

spig news

2026 No. 1: *The official newsletter of the AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group*

Kim-Cho earns honor as Teacher of the Year

Dr. Yeon Erin Kim-Cho has been selected to receive the 2026 Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year Award, presented annually by SPIG to an outstanding educator.

Kim-Cho is an assistant professor in Communication and Media Practice at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa.

Christina Smith, chair of the SPIG Teaching Committee, said the nominees were excellent this year and the selection was indeed challenging for the judges.

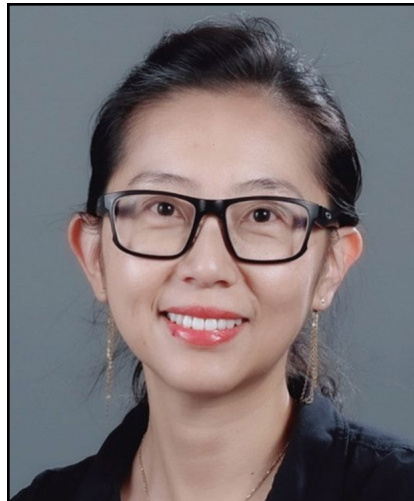
SPIG has long had an emphasis on classroom teaching and cultivating an atmosphere that helps journalism and PR educators go above and beyond in their teaching and mentoring of students.

Judges for the contest said Dr. Kim-Cho's hands-on teaching activities stood out as well as her strong presentation in mentorship, vocation, community engagement, student media advising and service learning.

Kim-Cho's family came to the U.S. from South Korea when she was in third grade. She traveled back to Korea for high school and completed a bachelor's degree from KyungHee University in Seoul.

She earned a master's degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and took a Ph.D. in mass communication at the University of Iowa in 2012.

Outside of teaching, her résumé



Yeon Erin Kim-Cho is an assistant professor at Grand View.

Find a complete listing of SPIG-sponsored conference events starting on page 4.

includes chairing the non-profit Korean American Society of Iowa and directing research for Refugee & Immigrant Voices in Action (RIVA).

During Covid-19 she worked with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and Genesis to produce fair housing materials in 10 languages.

In 2024 she was named a fellow by the Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement of Women in Communication at Florida International University.

The SPIG community will celebrate Dr. Kim-Cho at AEJMC 2026 in New Orleans in August.



Ecaterina Stepaniuc

head notes

All year, SPIG has been busy keeping up

When I accepted the opportunity to lead the Small Programs Interest Group, I was already aware of the outstanding community of executives and members that this organization has cultivated. However, witnessing firsthand their passion, engagement, and commitment to teaching has been a truly transformative experience.

As we reflect on the 2025–26 academic year, I would like to share a brief overview of SPIG's activities while also highlighting several meaningful discussions and key developments within our group.

We began the year in full swing. Early on, SPIG members engaged in extensive discussions surrounding a highly publicized national event and the broader discourse that followed.

These conversations raised important questions about how college professors should approach such topics in the classroom, particularly in relation to rights and responsi-

*Please see **YEAR** on page 2*

head notes

What a year for us, and it's not over

Continued from page 1

bilities, social media conduct, and employment or HR-related implications. In response, SPIG organized a timely panel discussion led by Liz Atwood of Hood College, chair of the Professional Freedom and Responsibility Committee.

Building on these conversations, our teaching chair, Christina Smith of Georgia College & State University, organized several engaging panels focused on innovative teaching strategies, artificial intelligence in the classroom, and emerging AI research tools.

For those of us teaching journalism and communication courses, AI has already sparked essential conversations about ethics, responsible use, academic integrity, and the future of our profession. Rather than avoiding these discussions, engaging them directly allows us to better prepare our students for the evolving media landscape and the opportunities and challenges it presents.

In addition to these ongoing conversations, SPIG proudly invites you to attend our panels and presentations at the 2026 AEJMC pre-conference and conference events in New

Orleans. These sessions will explore innovative teaching, AI policy and ethics, academic freedom, and other timely topics. Featuring scholars and practitioners from a wide range of journalism and communication backgrounds, they promise meaningful and engaging dialogue for educators at institutions of all sizes.

It is also my pleasure to congratulate the recipient of the 2026 Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year Award, Dr. Erin Kim-Cho of Grand View University. She has made a significant impact as an educator, scholar, and community leader.

Recognizing excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service remains central to SPIG's mission, and we are proud to celebrate her achievements.

In keeping with SPIG's commitment to recognizing and supporting excellence, I am especially proud to share the creation of the Pam Parry Mentorship Legacy Award. Beginning this year, SPIG will honor a member whose mentorship has made a lasting and meaningful impact on the personal and professional growth of colleagues, students, and emerging leaders within and beyond the organization.

This award recognizes individuals who build community through encouragement, collaboration, and a genuine investment in the success of others. Recipients exemplify supportive environments where students, colleagues, and emerging scholars feel valued, empowered, and inspired to grow both professionally and personally.

We will announce the inaugural recipient of the Pam Parry Mentorship Legacy Award in New Orleans, and I encourage you to join us for the announcement as well as our annual business meeting on Aug. 6 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in Room 103.

As I close this note, I would also like to extend my heartfelt best wishes to several longtime SPIG members who are retiring this year. Your dedication, leadership, and service to this organization have been nothing short of exemplary.

You have helped shape SPIG into the vibrant and supportive community it is today, and your contributions will continue to influence our work for years to come.

You will be deeply missed, and we are sincerely grateful for your contributions to SPIG.

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from the membership chair

I loved my #SPIGmoment! Help me spread the word about yours

By Indah Setiawati
Butler

Why should people join SPIG? What is special about SPIG? I will use these questions to recruit new members this year.

As the new Membership officer of SPIG, I would like to target early-career faculty and graduate students in our recruitment campaigns. In my experience, they are most likely new to AEJMC and therefore, they may not know much about SPIG.

We have 87 active members, and I am hoping to increase the membership by 5%.

To tell you the truth, I did not know about SPIG until I worked on my research with my colleagues last year. My colleague, Dr. Alexander Carter, said SPIG would be a perfect fit because our study focuses on students at a small university.

It was a big revelation to me to realize that there is a community of passionate educators and researchers from a small university like mine. I began to read the TJMC journal publications since then.

Let me tell you my #SPIGmoment last year in San Francisco.

I decided to join the group and serve as the membership officer after attending the heartwarming event honoring the legacy of the late Dr. Pam Parry with the Dalton Landon Service Award at the AEJMC 2025 national conference.

I was at that event to receive an award for my group's research submission from the then-SPIG head, Dr. Mas Biswas. I am glad I stayed and listened to the story of incoming SPIG head Dr. Kate Stepaniuc on the huge impact of Parry on her life.

It made me believe in humanity

It was a big revelation that there is a community of passionate educators and researchers from a small university like mine.

again. My first year as a new faculty member was rough, and the event reminded me of the people who had helped me through this journey.

In my reflection, SPIG may not have been on my radar because I was not exposed to it when I was in grad school. My research trajectory gears up toward the intersection of journalistic occupation with race and gender. It wasn't until I worked on research about artificial intelligence in higher education at Butler that I realized I could benefit from having a new village.

There are three strategies that I plan to implement gradually this year to recruit new members:

The first strategy is a video campaign on social media that highlights our #SPIGmoment. In this campaign we will publish an approximately one-minute video of our member sharing why people should join SPIG.

Story matters. My expectation is that once this video is published, you will share it on your social media and write a couple of sentences that share your experience with SPIG along with the hashtag #SPIGmoment.

You may share why you joined SPIG, who introduced you to SPIG, or any memorable event or collaboration. If applicable, I would also

encourage you to share a short story of how a member has had an impact on your professional development. It's like a shoutout.

The short video and your comments will help create visibility for our awesome group. It will be a teaser that hopefully puts SPIG at the back of their mind when they are looking for a village to grow. I will use the hashtag #SPIGmoment to identify potential members to interview during the AEJMC conference in New Orleans. Alternatively, we can also set up a Zoom interview. I can also guide you to record your own one-minute interview with your mobile phone.

The second strategy is to build a sign-up on a Google form to connect those who have a spot for a guest lecturer in a session of their course and those who would be interested to become a guest lecturer. I hope this opportunity will connect the current members with potential members who are grad students or new faculty members looking for an opportunity to build their résumé and expand their networks.

The third strategy is to promote SPIG and the Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication Journal page during the 2026 AEJMC conference in New Orleans. I will print out the flyers and distribute the online version to grad students and their group chats.

Overall, I want more people to know about SPIG and the wonderful members who have created such a supportive environment. I am happy to hear ideas and suggestions.

In the meantime, please support and be on the lookout for the upcoming #SPIGmoment social media campaign. More to come!

aejmc 2026 preview

SPIG pre-conference sessions aim to make teachers stronger

For more than a decade, the Small Programs Interest Group has started the annual AEMJC Conference a day early with a three-part workshop on topics designed to improve the pedagogical skills of its members and offer insights into how to better serve today's students. This August will be no different, with sessions on managing the demands and opportunities of tenure, using artificial intelligence wisely, and connecting alumni with a new generation of students.

Pre-Conference panels

TUESDAY

Aug. 4, 1 to 2:10 p.m.
Sponsored by SPIG

Tenure, Now What? Overcoming the sophomore slump in teaching, research and service.

Moderating/Presiding
Liz Atwood, Hood

Panelists
Carrie Sipes, Shippensburg
Alan Goldenbach, Hood College
Jack Zibuluk, Tennessee
Chattanooga
Kenneth Pybus, Abilene Christian

This panel will explore ways to retain momentum in teaching, research and service after tenure. If faculty have relied upon their dissertations to form the basis of their research agenda for tenure, they may need new ideas and collaborators.

Likewise, associate professors are often the workhorses of institutions – the ones committees turned to for experienced (and tenured) leadership. This committee will ask



advice from those who have successfully navigated the post-tenure stage of their careers.

Aug. 4, 2:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Sponsored by SPIG and Media Ethics Division

AI as the Teaching Assistant: Ethical strategies for the weary professor

Moderating/Presiding
Tamara Welter, Baylor

Panelists
Amy McCoy, Drake
Kate Stepaniuc, N. Carolina A&T
Kenneth Pybus, Abilene Christian
Alec Teffertiller, Baylor
Kim Fox, The American University in Cairo

As artificial intelligence tools become increasingly integrated into higher education, journalism educators are faced with opportunities and questions.

This panel explores how AI can serve as a virtual teaching assistant while maintaining academic integrity and journalistic values. Panelists will share practical strategies for incorporating AI responsibly in the classroom, managing workload without compromise while preparing students for an AI-influenced media landscape. Ideal for educa-

tors seeking balance between innovation and ethics in their pedagogy.

Aug. 4, 3:40 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Sponsored by SPIG
Engaging Alumni with JOMC Students: Programs, Events, and Mentorship Opportunities

Moderating/Presiding
Kate Stepaniuc, N. Carolina A&T

Panelists
Elizabeth Atwood, Hood
Masudul Bismas, N. Carolina A&T
Doug Mendenhall, Abilene Christian

The relationship between alumni and current media students represents one of the most valuable assets within any journalism and mass communication program.

This panel, Engaging Alumni with JOMC Students: Programs, Events, and Mentorship Opportunities, explores innovative strategies to strengthen that connection and build mutually beneficial relationships that enrich both the student experience and the alumni community.

Alumni bring real-world insights, professional networks, and authentic stories that help students bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry practice. The panel will highlight programs across the country that actively involve alumni in mentorship initiatives, career networking events, and collaborative media projects.

These efforts not only prepare students for the professional world but also reaffirm alumni pride and strengthen their long-term connection to their alma mater.

aejmc 2026 preview

SPIG joins forces with other divisions and interest groups

WEDNESDAY

Aug. 5, 8:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.
Sponsored by Mass Communication and Society Division and SPIG

Teaching Panel Session: From Small to Large Classes: Innovative Teaching Models and Strategies for Resource-Restricted Programs

Moderating/Presiding
Biyang Wu-Ouyang, Education University of Hong Kong
Carrie Sipes, Shippensburg

Panelists
Hao Xu, Melbourne
Yuan Wang, Education University of Hong Kong
Lisa Carponelli, Simpson
Dhiman Chattopadhyay, Shippensburg
Amy McCoy, Drake

Communication educators face growing pedagogical challenges across dramatically different class sizes. Drawing on perspectives from the U.S., Hong Kong, Australia, this panel offers practical, evidence-based strategies for maintaining instructional quality, student engagement, and workforce relevance from small to large classes.

Panelists will share adaptable models, including client campaigns, community reporting, and hybrid teaching, providing scalable, sustainable frameworks regardless of resources, especially in the age of AI.

Refreshments will be provided by the generous support of The Education University of Hong Kong.

Aug. 5, 10:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Sponsored by Magazine Media Division and SPIG

Teaching Panel Session: One Course, Many Paths: Reimagining the Communications Capstone in an Age of Consolidation

Moderating/Presiding
Lisa Carponelli, Simpson

Panelists
Mackenzie Cato, Kennesaw State
Reid Vance, Mississippi Christian
Tamara Welter, Baylor
Jennifer Wilson, Drake

As communications programs face budget pressures and shrinking course offerings, faculty are increasingly asked to do more with less – teaching consolidated capstones to students across PR, journalism, marketing, and beyond, while preserving the depth that each specialization demands.

Magazine journalism is one area feeling this tension, as programs work to keep long-form storytelling central to the curriculum even as resources shrink. This panel brings together educators navigating these shifts to share what's working, what isn't, and how they're designing meaningful learning experiences despite the constraints.

Whether you're already teaching a merged course or anticipating changes on your campus, this session offers practical strategies from colleagues in the same position.

Aug. 5, 3:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.
Sponsored by Commission on the Status of Women, Minorities and Communication Division, Commission on LGBTQIA Communities, and SPIG

Teaching Panel Session: Academic Freedom in the Age of Outrage: Strategies for Educators and Scholar Activists

Moderating/Presiding
Laura Willis, Quinnipiac

Panelists
Gabriel Tait, Ball State
Ashley Kennard, Ohio Wesleyan
Gheni Platenburg, Houston
Senta Scarborough, East Tennessee
Tamara Welter, Baylor
Christina Littlefield, Pepperdine

In an era of heightened pressure on higher education marked by political polarization, disinformation, and rising civic unrest, educators face growing challenges in teaching journalism, media literacy, and advocacy within media contexts.

This panel brings together teacher-scholars who integrate media literacy, strategic communication, and social justice into their pedagogy while examining how contemporary platforms amplify divisive content and challenge traditional norms of journalistic engagement.

Panelists will explore strategies for helping students uphold ethics while fostering open dialogue about media and information systems.

Drawing on the long-standing experiences of faculty who have navigated contested discourse in academia for years, the discussion highlights how their insights can guide colleagues facing similar pressures today. Panelists will share approaches to addressing controversial topics, managing student bias, and designing responsive syllabi that support critical thinking

Please see **THURSDAY** on page 6

aejmc 2026 preview

Thursday schedule to include SPIG business, social events

Continued from page 5

and ethical participation in public discourse.

THURSDAY

Aug. 6, 8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

Sponsored by Media Ethics Division and SPIG

PF&R Panel Session: Bridging the Gap: Navigating AI Policy, Ethics, and Education in Journalism

Moderating/Presiding

Allyson DeVito, Kentucky

Panelists

Amy McCoy, Drake

Peter Baniak, Kentucky

Chad Painter, Dayton

Matt Albright, Politics Editor,

The Advocate, Times-Picayune

Justin Mitchell, Managing Editor

of Audience Engagement at

the *Times-Picayune*

As generative AI becomes embedded in journalism classrooms and newsrooms alike, educators face the dual challenge of crafting policies that uphold academic integrity while preparing students for evolving industry realities.

This panel examines the tension between institutional consistency and faculty autonomy in developing AI policies across journalism and communication programs – exploring approaches ranging from integrating AI ethics into existing writing, reporting, photojournalism, and media ethics courses to developing standalone AI in journalism curricula.

Complicating the landscape further, some student media organi-

zations and instructors prohibit AI use entirely, while students report internship experiences where they are encouraged or required to use professional AI platforms and tools.

Bringing together educators and working journalists from multiple institutions, this panel will explore how to align classroom policies with professional ethical standards, address student concerns about inconsistent expectations, and navigate the broader questions of transparency, fairness, academic freedom, and preparedness for professional norms.

Aug. 6, 4:45 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Sponsored by SPIG

Top Refereed Research Paper Session

Moderating/Presiding

name, affiliation

Discussant

name, affiliation

Paper Award Winners

Aug. 6, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Sponsored by SPIG

Business Session: Members' meeting

Moderating/Presiding

Ecaterina Stepaniuc,

North Carolina A&T State

Aug. 6, 7:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Sponsored by SPIG

Off-site social: Location to be announced

Moderating/Presiding

Ecaterina Stepaniuc,

North Carolina A&T State

FRIDAY

Aug. 7, 9:45 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Sponsored by AEJMC

Scholar-to-Scholar (Poster) Refereed Research Paper Session: Projects from across AEJMC, including the following paper recognized by SPIG:

A Study on University Journalism Students' Perceptions of the Integration of Artificial Intelligence into Journalism Education:
An Induced Metaphor Analysis
Jingwan Peng, affiliation

SATURDAY

Aug. 8, 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Sponsored by Minorities and Communication Division and SPIG

Research Panel Session: Jazz(ing) up student success: news-academic partnerships and affinity groups

Moderating/Presiding

Christina Smith, Georgia College

Panelists

Shenise Bickham, Loyola-New Orleans

Robin Hoecker, DePaul

Lisa Page, Louisiana State

Lara Salahi, Endicott

Vincent Peña, DePaul

News-academic partnerships have grown into a national move-

Please see **SCHEDULE** on page 7

aejmc 2026 preview

Schedule

Continued from page 6

ment to strengthen local journalism and provide students with experiential learning opportunities. Additionally, affinity-based journalism groups such as student chapters of NAHJ, NABJ, AAJA, and others play a vital role in fostering belonging, representation, mentorship, and professional development for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Questions remain about long-term impact:

■ How do news-academic partnerships and affinity-based student organizations collectively shape students' career trajectories?

■ Do students who participate in these collaborations and communities pursue journalism after graduation?

■ How do these initiatives influence students' sense of belonging, professional identity, and confi-

dence in navigating the industry?

■ And when students choose alternative career paths, what transferable skills, civic values and professional competencies do they gain?

This session brings together educators, researchers, advisors, and students to consider questions concerned with how success is defined and measured across both news partnerships and affinity organizations.

The discussion will explore how community-building, mentorship, and representation intersect with experiential learning to support sustainable career pathways.

The conversation will also address structural challenges – including instability in local news ecosystems, budgetary pressures, and sociopolitical tensions surrounding diversity initiatives – and consider how institutions can build resilient infrastructures that support both professional development and building inclusive communities.

Don't just sit around; be a SPIG reporter!

As editor of SPIG News, I set a high priority of keeping our members informed about our interest group's role in the annual AEJMC Conference.

This edition, for example, is filled with news about upcoming panels, sessions and social events in New Orleans the first week of August.

However, for the next edition, due out in the fall, our attention will shift to recounting how the conference went, with stories about as many of the SPIG-related events as possible. Because I serve as editor of both this newsletter and that of the Religion and Media Interest Group, I will spend most of the conference running from event to event, taking notes for both outlets. It's fun, but it's a lot.

So, if you will be in New Orleans for AEJMC in August, please consider volunteering to help me provide coverage by writing about a SPIG event you attend. They're listed in this edition.

You just need to listen, take notes, snap a picture or two on your phone, and write roughly 500-600 words explaining in a newsy format what happened.

Your deadline will be to complete in the next week or so after the conference ends.

If this sounds doable, tell me before the conference in an email (doug.mendenhall@acu.edu) which event you'd like to volunteer to cover. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

And I'll thank you deeply.

– Doug Mendenhall



Photo courtesy of Sheraton

The Sheraton New Orleans Hotel is between the bustling Central Business District and the edge of the historic French Quarter. It's a two-block walk from Bourbon Street and within a 15-minute walk of major attractions.

sharing our summer

Where do you stand in this classless society?

By Michael Ray Smith

Recently of LCC International

Loss of accreditation. Protest. Resolution. The classless society Some SPIG members just have no class . . .

They retired.

Among them: Mitzi Lewis of Midwestern, Brian Steffen of Simpson, Michael A. Longinow of Biola — and others I'm sure and to some extent, me.

Light idleness

Following a career in higher ed, many colleagues are finally moving into the leisure class — getting those golf lessons they should have taken decades ago and writing that novel featuring a broken-down professor.

Medium idleness

Others are enrolled in a different kind of master class — applying their hard-won wisdom to support ailing parents, spouses, or others who need them most.

Dan Grandel, who penned a book on his seven bicycle trips across the U.S., left, and Lucy Anderson, an inspirational writer, pose with SPIG's Michael Ray Smith. Grandel and Anderson recently participated in a writing workshop at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania's Menno Haven retirement community.



Heavy idleness

Many are still staying after class, presenting lectures. I'm sharing writing workshops with eager learners at Menno Haven Retirement Center in Chambersburg, Pa. Others are doing the same in Virginia Beach and points North and West.

What a joy to leave the class system — where we were known chiefly by academic rank — and savor the scintillating exchange of a trip to the diner. And yes, sometimes we still have to raise a hand.

"Coffee?"

"Decaf?"

"I'll make a pot."

What remains is first class all the way. After a career of coaxing students to laugh with us — never at us — life is richer than ever. We can't help but stay involved with the community, the church, and the culture.

So, for those idling a little or a lot — class dismissed.

Michael Ray Smith still seeks the leisure class but is often late to the fun and games.

The prompt

The AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group has a reputation for promoting community. We like to share. SPIG News reached out to members and asked them to share something about their summer.

Option 1: What are you most looking forward to this summer? Could be a trip you'll make, visitors coming to see you, a home project, quiet time with a thick book, whatever floats your pool ring.

Option 2: Tell us about what happened in June that made your summer a joy.

Erin Kim-Cho, Grand View

My summer highlight was leading Grand View University's first-ever study tour to Asia—one of the first among our region's small colleges. Fourteen students and adults spent 12 days in South Korea exploring culture, media, history, and global citizenship. Bringing students to my motherland made it a deeply meaningful full-circle vocational experience.

Here is a [post](#) that Grand View did about the study tour.

Amy McCoy, Drake

My teens and I have started regularly pet sitting this summer. It's not only a great way to meet some cool cats (and dogs), but it's also been rewarding to watch my sons take on new responsibilities and earn their own spending cash. Bonus: now they can oversee our three-dog pack more when I travel.

sharing our summer



Newly Paul, North Texas

I just got back from a week-long vacation in Istanbul. It was my first time visiting Turkey. I went with a colleague from my department, and we spent five magical days soaking up Turkish culture, history, art, food, and architecture.

I had my fill of kebabs, Turkish tea, and sweets; we trawled the streets inside the ancient Grand Bazaar and spice market, we took a cruise down the Bosphorus strait, and we experienced a traditional Turkish hammam (bath). We came back with souvenirs, tons of memories and pictures.

The first (above) is me outside the famous Blue Mosque, at the conclusion of a guided tour.



The second (above) is a picture of "lahmacun," one of my favorite things to eat in Istanbul. It is very much like a pizza and is made of a thin flatbread topped with minced meat, veggies, and spices.

Kathleen Webber, The College of New Jersey

I'm about to go on sabbatical for a year to research a book on the history of textile and garment manufacturing in Philadelphia. I am very excited about that.

Michael Ray Smith, retired

My chapter on Charles M. Sheldon of WWJD fame is in the book, "The End of Reality as We Knew, Disinformation, Artificial Intelligence and the new era of fact-checking," edited by Carlos Elias and David Teira, published by Dykinson. Also, I presented research on a university's response to losing accreditation, also moderating the session at the International Academic Forum's 5th Paris Conference on Education at the Sorbonne University International Conference Center.



Doug Mendenhall, Abilene Christian

Summer at our house focuses on our first granddaughter, Makaiah Cade Mendenhall, (above) who was born in April and has already learned to smile — and to scream mightily until food arrives. We all try hard to do what she commands.

John Kerezy, Cuyahoga

My last day at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland will be July 31. I've enjoyed and benefited from an association with AEJMC, and the SPIG as well, for 20+ years.

from the teaching chair

Offerings in ‘classroom sandbox’ include GIFT winners, AI concepts

By Christina Smith
Georgia College

To continue its tradition of promoting dynamic teaching, SPIG hosted multiple teaching panels during the past academic year that highlighted Great Ideas for Teaching winners as well as pragmatic and ethical uses of artificial intelligence in the classroom and in research.

In September, SPIG spotlighted the innovative, classroom-tested teaching strategies of GIFT winners Marti Maguire (William Peace University) and Vivian Martin (Central Connecticut State University).

Maguire shared how she incorporates debates into her classrooms to help students learn how to synthesize and articulate ideas in their writing.

Martin, who serves as a depart-

ment chair and teaches journalism classes, shared a journalism-history card game she uses to help students remember historical events and journalism’s roles in those events.

In November, SPIG hosted a teaching panel on AI in the classroom. Featured panelists were Amy McCoy (Drake University), Cessna Winslow (Tarleton State University) and John-Erik Koslosky (Commonwealth University).

The hour-long presentation allowed SPIG members to learn how fellow educators from a variety of communication concentrations incorporate AI practices and theories in everyday classroom assignments.

SPIG welcomed back McCoy in March for a pragmatic presentation on ResearchRabbit AI, which is a free academic research tool that allows users to visualize and build

citation networks. In addition to the hands-on experimenting with the software, McCoy, who teaches public relations classes, and attendees also spent time discussing their thoughts and concerns about the ethics of using AI in the classroom and research.

If you were unable to attend SPIG’s teaching workshops this past year, but want to learn more about the topics discussed, click here to access presentation materials, which are shared with permission from the presenters.

Be on the lookout in the fall for announcements about academic year 2026-27 presentations.

If you would like to present a teaching workshop during the upcoming year or have a topic suggestion for a future workshop, email christina.smith1@gcsu.edu.

oversharing my summer

How I edited this (almost) single-handedly

By Doug Mendenhall
Abilene Christian

In mid-April I trimmed a few branches of a vine that was encroaching on our backyard and stealing sun from my lantanas.

Almost finished, I reached up with my right hand to hold a stray vine out of the way. The electric hedge trimmer suddenly and efficiently began trimming my fingers.

It was an error in biblical interpretation that I blame on Jesus, who once was quoted as saying, “I am the vine, you are the branches.”

With that guidance, I momentarily mistook my right hand for a branch and almost whacked off all the digits except the pinky.

After a shocked moment of triage, I ran in the house, grabbed a towel to soak up the blood and yelled for my daughter to wake up and take me to the hospital.

Note for context: She moved quickly considering that she was nine months pregnant and due to be induced the next day.

After 19 stitches from an ER doctor who at first said, “I have no idea what I’m going to do with this,” I still have a working hand.

Sort of. Occupational therapy is helping. The numbness is wearing off in the tip of my index finger.

My typing accuracy is down to about 91%, as you may discover reading the rest of this edition.



Photo by Doug Mendenhall's left hand
A custom brace forces my right index finger to help type SPIG News.