

Vice President Platform

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Bringing AEJMC Together: Connection and Community

During this difficult time, it is vital that we have a solid discipline-focused professional network that extends beyond a brief August stretch. We need safe spaces to ask hard questions, discuss our shared mission to research, teach, and practice journalism and mass communication, and learn about challenges our extended colleagues face in their own universities, states, and countries.

AEJMC is this shared community. Our association unites us to visit with old friends, welcome new members, share research ideas, and mentor the emerging generation of scholars. With a dedication to strengthening these connections, I am honored to run for Vice President, joining the leadership ladder to become President of AEJMC. I draw from 20 years of membership and service to our association, from my first role as newsletter editor in what is now the Commission on Graduate Education to my current position on the Membership committee. I have held division officer roles, led the Council of Divisions, served on the Board of Directors, edited an AEJMC Master Class series book, completed terms on Standing, Appointed, and Ad Hoc committees, and hosted a regional conference. I regularly present papers, join panels, facilitate preconference roundtables, review regional and conference submissions, and participate in other ways.

From my AEJMC experiences, I am tuned into both the bright spots and frustrations of our organization. I know firsthand the support that the Institute for Diverse Leadership provides its cohorts. As the host of the 2023 Southeast Colloquium, I was privileged to witness grad students presenting at their first conference. I understand the benefits of adding lactation rooms and childcare, recalling my own experience as a new mom. At the same time, I have heard from members who feel disconnected because they have yet to find their people in the association or can't attend the annual conference because of a lack of funding, travel barriers, health restraints, or other obstacles.

Building on the past and current presidential ladder's strategic plans, my platform amplifies the best of AEJMC, as we bring our organization, conferences, and membership into the future, helping people to connect within AEJMC, upgrading programming to bring in new voices, and improving communication. My tenure on the Board of Directors and presidential ladder will focus on the following tenets:

Building Connections

For AEJMC to grow, we need to make it easier for people to find their homes within our association. I will continue the structural improvements initiated by the current and past leadership ladder, significantly increasing participation in divisions, interest groups, and commissions. Working with the groups' officers and Council of Divisions leaders, we will develop more tools for recruiting and retaining members, ensure leadership continuity, and promote quality scholarship. At the conference, we can expand the D/IG Fair to celebrate the unique identities of our AEJMC groups, work on communication and collaboration to reduce programming conflicts, and offer other group-level content to fit member interests. We will also work together to develop more ways to recognize service within each group.

Our strength also lies in bolstering our networks across groups. Modeled after the AEJMC Running and Walking Club, I will help members expand their circles around other common interests, bringing together members from different universities, career stages, and research agendas. A meet-up board at the conference will connect members around shared research/teaching interests, casual meal conversations, sightseeing, and activities like pickleball or yoga.

Between conferences, we will offer more touchpoints, both at the division/interest group/commission-level and across AEJMC. We can use virtual chats, webinars, and other sessions to connect with each other, mentor early career scholars, offer professional content, address current issues, and feature speakers from advocacy groups, media outlets, and other organizations. We could consider extending the job hub virtually to benefit both graduate students and hiring universities. Expanding these opportunities will make AEJMC more accessible and able to respond to and process current events.

Upgrade Programming to Expand Content and Participation

As the former head and vice-head of the Council of Divisions (the people who do the conference programming with AEJMC staff), I fully understand the process of developing content and scheduling the annual conference. We need to protect what works well: submitting and presenting research, D/IG-specific sessions and awards, etc. What can be improved is the transparency in programming and the breadth of participants. I will articulate and clarify the panel selection process, encouraging more diverse participation across groups. Furthermore, by reviving successful approaches of past conferences, like AEJMC 101 for new members, mini-sessions on member-driven topics in the exhibition hall, and broad-interest sessions on careers, mentorship, publishing, opportunities within AEJMC ("life after division head,"), and other popular topics, groups can reserve programming for research and teaching sessions.

Improve Communication Across Levels

Especially now, we need to foster more communication across our association. Conference events and virtual touchpoints help to spark discussions and strengthen networks. AEJMC can feel daunting and confusing, especially to new members. I will revive introductory sessions of the past, demystifying the panel process, convey options for leadership in divisions, interest groups, and commissions, and cover other overlooked. These sessions will also reserve space for members to ask questions and offer feedback. To facilitate open conversation between the Board of Directors, staff, and members, we can bring back the round table discussions at the annual conference. Throughout the year, virtual touchpoints can create communication channels between leadership and various subsets of members, especially those who cannot attend the conference. We can also use the Midwinter Conference and Southeast Colloquium to help elevate the voices of our members.

Uniting AEJMC

My vision is to make AEJMC more accessible and inclusive, improve opportunities to connect, expand communication, and cultivate an environment in which all feel seen and supported. As your AEJMC president, I will work with members, staff, and leadership to create distinct strategies to meet these goals, while preserving what we value in our association. I appreciate your support as we come together around common interests, challenges, and passion for journalism and mass communication.