

# AEJMC Commission on Graduate Education Hidden Curriculum Newsletter

Dec. 8, 2025

   @CSGEAEJMC

## Building Together: The Road to AEJMC 2026



### Leadership Update

**By Briana M. Trifiro, CSGE Chair. Northeastern University**

Dear members,

I am honored to step into the role of Head of the Commission on Graduate Education (CSGE) for the 2025-2026 academic year and am truly excited about the year ahead. Our community has always been a hub for connection, collaboration, and professional growth—and this year, we have even more in store. I am excited to watch as CSGE evolves, introducing new programming and opportunities for engagement between graduate students and early career faculty members.

With the spirit of collegial collaboration in mind, we're kicking things off this year with a new lineup of programs and initiatives designed to support scholars at every career stage, from graduate students to early-career faculty. Here are a few highlights you won't want to miss:

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♦ NEW CSGE Board Members

With a new academic year comes a new slate of faces for CSGE! Please join me in welcoming the 2025-2026 CSGE Executive Board. If you are interested in getting involved, we always welcome volunteers for our PF&R, Research, Teaching, and Communications committees. Email for more information!

- Head – Briana M. Trifiro, Northeastern University (b.trifiro@northeastern.edu)
- Vice Head – Elizabeth S. Cox, Kansas (escox@ku.edu)
- Teaching Chair – Matt Martin, Southern Mississippi (m.e.martin@usm.edu)
- Research Chair – Deb Danuser, Pittsburgh (Deborah.danuser@gmail.com)
- PF&R Chair – Nicole Marie Klevanskaya, Minnesota (konop070@umn.edu)
- Communications Co-Chair – Jodi Friedman, Maryland (jfriedm9@umd.edu)
- Communications Co-Chair – Kris Vera-Phillips, Southern Methodist (kvp@mail.smu.edu)

♦ NEW PUBLICATION: Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication

In 2024, CSGE launched a new initiative to celebrate and amplify excellence in graduate instruction. The event was a remarkable success, bringing together scholars of every stage in their careers to collaborate on pedagogy and new ideas to liven up the classroom. Whether you are developing a new prep, teaching for the first time, or just looking for something to get you excited about being in the classroom, the showcase offered new strategies, lesson plans, and ideas. We were thrilled to collaborate with AEJMC's Small Programs Interest Group (SPIG) to publish the accepted submissions as a special issue of Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication. To read through the showcase descriptions as well as Dr. Trifiro's narrative foreword, [click here](#). Stay tuned for the latest issue of TJMC with the 2025 participants! If you are interested in submitting to the 3rd annual CSGE Teaching Showcase in New Orleans in 2026, see [page 11](#) for instructions and details.

♦ Call for Papers: 2025 AEJMC Southeast Colloquium, March 12-14, 2026, University of Tampa

The AEJMC Southeast Colloquium, one of AEJMC's oldest and most collaborative gatherings, invites full papers, extended abstracts, and panel proposals across several divisions, interest groups, and commissions. New this year will be an undergraduate research competition – more information found within this newsletter! Please consider joining us in March in Tampa!

♦ NEW mentorship opportunity with Media Ethics Division (MED)

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Looking to get more involved with AEJMC? MED is seeking participants for its multi-tiered mentorship program that links senior faculty, junior faculty, and graduate students within media ethics. In the program, mentees will be paired with mentors who share similar research, methodological, and institutional interests. Mentors will meet on an informal though regular basis (via Zoom, phone, or whatever works best for the pair) with their mentees to discuss questions and concerns related to their career path. For more on this collaboration, see [page 12](#).



As we move forward, our goal is to build an even stronger, more inclusive, and supportive network for our members. Thank you for being part of the CSGE community—your engagement, ideas, and enthusiasm make everything we do possible.

As a parting note, the Commission would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Patrick Johnson for his

unwavering support and leadership over the past several years. His dedication and vision were instrumental in making the transition from an interest group to a full Commission possible—a milestone that will have a lasting impact on our community. Dr. Johnson has been a steadfast advocate for our mission, recruiting and mentoring many of us and welcoming us into the AEJMC family. His commitment to building community, fostering collaboration, and elevating our collective work has shaped who we are today. We are truly indebted to Dr. Johnson for his years of service, guidance, and inspiration. Thank you, Patrick, for everything you've done to strengthen this Commission and the people within it.

In sum, I look forward to connecting with many of you throughout the year and to all the exciting things ahead for CSGE!

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## On the Job Market? Get Ready to Shine!

**By Deborah J. Danuser, Research Chair. University of Pittsburgh**

Whether you're preparing for your first job talk or refining one you've already given, CSGE invites you to join “Real Talk about Job Talks,” a virtual webinar designed to help scholars at every career stage prepare and deliver an effective research presentation. Your job talk is more than a single moment—it's your opportunity to define your scholarly identity, communicate your research vision, and connect with colleagues across diverse academic audiences.

This webinar brings together a thoughtful panel of scholars with experience across institutions and career pathways, including Jensen Moore (Oklahoma University), Alexis Shore Ingber (Syracuse University), Elisia Cohen (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities), Jess Shaw (Temple University), and Kelsey Prena (Central Michigan University). Drawing from their own experiences on the job market and on hiring committees, panelists will share practical strategies, common pitfalls to avoid, and tips for delivering a polished, confident job talk.

Together, we'll discuss how to structure a compelling research narrative, engage a wide range of academic audiences, and navigate Q&A with clarity and confidence. The session will conclude with a robust Q&A, offering participants the chance to ask questions and receive candid, supportive advice.

If job talks are on your horizon—or even just something you're beginning to think about—this webinar offers an encouraging space for honest conversation and shared learning.



Wednesday, December 10



4:00 PM (EST), 3:00 PM (CST), 1:00 PM (PST)



Virtual Event: Register [here](#).





## Shaping Graduate Education and Research Experiences

**By Elizabeth Cox, Vice Head. University of Kansas**

We're excited to share that we'll have five panels at the upcoming annual conference, focusing on topics especially relevant to graduate students and early-career faculty. Our PF&R panels will explore the importance of creating spaces for self-care within graduate programs. In addition, we'll be offering a mentorship session with the Advertising Division to facilitate engaging discussions about issues relevant to graduate students, including the job market and early-tenure process.

We will once again co-sponsor a joint commission panel with the Commission on the Status of Minorities and the Commission on LGBTQIA+ Communities to examine the ethics, safety, and visibility of research in marginalized communities. An additional solo-sponsored research panel will bring together scholars to discuss how to identify a research “niche” during graduate study. Our teaching panel will explore how early-career faculty can utilize AI as a classroom tool, bringing new voices into the conversation.

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Across all of our panels, we are excited to highlight graduate student and early-career faculty perspectives at the upcoming annual conference. As we approach the event, we'll release more information as we work with the submitters to finalize programming.

### **Introducing a New Peer-to-Peer Networking Opportunity at AEJMC 2026**

In the past, we've offered multiple mentorship opportunities at the annual conference to introduce graduate students and early-career faculty to associate and full faculty. This year, we are excited to develop and offer a peer-to-peer networking opportunity. In the months leading up to AEJMC 2026 (after acceptances are sent out), we will open a sign-up form for those interested in being connected with another graduate student or early-career faculty member who will also be attending the conference. Our hope is that these introductions help attendees arrive at AEJMC—and our annual luncheon—knowing at least one familiar face.

We will do our best to match people based on research and teaching interests, as well as their academic goals. Hopefully, these relationships will extend beyond the conference and develop into lasting professional connections that continue to support your scholarly growth well into the future.

Stay tuned for more information as we fully launch this opportunity next year!



you're invited: get involved with the

# Commission on Graduate Education

<b>VOLUNTEER ON COMMITTEES</b>	<b>LOG INTO VIRTUAL PROGRAMS</b>
Make your CV look even better!	Boost your savvy and gain inspo
<b>RUB SHOULDERS AT CONFERENCES</b>	<b>USE CONFERENCE AMENITIES</b>
Make contacts who become collaborators	"Shop" the Traveling Closet, eat/hang in our grad lounge

WANT TO KNOW MORE? EMAIL [B.TRIFIRO@NORTHEASTERN.EDU](mailto:B.TRIFIRO@NORTHEASTERN.EDU)

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## Looking Ahead: Spring Conference Preview

**By Jodi McFarland Friedman, Communications Co-Chair. University of Maryland**

Don't let your abstracts or completed papers languish on your desktop.

As the fall semester comes to a close, take your research to the next level. Submit abstracts or full papers to one of AEJMC's spring conferences, both taking place in March. The conferences are collegial events that allow an emerging scholar to gain valuable experience and exposure.

Each conference welcomes work in progress. You could present research at a spring conference, hone it, and submit the full paper in time for the summer submission deadline for the main August AEJMC conference planned this year for New Orleans, Louisiana.

### **AEJMC Midwinter Conference**

The University of Oklahoma's Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication will host AEJMC Midwinter Conference. The conference takes place on campus on March 6-7 in Norman, Oklahoma.

Paper abstracts should be 600-800 words (excluding author information and references). The submission deadline is Dec. 15, 2025. If accepted, the completed paper (no longer than 30 pages) is due two weeks before the conference.

See the full list of divisions accepting abstracts [here](#).

### **AEJMC Southeast Colloquium**

The University of Tampa is hosting the 51st annual Southeast Colloquium from March 12-14. The deadline to submit extended abstracts or full papers was extended to Dec. 15, 2025.

Extended abstracts should be 1,200-1,500 words. Full papers should be no more than 25 pages (or 50 pages for the Law and Policy division.) See more details [here](#).

Use this [form](#) to make a submission.



## Strategies and Advice for Transitioning into an Academic Position

**By Nicole Marie Klevanskaya, PF&R Chair. University of Minnesota**

AEJMC's Commission on the Status of Graduate Education hosted a virtual panel titled “First Year on the Job: Strategies and Advice for Transitioning into an Academic Position” on Nov. 12. Moderated by CSGE Head and Northeastern University Postdoctoral Teaching Associate Dr. Briana Trifiro, the panel featured four stellar research professors who are currently in their first year at R1 Universities, including Dr. Carolina Velloso (University of Minnesota), Dr. Alexis Shore Ingber (Syracuse University), Dr. Elizabeth Cox (University of Kansas), and Dr. Kris Vera-Phillips (Southern Methodist University).

The all-star panel shared helpful advice, challenges, and insights they wish they had known before taking on their roles as research professors. Time management was a topic that frequently came up during the panel. Namely, panelists noted that it might be better to separate teaching days from research days; this would mean delineating 2-3 days of the week solely for teaching and the other days solely for research.

Some panelists mentioned that working on their dissertations during the last year of their Ph.D. programs may have been more time-consuming than their first years in academic jobs. Teaching tasks generally take the most time on the job, they said, which includes: 1)



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responding to student questions, 2) managing teaching assistants, and 3) providing assignment feedback. To prepare for the teaching load, Dr. Velloso recommended that current students consider serving as an instructor of record at some point during graduate school, if they have the opportunity. Dr. Cox, in particular, mentioned that first-year professors should understand that their schedule might not allow them to do as much research as they would like during their first year. Regardless of these challenges, however, panelists mentioned that interacting with undergraduate students has been by far one of the most enlightening and enjoyable parts of their first years on the job.

Watch the full panel session [here](#).



Jocelyn McKinnon-Crowley presents at CSGE Graduate Teaching Showcase in San Francisco, August 7, 2025. (Photo by Kris Vera-Phillips).

## In the Classroom and Beyond

**By Matthew E. Martin, Teaching Chair. University of Southern Mississippi**

Pedagogy is an under-addressed skill in most graduate programs despite its status as a main pillar of academia. The rapidly changing audience and often overwhelming learning environment put further stress on graduate students seeking to develop their scholarly voice

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in the classroom. This year's webinar lineup aims to address a primary challenge for new teachers and explore a new concept in assessment, gaining popularity in higher education.

### **Filling the Big Tent: Strategies for engaging large lecture courses**

Large lecture classes present a unique landscape for instructors, requiring a gentle balance between rigorous content and meaningful engagement. The challenge of creating an interactive learning experience at scale while managing the dynamics of a diverse population presents communication instructors with an opportunity to model the very principles we teach, but which few are trained for.

This webinar is designed to explore practical strategies, evidence-based approaches, and innovative tools that share best practices that help transform large-enrollment classes into environments where students are not just listening, but learning and connecting. We'll discuss ways to promote active learning and engagement by integrating technology and designing assessments that encourage deeper understanding and cultivate a sense of community, even in rooms that seat hundreds.

### **Reimagining Assessment: A three-part webinar series empowering the shift toward ungrading**

Responding to long-standing challenges to traditional assessment and fueled by student needs exacerbated by the pandemic, ungrading is gaining momentum in contemporary classrooms. Promoted as a strategy to improve student mental health, inspire self-assessment, and reflect the needs of an adaptive modern workforce, this pedagogical alternative represents a fundamental shift from measuring learning to stimulating exploration, from ranking students to empowering them, centering learning rather than compliance. The practice helps students become more intentional, independent learners, skills valued in both academic and professional contexts.

This series aims to introduce, explain, and provide real-world examples of ungrading in modern communication classrooms. If you're curious, considering, or committing to a switch from points and percentages to reflection and retention, these webinars offer insight into the practical, philosophical, and research-supported practice.

#### *Session 1: "Score No More: Ungrading, an introduction."*

Discover the foundations of ungrading. This introductory session breaks down key concepts, common misconceptions, and the pedagogical motivations behind the move from traditional grading systems to classrooms that reduce bias, invite more equitable participation, and emphasize individual learning trajectories that reshape the student learning experience.

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*Session 2: “Ungrading: Theories and strategies.”*

Go deeper with the research, frameworks, and practical methods that support ungrading. We’ll explore communication-specific applications, feedback models, contract grading, labor-based assessment, and approaches for maintaining academic rigor while centering student ownership of learning.

*Session 3: “Not Going Back: Tales from ungraded classrooms.”*

Hear from instructors who practice ungrading in university-level communication courses. This session highlights successes, challenges, student reactions, and lessons learned, offering honest insights into how ungrading operates in real classrooms. Gain resources and actionable insight you can immediately apply in your own courses.

Explore this progressive pedagogy, reflecting on emerging research into motivation and learning, focusing on helping students prioritize improvement rather than fixate on a final score.

**Invitation to participate**

If you have experience teaching large lecture or ungraded courses and would like to lend your experience as a panelist for any of these sessions, we invite you to reach out and participate.

Please contact me ([m.e.martin@usm.edu](mailto:m.e.martin@usm.edu)) to join the panel or receive an email when webinar dates are released.

**3rd Annual CSGE Graduate Teaching Showcase**

The Commission once again invites graduate students to showcase examples of effective teaching to inspire and encourage instructors at all levels. The showcase highlights new and innovative approaches that resonate with students or engage learners from diverse backgrounds and abilities. Accepted applicants will be expected to attend the 2026 AEJMC conference in New Orleans to present their proposed activity or lesson plan, either as a poster presentation or a live demonstration. The call for submissions will be released in late Winter/early Spring, depending on your latitude, with a deadline of May 1.

This is a unique opportunity to practice potential teaching presentations that will be useful on the job market.

The proposal (400 words max) should:

- Demonstrate the present relevance to teaching and learning in higher education

- Identify clear learning outcomes and goals
- Appeal to an interdisciplinary audience (including news writing, content production, digital journalism, media literacy, research methods, media ethics/law, artificial intelligence, strategic communication, big data, computational methods, and more)

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated on the following criteria:

- Clarity of the proposal, including key takeaways and audience-interaction components
- Relevant topic that would appeal to instructors of all experience levels
- Practical methods and techniques that others can use and apply
- Evidence of successful outcomes or lessons learned

## Building Careers Together: A Mentorship Community for Media Ethics Scholars

By Kris Vera-Phillips, Communications Co-Chair. Southern Methodist University.

Careers in media ethics are built through relationships, conversation, and shared wisdom—and MED is creating space for exactly that through its multi-tiered mentorship program.



**THE AEJMC**

**COMMISSION ON  
GRADUATE EDUCATION  
&  
MEDIA ETHICS DIVISION**

**WANT TO KNOW:**

**ARE YOU  
SEEKING A  
MENTOR?**

**FILL OUT THIS FORM:** [HTTP://BIT.LY/4OQVSL7](http://bit.ly/4OQVSL7)

- Meet your senior scholar at times that work for your mentor and you→
- Get guidance on papers, conference, navigating academia, job apps & talks....
- Together, you set the agenda!

This initiative brings together senior faculty, junior faculty, and graduate students in media ethics to foster meaningful, sustained mentorship across career stages. Whether you're a senior scholar eager to give back, a junior faculty member seeking guidance while also supporting graduate students, or a graduate student looking for mentorship from those who've been where you are,

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this program is designed with you in mind.

Participants are thoughtfully matched based on shared research interests, methods, and institutional contexts, creating mentoring relationships that feel relevant, intentional, and supportive. Mentors and mentees connect regularly—on their own terms—through informal conversations via Zoom, phone, or other formats that work best for each pair. These conversations often center on the questions that matter most at pivotal moments: feedback on dissertation chapters or works in progress, strategies for strong job applications or tenure materials, and candid advice about phone or campus interviews, among many others.

To help sustain connection throughout the year, MED periodically shares conversation prompts with mentoring pairs. These prompts are meant to encourage dialogue around common professional experiences and challenges—such as how to review a paper—while helping participants stay connected beyond a single meeting or semester.

At its core, this mentorship program is about building community, sharing knowledge across generations of scholars, and reminding us that none of us has to figure this work out alone.

If you're interested in mentoring, being mentored, or both, sign up [here](#) and become part of this growing network of support and collaboration.