

# NEWSLETTER

## 2026 Research Competition & Reviewer Request: ComSHER Needs You!

By Research Chair Dr. Shupef Yuan,  
Northern Illinois University

### Research Competition

The Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk (ComSHER) Division invites original research submissions related to science, health, environment, risk, and related topics. ComSHER welcomes submissions from all disciplinary approaches and methodological orientations, including quantitative and qualitative methods, and highlights research that showcases diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and international perspectives.

Please note that ComSHER accepts full-length manuscripts only. Extended abstracts or research-in-progress submissions are not accepted. For more information, see the 2026 ComSHER paper call.

### Reviewer Request

Along with research paper submissions comes the need for qualified reviewers. Given the diversity of submission types, we anticipate a large volume of submissions, and we need your help.

This year, the review system will be updated with a new platform. Additional information will be shared as we get closer to the paper submission deadline. All faculty members listed as authors on paper submissions will be asked to serve as reviewers.

Please contact the Research Chair, Shupef Yuan ([syuan@niu.edu](mailto:syuan@niu.edu)), if you have any questions about the paper submission or reviewer selection process.

We look forward to receiving your papers and having you serve as a reviewer for the ComSHER Division. Your participation enables a strong showcasing of ComSHER research productivity at AEJMC 2026.

## ComSHER in the Crescent City

By: Division Head Dr. Ashley Anderson, Colorado State University & Division Vice Head Dr. Kang Namkoong, University of Maryland

As we look ahead to the 2026 conference in New Orleans this August, we want to take a moment to highlight last year's meeting. The 2025 AEJMC annual conference in San Francisco was an energizing and successful gathering for ComSHER. As one of AEJMC's largest divisions, we continued to showcase an impressive range of scholarship and professional engagement. Nearly 200 papers were accepted for presentation in San Francisco, about a 50% acceptance rate of the nearly 400 submissions we received. Our research program featured a high-density session, multiple poster sessions, and research paper panels highlighting top-ranked submissions and timely themes such as AI and perceptions of science, health misinformation, and environmental journalism. We also cosponsored a research paper panel with the Commission on the Status of Minorities on positionality, authenticity, and visibility in academia.

Our division co-sponsored and organized two professional freedom and responsibility (PF&R) panels in collaboration with other divisions. We cosponsored a panel on the vital role of visual storytelling in science communication and journalism with the Visual Communications Division. With the Magazine Media Division, we cosponsored a panel on Reporting on Addiction: When is it OK to Let Your Sources Tell You What to Cover? Teaching innovation was also front and center. Our teaching panel examined the strategic use of Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, by both faculty and students.

Our ComSHER Graduate Student Committee hosted meaningful events to engage the division's graduate students during the conference, including a coffee hour. We held a well-attended members meeting with refreshments, where attendees received division updates and shared ideas for the year ahead.

We were proud to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of our members. ComSHER honored numerous scholars and mentors with division awards, including Article of the Year, Top Paper awards, the Eason Prize, which is the largest cash award for student papers presented by an AEJMC division or interest group, and the Sharon Dunwoody Excellent Mentor Award. We also want to thank our previous head Dr. Jessica Willoughby for her support and leadership of the 2025 conference.

As we look ahead to the 2026 AEJMC conference in New Orleans, we are excited to continue offering strong research, teaching, and PF&R programming while identifying new ways to engage and celebrate our members. The call for papers is now open. Please look for other calls for award nominations and reviewer opportunities. With hundreds of submissions each year, the generosity and care of our reviewers are essential to sustaining the quality and impact of our division. Thank you for contributing to ComSHER's vibrant community. We look forward to seeing you in New Orleans in 2026.

# NEWSLETTER

## Connecting Classroom Learning to Community Impact

By: Teaching Chair Dr. Kaiping Chen, University of Wisconsin–Madison

It is an honor to serve as Teaching Chair this year. Across our field, communication educators are navigating a moment of exciting change as we rethink how teaching prepares students not only to understand communication research, but also to apply it in collaboration with communities and professional partners. I look forward to working with colleagues to share teaching practices, highlight innovative classroom approaches, and support conversations about how our pedagogy can respond to evolving societal needs.

I am delighted to share that our teaching panel, **“From Classroom to Community: Teaching Science Communication for Practitioner Collaboration and Civic Impact,”** has been accepted for the 2026 AEJMC Conference in New Orleans. Co-sponsored by the Communication Theory and Methodology (CTAM) Division, the session will take place on **Friday, August 7, from 1:15 to 2:30 p.m.**

Across science, health, environmental, and risk communication, educators increasingly recognize the importance of preparing students to work beyond academic settings. Today’s complex challenges require communicators who can collaborate effectively with scientists, policymakers, journalists, and community leaders. Yet many instructors continue to grapple with a central pedagogical question: how can classroom learning meaningfully translate into real-world engagement and civic impact?

This teaching panel brings together scholars and practitioners who have designed courses, research initiatives, and outreach programs that bridge academic learning with practitioner collaboration. The session will highlight pedagogical models emphasizing participatory learning, community-engaged research, culturally responsive teaching, and sustainable partnerships between universities and professional communities.

By sharing classroom-tested approaches and lessons learned, the panel aims to offer actionable strategies for integrating practitioner engagement into science communication education. More broadly, the conversation invites us to rethink how teaching can prepare students not only to communicate knowledge, but also to co-create it responsibly with communities and stakeholders.

We hope you will join us in New Orleans and continue this important conversation about connecting teaching, community engagement, and civic impact. I look forward to seeing many of you there!

## ComSHER to Sponsor Two Exciting PF&R Panels at AEJMC 2026!

By: PF&R Chair Dr. C.J. Calabrese, Clemson University

For this year’s conference, we have two exciting PF&R panels for ComSHER. Our first panel is titled, **Fighting for Free Expression or for an Informed Society? Addressing the Societal, Health, and Ethical Implications of AI and Tech in Today’s Information Environment.** The panel is co-sponsored by ComSHER and the Mass Communication & Society Division (MSCD). Despite efforts from journalists and academics to combat misinformation, it continues to spread and have an impact on our society. Social media companies have also pulled back efforts to fact-check misinformation, claiming to defend individuals’ First Amendment rights. Does shifting this responsibility away from tech companies increase the risk of false information harming society? This panel will explore the ethical, health, and societal implications of AI and tech, and how journalists and academics should approach our skewed information environment, developing strategies for ensuring an accurately informed society. This will be an exciting opportunity to hear a fruitful discussion about our information environment from several different perspectives.

The second panel is titled, **Strategically Creating Spaces for Self-Care through Academic Community,** and is co-sponsored by ComSHER and the Commission on Graduate Education (CSGE). This panel will highlight the strategic decisions graduate students employ to foster community and offer self-care through mutual support. In addition, the panel will discuss ways in which graduate students can build relationships, receive and extend care, and flourish. Whether you are a graduate student, or faculty member that wants to learn more, this will be another great panel to attend.

# NEWSLETTER

## Graduate Student Committee Update

By: Committee Chairs Rudy Sunrin Kim, University of Maryland & Luna Pittet Gonzalez, University of Florida

The COMSHER Graduate Student Committee enters Spring 2026 energized by a year of strong programming and community-building initiatives. Over the past year, the committee has prioritized professional development, publication mentorship, and meaningful opportunities for graduate student engagement within the division.

### Looking Back: 2025 Programming Highlights

In March, the committee hosted From Draft to Acceptance: Expert Tips for a Strong Submission, featuring Dr. Chris Haoran Chu (University of Florida), Dr. Wenlin Liu (University of Florida), and Dr. Jeff Conlin (University of Kansas). This session offered practical guidance on strengthening manuscripts and navigating the peer-review process, drawing strong attendance from graduate students preparing conference and journal submissions.

In May, the committee organized Ask the Editors: Turning Conference Papers into Journal Publications, featuring Dr. Xiaoquan Zhao (George Mason University), Dr. Janet Yang (University at Buffalo), Dr. Juliet Pinto (Penn State University), and Dr. John Besley (Michigan State University). Editors and senior scholars provided insight into revising conference papers for journal submission, addressing common pitfalls and strategies for increasing publication success.

The Graduate Student Committee also hosted a Coffee Hour at AEJMC, creating space for informal networking, mentorship conversations, and connection among graduate students across institutions.

### Looking Ahead: Spring and Summer 2026

Building on this momentum, the committee is launching several initiatives designed to support graduate students at multiple career stages.

- Mentorship Program Relaunch – A renewed structure aimed at strengthening mentor-mentee matching and sustained engagement.
- Online Panel: From the Job Market to Year One – Early-Career Faculty Perspectives (Mid-March) – A candid discussion with recent faculty hires reflecting on navigating the job market and transitioning into their first year as faculty.
- Online Panel: Preparing Competitive Grant Applications – An Overview for Emerging Scholars (Mid-April) – An introduction to grant development strategies, funding landscapes, and positioning research for external support.
- Concept Speed Round (July) – A fast-paced, interactive session where graduate students can present core theoretical concepts used in their research.

These initiatives reflect the committee's continued commitment to equipping graduate students with practical tools for publication, funding, and career development.

### Committee Leadership and Membership

The 2026 Graduate Student Committee is co-chaired by Luna Pittet Gonzalez (University of Florida) and Rudy Sunrin Kim (University of Maryland). Returning members include Eylül Yel (Purdue University), Jinxu Li (Texas A&M University), Xi Liu (Syracuse University), and Mahedi Hasan (Texas Tech University). New members to the committee are Hyunji (Hannah) Kim (University of Texas at Austin), Isabel Villanueva (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Justin Cheung (Nanyang Technological University), and Laine Kowalski (University of Arizona).

As COMSHER continues to foster research excellence and professional development, the Graduate Student Committee remains dedicated to cultivating an inclusive and supportive scholarly community for graduate students. Members are encouraged to participate in upcoming programming and to stay tuned for additional announcements throughout the spring and summer.

The committee looks forward to collaborating with division leadership and members to expand opportunities for graduate engagement and mentorship. We are also beginning a search for a new chair to lead the Graduate Student Committee for the 2026-2027 academic year.

If you have any questions regarding the committee or its events, feel free to reach out to the chairs via email: [rudykim@umd.edu](mailto:rudykim@umd.edu) & [lpittetgonzalez@ufl.edu](mailto:lpittetgonzalez@ufl.edu).

# NEWSLETTER

## Call for comSHER Members: Sign Up to Serve as Paper Competition Reviewers (Deadline: March 16)

By Research Chair Dr. Shupeí Yuan,  
Northern Illinois University

Dear comSHER Member,

As we prepare to launch the judging process for the 2026 AEJMC Annual Paper Competition, I invite you to consider serving as a paper reviewer for comSHER division. This is a meaningful commitment of time and expertise, and we are deeply grateful for the vital role reviewers play in supporting our scholarly community. To help us finalize reviewer assignments, **please indicate your availability by selecting the DIG(s) for which you are willing to review using this link by Monday, March 16, 2026.** Instead of Qualtrics, this year we use AEJMC main site for easier management. Once you log in, you just need to indicate the DIG(s) you would like to review.

Confirming your availability by this date will allow the research chair to complete assignments promptly. Once the submission portal closes, you will be able to access your assigned papers through your AEJMC account. While submissions are not yet visible in the system, completing this step now is an important part of preparing for the New Orleans paper competition.

AEJMC now uses a single account for submitting, reviewing, and downloading papers, helping to streamline the process for reviewers. After assignments are made, your papers will appear directly in your member portal. Thank you for considering this service to the association. Your thoughtful feedback plays an essential role in mentoring scholars and strengthening the quality of research shared at AEJMC. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me ([syuan@niu.edu](mailto:syuan@niu.edu)).

With sincere thanks for your continued support,

Shupeí Yuan (Research Paper Competition Chair)

## 2026 ComSHER Call for Papers

The Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk (ComSHER) Division invites full-length paper that represent original research related to science, health, environment, risk, and other topics relevant to the communication of scientific information to the general public or specific populations. ComSHER welcomes submissions from all disciplinary approaches and methodological orientations, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. ComSHER is committed to highlighting research that showcases diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice issues and international perspectives.

In any one year, an individual can appear as an author or co-author on a maximum of two (2) submitted research papers. If one individual appears on more than two submissions, the ComSHER Executive Committee reserves the right to disqualify some or all of the papers in question from the research competition.

To acknowledge research excellence of ComSHER members, all non-student papers will be considered for Top Paper Awards, which are determined by overall reviewer rankings. Authors of awarded Top Papers are invited to present their research on a panel at this year's conference and are honored at the ComSHER Business Meeting.

Further, in honor of former University of Texas doctoral candidate Lori Eason (1957–2002), ComSHER offers the Eason Prize for the top three student papers. The Eason Prize remains the largest overall student award at AEJMC and includes \$500 for first place, \$300 for second place, and \$200 for third place. Student submissions competing for the top student paper and the accompanying Eason Prize are judged together with other faculty submissions. Eason Prize submissions cannot be co-authored with faculty and must be clearly identified as an Eason Prize entry on the cover page of the submission. If not identified, they will be disqualified from the competition.

ComSHER does not accept Research-in-Progress submissions (formerly known as extended abstracts). Only full-length paper submissions are accepted. All submissions should follow APA format and the AEJMC Uniform Paper Call Guidelines (no more than 25 pages of double-spaced text with 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins, plus references, tables, figures, and appendices).

All accepted papers must be presented by a listed author. Authors unable to present must find another person to present their work and inform the Research Chairs in advance. Failure to appear to present may result in the author(s) losing eligibility to submit to the Division for one year. Direct questions to the Research Chair, Shupeí Yuan, at [syuan@niu.edu](mailto:syuan@niu.edu).

The Division encourages all submitters to carefully check their submissions for self-identifying information of any kind, including metadata embedded in submitted documents. Submissions containing any identifying information will be rejected without review. Before uploading your submission (including PDF and Word documents), exercise extra diligence to remove all author identification from the document, including file properties or any obvious self-citations. AEJMC's Uniform Call for Papers provides helpful guidance on managing self-citation.

# NEWSLETTER

## Have information to share with ComSHER members?

By: Media Team Chair Dr. Ciera Kirkpatrick, University of Nebraska– Lincoln

The ComSHER Media Team is here to help share news and opportunities relevant to our division's members. If you have something you'd like to share (e.g., job opportunities, networking opportunities), please contact the chair of the Media Team, Ciera Kirkpatrick, at [ciera.kirkpatrick@unl.edu](mailto:ciera.kirkpatrick@unl.edu), with the information (and any graphics or links) that you would like to have shared. The Media Team can share your message via our Listserv and social media platforms.

If you don't already, follow the division on Twitter ([@AEJMC\\_ComSHER](https://twitter.com/AEJMC_ComSHER)) and Bluesky ([@comsher.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/comsher.bsky.social))! We also have a [Facebook group](#) you can join for announcements!



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