well as unwritten expectations – then write out a 5-year plan to make sure requirements are met and even exceeded.

“If you shoot above [expectations], you settle above that if there are questions about things,” she said.

Welter, who formerly taught at Biola with a 4/4 load and overloads, demonstrated a Google spreadsheet she used to track teaching, research and service activity. She advised attendees to set aside 30 to 60 min-



Photo by Jackie Incollingo

Rob Wells of Maryland advised new faculty members to “stay in their lane” with research projects until they have a clear case for why they should be considered a scholar in that field.

utes of uninterrupted time daily to build the habit and flow of research writing.

Both Cieslik-Miskimen and Masudul “Mas” Biswas of North Carolina A&T emphasized the need to use the academic calendar wisely, maximizing teaching breaks and understanding points in the year that are most conducive to research.

Biswas said he purposely avoided teaching in summer to designate time for research and writing, finding projects that could be completed in tight timeframes.

“Pick your topic that you can complete in 4 months or 5 months or 6 months,” he said, adding that he turned conference deadlines into his own deadlines as a way to channel acceptances and conference feedback into journal publications.

Rob Wells of Maryland also advised faculty to pick projects wisely and with focus: “I’m kind of a tradi-

tionalist on this . . . for me, stay in your research lane until you get tenure and until you have a clear articulate case why you are a scholar in the field.”

Efficiency and focus aren’t his only priorities, though.

“I really think you should pick projects that make you happy . . . because you’re going to be spending a lot of time with it and you want to make a societal contribution that’s worthy,” he said.

To preserve time for research, Wells said he set aside time early each day before distractions hit, turned off email to focus, and scheduled meetings only on teaching days.

Welter said that to protect research windows, faculty should try to avoid endless classroom preparation and limit service responsibilities.

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Research takes planning, panel says

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Some panelists from teaching-focused institutions said they found success focusing on pedagogical research.

Biswas explained the natural connection: “At a teaching heavy institution, I do research on teaching pedagogy . . . it aligns with my interests.”

Welter advised faculty to plan courses strategically and get IRB approval early to do pedagogical research. She also emphasized creating means for personal accountability such as joining writing groups or developing research and/or writing partnerships.

Panelists agreed that collaborations can be a powerful tool for completing research and advised considering partners outside their department or their university.

Biswas explained how he strategically looked for collaborators at other institutions who had time. “I would reach out to my good friends

who were not busy with eight or nine projects, but maybe one or two,” he said.

Finding the right outlet for publication is also critical for newer scholars. Wells said, “Find a journal you can work with . . . find a focused journal in your field, then move on to bigger ones.”

Biswas said he looked for a mixed variety of peer-reviewed journals at different tiers. Wells advised faculty to meet with publishers at the AEJMC conference to discuss book ideas.

Cieslik-Miskimen advised faculty to be prepared to pivot, publishing in different formats to fulfill expectations for promotion.

As a journalism historian pursuing promotion, she said she initially anticipated writing a book, until the pandemic shut down archival sources.

Out of necessity, she transitioned to journal articles. “Being able to walk away from my initial game plan

“Let service become scholarship for you . . . when you do meaningful community work, see if it can transition to scholarship.”

Yeon Erin Kim-Cho

for research format helped me stay on track,” she said.

Picking the right project is critical for Yeon Erin Kim-Cho of Grand View, who said she focuses on connecting research to her teaching and service in the community. She said she often uses her classrooms as laboratories for developing and refining research concepts, then has students get involved in projects by creating public-facing magazines and other material for nonprofits involved in research and service partnerships.

As part of her research, Kim-Cho said she has secured funding from Iowa Public Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, working on local health issues with students embedded in real projects that serve community needs.

“Let service become scholarship for you . . . when you do meaningful community work, see if it can transition to scholarship,” Kim-Cho said. “If you can take anything away from my presentation, I hope you can take some time to think about how I can combine teaching, research and service . . . and where is my passion.”

Similarly, when seeking a balance of teaching, research and service, Cieslik-Miskimen said, “Think through what brings you joy and what do you like doing and incorporate as much of that into your job as much as possible.”

Studies of AI, social media earn SPIG research awards

With topics situated squarely in the classroom, two research projects were honored Friday during a SPIG awards event that followed the annual business meeting.

Receiving first place was a four-scholar paper titled, “Navigating AI in the Classroom: Ethical Tensions and Pedagogical Opportunities in Communication Courses.”

The award was accepted by Indah Setiawati of Butler. Other authors from Butler were:

Alexander Carter, Kristen A. Patrow and Lee K. Farquhar.

The second-place award went to the paper, “You’ve Never Seen Friends? The Lack of Common Media Experiences Among First Semester Mass Communication Students.”

The award was accepted by Jeremy Sarachan of St. John Fisher, who said the SPIG Listserv was a solid resource for research on the paper. Other authors on the project were: Olushola Aromona, South Dakota State; Lisa Carponelli, Simpson; Marti Maguire, William Peace; and Nomi Morris, California Santa Barbara.

more news from san francisco

Broadcasters share 6 lessons that get students up to speed

By Doug Mendenhall
Abilene Christian

Students often enter the broadcast or podcast job market without much training in the performance aspects of journalism. Moderator Elia Powers of Towson included that finding in his book published last year, *Performing the News*.

And with that finding in mind, Powers and four panelists shared exercises that they have used to help students become more confident of their skills. Because these skills can be time intensive to build, two panelists said they use office hours rather than class time for one-on-one interactions.

The Saturday teaching session sponsored by SPIG and the Broadcast and Mobile Journalism Division was titled, "Helping Podcasting and Broadcasting Students Become Confident Communicators."

Here are outlines of six assignments shared during the session:

Getting comfortable reading scripts

Used by Elia Powers of Towson in an undergraduate podcasting class.

1. Each student turns a print paragraph into an audio one.
2. First read: With a partner, they take turns reading their own paragraph out loud. Focus on clarity and pronunciation. No eye contact needed.
3. Second read: Take turns again focusing on emphasizing important words and building in pauses. Make eye contact regularly. Try some off-script ad-libbing.
4. Third read: Focus on what you're saying, not looking at the script much. Try to sound conver-



Photo by Doug Mendenhall

Moderator Elia Powers of Towson lays out ground rules for the broadcast panel as Marcus Funk of Sam Houston listens, left.

sational, pay attention to partner's reaction. Use memory and ad libs.

5. After each step ask, "How did that feel?" Afterward ask, "Which version sounded best?" Advised students to go with whatever felt most natural, but to use elements from all of them.

6. Tip: Let classmates pick their partners so they feel comfortable with each other.

7. Spread out around the room or even go outside.

8. Encourage students to print the scripts, not read from their phone.

9. Circulate around the room to all the groups as they read.

Getting comfortable in the recording space

Used by Stan Jastrzebski of Missouri in a Reporting/Writing 1 class in which students produce seven stories for use on KBIA radio stories. The goal is for students to sound like themselves and de-mystify the recording space.

1. Each component of the room is important – chair, microphone,

computer, software.

2. Sit/stand tall, especially if someone else is in the booth.

3. "Full lungs, clear voice, can't lose." Use short sentences and good breath support.

4. Be ready with some patter or small talk to make the interview subject (and student) comfortable.

5. Good posture and breath support make a student's vocal pitch go down, which conveys a bit of gravitas. Posture also helps young students appear more in control and to be taken seriously.

6. Assessment: Have each student teach another student, or have a pair of students go in the booth together and grade each other.

7. Tip: Don't try this assignment when there's a tight deadline to complete a news broadcast.

How to make the booth into a safe place

Stan Jastrzebski of Missouri for upper-level students:

1. Instructor goes into the booth

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more news from san francisco

Booth skills boost class readiness

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with a student who brings a script they wrote and know.

2. Instructor looks at the floor and listens at a “granular level.”

3. Have student record script one sentence or paragraph at a time. Give feedback after each segment.

4. Focus that feedback on pacing, word emphasis, enunciation, and conveying ideas through tone.

5. Ask students what message each sentence was meant to convey and how they’d tell that to a friend.

6. Students should be able to maintain vocal level and energy throughout the sentence, not trail off. The analogy is, “They have to run through the finish-line tape,” Jastrzebski said. “They will learn where to pick up that energy in each sentence.”

7. Remind students that it takes a long time to find their voice.

8. Pay attention for:

a. Student reading too fast,

b. Student energy trailing off.

c. Sentences have a “nursery rhyme” rhythm that goes up in the first half, then down in the second.

9. Tip: It’s uncomfortable for instructor to be there and feel as if they are in trouble, so try not to make eye contact and they’ll forget you.

10. Tip: Don’t be afraid to have them rewrite a sentence into a more easily voiced way.

11. Tip: Don’t let them try to sound like a caricature of a popular podcaster.

Bearkats recommend

Used by Marcus Funk of Sam Houston in an elective Audio Production and Performance class in which he tries to balance podcasting and radio with a goal of creating publishable short episodes of an interview podcast that are still somewhat journalistic. This version of the assignment was preceded by one

that Funk said was too freeform, a la “Humans of New York.”

1. Students can talk about a TV show, book or whatever the guest wants to recommend.

2. They shoot for 15 minutes per interview, including some standardized questions that allow for individualized follow-ups.

3. The focus is on visual and emotional storytelling.

4. The goals are to facilitate sound effects and art generation.

5. Assignment 1: Interview each other for an episode.

6. Assignment 2: Be interviewed by a classmate for an episode.

7. Assignment 3: Recruit someone tied to the university for an episode.

8. Assignment 4: Same as 3, but this time for extra credit.

9. Tip: This should generate enough episodes for delayed release during the next semester.

10. Students edit episodes in Audition using required sound effects.

11. Assessment: If it’s not publishable, student receives an F.

3 personal narrative projects that let students have choice and buy-in

Used by Laura Smith of South Carolina in a podcasting and audio production class across disciplines that’s more about applied content creation than theory. Three main assignments that give them more buy-in because they have choice:

1. Sonic ID: Students interview someone about a sound in the community and represents it. Reporter gathers the natural sound and with quotes get a 15-second piece. These go to the local radio station for identification breaks. Confidence is helped by letting students use whatever equipment they’re familiar with.

2. Public Service Announcement: Pick a non-profit organization and create an exactly 30-second hy-

per-local spot about it. Confidence is helped by becoming familiar with the audience.

3. NPR-style 3- to 5-minute “news is people” story that is issue driven. Uses the “diamond shape” of starting small with one person, expanding to explain the issue, then returning to a second single person to put it in perspective. Confidence is helped going through all of the steps (pitch/research/interview/outline/draft) and learning the complex production skills that are needed.

Tip: At times she lets a student change/adapt an assignment, such as a student who was out with mono or another who was recovering from a bone marrow transplant.

Reading the script together

Used by Indira Somani, representing the South Asian Journalists Association. She taught an investigative journalism documentary class. Because many students are oral learners, this technique made for a successful assignment:

1. Some reporting has been done, with placeholders for soundbites in a 5- or 6-page script.

2. Once the general structure of the script is formed, assign parts.

3. All students meet to read the script out loud together. The rest of the class has to follow along; they can’t be on their phones.

4. This helps ensure students are telling the most compelling story possible.

5. Effective in letting students discover what is missing, what needs to be reorganized to improve the structure of the story, whether they are stepping on the soundbite.

6. To build confidence, they go through the script, identify operative words and mark the script for: volume, pitch, rhythm, enunciation, emphasis.

news from san francisco

Joint panel with ICD misses voice of a longtime PR leader

By Doug Mendenhall

Abilene Christian

A key voice was missing from a panel on how to create experiential learning opportunities for students seeking careers in communication.

Sponsored by SPIG and the International Communication Division, the Friday session began with a tribute to Pamela Bourland-Davis of Georgia Southern, a leader in the AEJMC Public Relations Division and editor of the *Journal of Public Relations Education*, who died earlier this year.

The panel, “From Momentous Change to Leadership: Preparing our Students for Comm Careers,” was her idea, said panelist Charles Lubbers of South Dakota, who said he knew Bourland-Davis for 30 years.

In a field that could often be too theoretical, he said, the two always shared one principle: “We wanted everything to be applied.”

Their shared thought was that a diet of too much PR theory didn’t help undergraduates with their greatest need, to apply it on the street and in the workplace.

“Pam was a master of that,” Lubbers said.

Bourland-Davis also had recently stepped into the position of vice chair of the Commission on Public Relations Education.

Moderator Elizabeth Toth of Maryland briefly described CPRE’s 50th-anniversary report on recommendations for advancing undergraduate PR education, which seeks to address the future of the workplace or PR practitioners.

As Bourland-Davis would have wanted, that report calls for more



Photo courtesy of Georgia Shern

Pamela Bourland-Davis of Georgia-Southern was remembered by former colleagues – at an AEJMC panel that was her idea – for helping PR undergraduate students learn to apply the theories of the field. Bourland-Davis died in May.

experiential learning that exposes students to professional behaviors and workplace expectations, Toth said.

Lubbers offered a description of trends seen in the Gen Z workforce (born from 1997-2012) that make experiential learning even more crucial.

“These are not universal statements that we’re making,” he said, but he did assert that changes of even 7% in certain qualities or priorities can make a difference in how the generation interfaces with the PR industry.

Lubbers said Gen Z never knew life without the Internet and weathered Covid in high school or college just as work was shifting from offices and classrooms to remote or hybrid settings.

He shared these findings about

Gen Z from 2023 research that went into the CPRE report:

- Salary is less important than their preferences and expectations in the workplace.

- They expect employers and coworkers to be ethical, socially responsible and transparent.

- They value DEIB – a familiar acronym plus “belonging” as a next logical step for any organization that has already created a program to increase diversity, equity and inclusion. “The program must work,” Lubbers said.

- They want to actively improve the environment, not just “do no harm.”

- They want the organization for which they work to share a six-fold commitment to offer: training, advancement, work-life balance, flexibility, meaning/impact in work, and modern technology.

Panelist Amiso George of TCU said those expectations mean that higher education needs to adapt its development strategies, while employers need to rethink their recruitment and retention strategies.

Job postings must speak to Gen Z values, George said, not just the employer’s needs.

She discussed a study that used content analysis to investigate what expectations prospective employees bring to an entry-level job posting. The study focused on the ads themselves, not on actual workplace practices.

What do Gen Z workers say matters to them? ethics, transparency, DEIB and environmental sustainability.

What commitments do they want most from employers? re-

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Report hopes to boost PR ed

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mote or hybrid work models, training, advancement, work-life balance, work that has meaning or impact, and modern technology.

George said that means educators need to be preparing students for value-driven job searches and integrating Gen-Z values into existing career-readiness programs.

Panelist Debbie Davis of Texas Tech said these rising Gen Z priorities fit well into David Kolb's 50-year-old theoretical model for experiential learning.

She said "durable skills" is an important term for what needs to be developed, because studies show that students who participate in experiential learning ultimately develop better long-term skills such as communication, negotiation and relationship building.

"A higher level of learning," Davis said. "So much of it falls into those soft and durable skills."

She ran through a list of eight experiential paths to build these durable skills: Internships, modernized student media, content creation for other departments, competitions or case studies, community engagement or service learning with non-profit clients, in-class or capstone projects, study abroad, professional networking and conferences, and student-run agencies.

At the end of all those paths, Davis said, reflection needs to be built in. "Let's talk about what you're learning."

As has been the case for more than a century, said panelist Damion Waymer of South Carolina, discussions of experiential learning usually lead to arguments about the purpose of education itself.

For example, this question was debated by Booker T. Washington, who championed skills, and W.E.B. Dubois, who saw enlightenment as a higher purpose.

However, Waymer said, that Enlightenment influence is fading and giving way today to more of an entrepreneurial paradigm.

In some ways, though, by leaning

whole hog into the profession, we risk losing control of the future of our students' education, he said.

"Higher education is more than the classroom," Waymer said. He cited a June 2025 article from *Inside Higher Ed*, "Higher ed must recommit to its enlightenment roots."

How to balance these conflicting goals?

With so much history behind and a rising need ahead to deal with shifts in the marketplace and in technology, Waymer concluded the session by pointing back to the 50-year report championed by Bourland-Davis.

"CPRE is trying to strike a balance," he said.

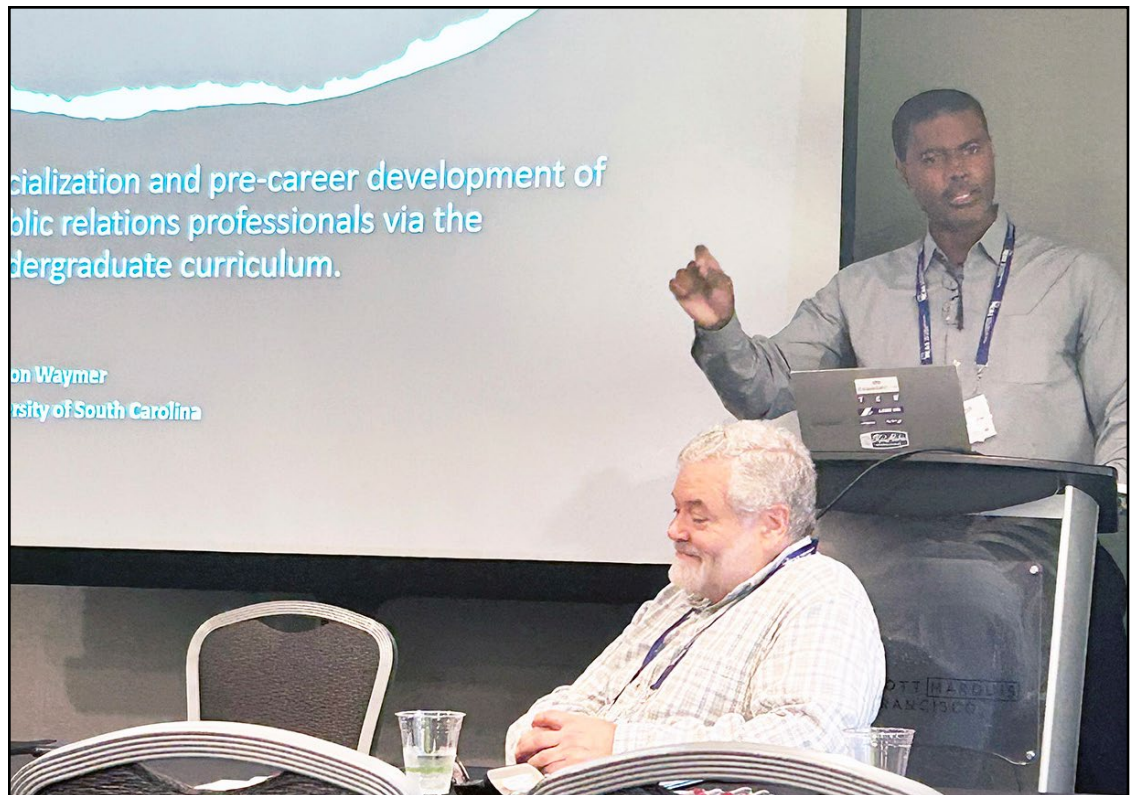


Photo by Doug Mendenhall

Charles Lubbers of South Dakota listens as Damion Waymer of South Carolina makes a point about differences of philosophy about the true role of higher education.

streets of san francisco



A few scenes from my afternoon walk on a perfect day in the Bay. Hope to see you next August in the streets and conference rooms of New Orleans.

– SPIG News Editor Doug Mendenhall