

## 2026 Senior Scholar Projects

Two Senior Scholar projects were awarded grants.

### **Project 1**

**Sungwon Chung, Ball State, and Sun Young Lee, Maryland**

**“AI Disclosure in Journalism: How Disclosure Wording and Editorial Oversight Influence Trust and Engagement”**

**Chung and Lee are receiving a grant of \$4,989**



**Sungwon Chung** (Ph.D., Texas Tech University) is an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Strategic Communication at Ball State University. He teaches courses in media and society, media planning, and research methods. His research examines media and visual effects across journalism, corporate social advocacy, social responsibility, instructional media, and entertainment contexts, with a particular emphasis on the underlying mechanisms of motivated message processing in audience responses.



**Sun Young Lee** (Ph.D., University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill) is an associate professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland–College Park. Her research focuses on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and public relations, with particular attention to how companies engage consumers, communities, and nonprofits to co-create social value. Her work examines CSR communication, including visual strategies, CSR in crisis contexts, and how companies and sociopolitical environments interact.

**Abstract:** Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping journalism, from drafting stories to producing visuals. As these practices expand, audiences have become increasingly concerned about transparency, misinformation, and the absence of human judgment. Yet U.S. newsrooms lack consistent disclosure policies, often relying on vague or poorly designed labels that erode trust, or omitting disclosures altogether out of fear of backlash. The challenge is especially pressing for visuals, where AI can alter realism and interpretation. This project provides the first systematic, theory-driven tests of which disclosure strategies are most effective and why, within a unified study design. Across three online experiments, it investigates how (a) disclosure wording signaling the degree of AI involvement (humanwritten, AI-assisted, AI-generated), (b) editorial oversight cues (present vs. absent), and (c) topic stakes (low vs. high) jointly shape audience responses. It also examines how individual differences in AI literacy (knowledge of AI’s capabilities and societal impact) and AI content aversion (resistance to AI-involved content) moderate these effects.

Findings will reveal how combinations of disclosure wording and oversight shape audience responses—for example, whether even “AI-generated” content can be viewed as acceptable when accompanied by clear editorial review. These insights will offer evidence-based strategies for journalists and actionable guidance for policymakers considering standardized disclosure practices. Ultimately, the project seeks to promote AI adoption in journalism that reinforces transparency, accountability, and democratic trust.

### **Project 2**

**Queenie Li, Miami, and Nick Carcioppolo, Miami**

**“Examining Online Discourse on Childhood Vaccination Amid Florida’s Removal of Mandates”**

**Li and Carcioppolo are receiving a grant of \$4,600**



**Queenie Li** (Ph.D., University of South Carolina) is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Miami. Her research explores how organizations and

governments can use communication to address societal challenges, promote health, and inspire meaningful social impact.



**Nick Carcioppolo** (Ph.D., Purdue University) is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Miami. His research focuses on the design and evaluation of health communication interventions, persuasion, and media effects.

**Abstract:** Childhood vaccination remains one of the most effective public health interventions, yet vaccine hesitancy continues to erode immunization rates and threaten herd immunity. This challenge is particularly acute in Florida, where exemption rates for school-entry vaccinations exceed the national average, and some counties report rates nearly five times higher than the U.S. norm. In September 2025, Florida announced its decision to remove statewide childhood vaccination mandates, a policy shift accompanied by misinformation surrounding vaccine safety and efficacy. This development marks a critical turning point in vaccine discourse, as hesitancy is no longer solely rooted in distrust of political and medical institutions, but may now be reinforced by official government messaging.

This project examines how Florida's policy shift influences online public discourse surrounding childhood vaccination. Using social media data collected from Reddit, Li and Carcioppolo will analyze conversations three months before and after the mandate removal announcement. Employing sentiment analysis, stance detection, topic modeling, and network analysis, the study will capture changes in public attitudes, beliefs, and trust in institutions. In doing so, it will map the communicative patterns and influential actors shaping vaccine hesitancy in this evolving policy environment.

The study makes three key contributions. First, it addresses a critical gap in the literature by focusing on routine childhood vaccination, an area historically underexamined relative to optional vaccines such as influenza or HPV. Second, it provides timely insights into how political and institutional messaging shifts reshape online discourse and public perceptions of childhood immunization. Third, it establishes a foundation for developing targeted health communication strategies and interventions designed to address vaccine hesitancy in Florida and beyond. By linking government policy, public trust, and social media sentiment, this project advances scholarship and offers practical implications for policymakers and health professionals navigating the future of childhood vaccination.