

## Vice President Platform

**Margaretha Geertsema-Sligh**

**Butler University**

### **My Vision: A More Open and Welcoming AEJMC**

AEJMC has been a constant companion in my academic journey for more than 25 years. It has shaped my scholarship, my teaching, and my professional identity, and it has provided an intellectual home and a community of colleagues whose work I deeply respect. I now look forward to giving back to this organization through leadership and service. My vision for AEJMC centers on journalism and media education, research, and professional responsibility within a more open and welcoming environment, while upholding the highest standards of academic rigor, ethical commitment, and professional excellence.

As media scholars, teachers, and practitioners, many of us were drawn to academia by curiosity and a desire to better understand the world and our role within it. As AEJMC vice president, I will encourage members to reconnect with that intellectual openness. AEJMC is, at its core, a community of learners, one that grows stronger as we remain curious, explore new ideas, and engage generously with difference.

An intellectually open AEJMC strengthens our mission as a scholarly community committed to rigorous inquiry, innovation, and public relevance. Intellectual openness invites diverse theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and ways of knowing, particularly those from underrepresented regions and lived experiences. By fostering spaces where ideas can be debated thoughtfully and respectfully, AEJMC enhances the quality and credibility of our research, prepares members to engage complex global and societal challenges, and cultivates a sense of belonging among those who may otherwise feel marginalized. In doing so, AEJMC positions itself not as a gatekeeper of static knowledge, but as a vibrant, forward-looking intellectual home.

To advance this vision, I will focus on three interconnected priorities: strengthening global perspectives, facilitating diverse views, and fostering a sense of belonging.

#### **1. Strengthening Global Perspectives**

AEJMC must deepen its global engagement. Our scholarship, teaching, and leadership should reflect the realities of an interconnected world in which journalism and media operate across borders, cultures, and political contexts. Global perspectives challenge U.S.-centric assumptions, expand whose knowledge counts, and strengthen the intellectual rigor and

relevance of our field. They also prepare students to work in media environments shaped by migration, digital technologies, misinformation, and struggles for press freedom worldwide. For AEJMC, embracing global perspectives is not simply about inclusion. It is about relevance, ethical responsibility, and leadership in a global media landscape.

Key initiatives include:

- **A Virtual Global Collaboration Network:** AEJMC should strengthen relationships with international organizations, including the International Communication Association (ICA), the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), and the World Journalism Education Council (WJEC). These partnerships could support joint conferences, shared resources, mentoring, and global research networks, particularly benefiting early-career and international scholars. Strategically, collaboration with peer associations strengthens AEJMC's global standing and positions us as a leader in shaping the future of journalism and media education worldwide.
- **Expanded Commitment to WJEC:** I am especially interested in broadening AEJMC's participation in the WJEC. Greater engagement would create opportunities for joint projects, leadership exchanges, and shared advocacy, amplifying AEJMC's voice in global discussions on press freedom, media literacy, and journalism education standards.
- **A Global Fellows Program:** This program would support a small cohort of international members, especially from the Global South, for one to two years, providing membership, conference support, and mentorship. Emphasizing reciprocal exchange, fellows would contribute to teaching, research, and global dialogue while building long-term relationships that strengthen AEJMC's global inclusivity.
- **Support for Global Scholarship:** I will continue to support initiatives such as translating research abstracts in AEJMC publications to increase accessibility for non-English-speaking scholars, students, and practitioners. Conversely, we should also encourage engagement with scholarship produced in languages other than English to broaden our global vision. Our journals could include a section titled *Global Views* that contains translated abstracts from non-English-language scholarship.

## 2. Facilitating Diverse Views

Strengthening global perspectives must go hand in hand with facilitating diverse viewpoints. Journalism and media education thrive on multiple perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing. Diverse voices challenge assumptions, enrich scholarship, and ensure that our research, teaching, and professional practices reflect the communities we serve.

Inclusion strengthens decision-making, stimulates innovation, and prepares students to work ethically and effectively in complex media environments. Embracing diverse voices is therefore essential to AEJMC's relevance and leadership.

I will support this work by:

- **Uplifting Commissions and Committees:** I will highlight and support the work of AEJMC's four commissions and the Standing Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Justice (DEIAJ). I am committed to supporting the work of the newly established DEIAJ committee and ensuring its efforts are meaningfully integrated into AEJMC leadership.
- **Continuing Support for the Institute for Diverse Leadership (IDL):** As a beneficiary of the IDL, I understand its impact in preparing scholars for leadership roles and will continue to advocate for this essential leadership pipeline.

### 3. Fostering a Sense of Belonging

Intellectual openness flourishes when members feel connected, respected, and valued. My vision is for an AEJMC where members not only participate but truly feel they belong.

To encourage belonging, I propose:

- **Monthly Virtual Fireside Chats:** A new series, *"Fireside Chats: In Conversation with AEJMC Leadership,"* would create regular opportunities for open dialogue, collective reflection, and mutual accountability in an informal, accessible setting.
- **A More Engaging Community Portal:** The AEJMC Community Portal is a step in the right direction. I will advocate for expanding its functionality to support sustained, year-round engagement, networking, mentoring, and collaboration beyond the annual conference.

I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to serve AEJMC in this leadership role. I bring a deep commitment to intellectual openness, inclusive leadership, and global engagement shaped by more than two decades of participation in this organization. I would be honored to earn your trust, your support, and your vote as we work together toward a more open, welcoming, and intellectually diverse AEJMC. Together, we can ensure AEJMC remains vibrant, engaged, and deeply supportive of all our members.