

# INSIGHTS

ASJMC

---

SPRING 2006

## WHEN JOURNALISM MAJORS DON'T KNOW GRAMMAR

(causes considerations, and approaches)

Gerald Grow, Florida A&M University

## JOURNALISM SCHOOLS AND THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

Don Ranly, University of Missouri

## HOMONYMS AS TEACHING DEVICES IN J-CLASSES

Bruce Plopper and Sonny Rhodes, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

---

## ASJMC ADJUNCT SURVEY RESULTS...AND MORE

Michael E. Abrams, Florida A&M University

## BEST PRACTICES: HOW TO VALUE PART-TIME JOURNALISM FACULTY

Kimberly Wilmot Voss, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

## NURTURING THE CONTINGENT COLLEAGUE

Peter B. Orlik, Central Michigan University

---

## SO, YOU WANT TO BE A DEAN?

Anne C. Osborne, Alan D. Fletcher, and Billy I. Ross, Louisiana State University

## THE JOY OF...DEANING

Richard Cole, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

## SKILLS CAN BE PORTABLE TO BIGGER JOBS

Chris Martin, West Virginia University

***ASJMC Insights***

Editor: Robert M. Ruggles

Layout and production: Kyshia Brown

The Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (ASJMC)  
234 Outlet Pointe Boulevard, Suite A  
Columbia, SC 29210  
803/798-0271  
803/772-3509 (fax)

ASJMC is a non-profit educational organization.  
More than 200 programs, both accredited and non-accredited, teaching journalism and mass communication at the college level are members of the association.  
Find us on the Web at: [www.asjmc.org](http://www.asjmc.org).

*ASJMC Insights* is a publication of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Copyright © 2006 by ASJMC

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, and recording, without the prior permission of the publisher. For information on getting permission for reprints and excerpts, or ordering additional copies, contact [aejmchq@aol.com](mailto:aejmchq@aol.com).

Submit queries and manuscripts to Robert M. Ruggles, *Insights* Editor, 2318 Hampshire Way, Tallahassee, FL 32309-3107. E-mail: [BobRug@aol.com](mailto:BobRug@aol.com). Phone: 850/893-3518  
Opinions expressed in *Insights* are solely those of the authors and are not those of ASJMC or its officers.

*Insights* is printed and bound in the United States of America.

# From the Editor ....

For the 35 years I was a journalism teacher and administrator, I watched, partly in horror but also in puzzled fascination, as students entered journalism studies with less and less grasp of grammar and spelling. I did something about it when I was at Florida A&M University. Along with the faculty, we created a course called Grammar for Journalists that is still being taught under a slightly more politically correct title, Language Skills for Journalists. It is, as the old parlance has it, a bone-head English course. Has it helped? Some, I think, but today's students are no better—maybe even worse—than those of 30-plus years ago. It has little to do with race, economic status, or the other convenient excuses always used when education fails.

For years, j/mc teachers and administrators have pointed fingers of blame at the freshman comp teachers, the high school and middle school teachers, and even the parents. That doesn't cut it any more, if it ever did. Collegiate journalism programs have these students NOW, and if they are to be kept from further eroding what's left of the standards of the Fourth Estate, those problems must be dealt with before the students are graduated. Who else is going to remedy the problems but the j/mc teachers and administrators? These problems are journalism education's dirty little secrets. Yet, no serious successful efforts to solve the problems have been made, and the issues are not discussed enough—except in a hand-wringing way. We hope to jump start that discussion with this issue of *Insights*. Be sure to read Gerald Grow's explanation about how we got to this point, keeping in mind the grammatical errors you read in your local newspaper or heard on TV just today.

Don Ranly, Bruce Plopper, and Sonny Rhodes join the grammar fray with some provocative thoughts and ideas, as well.

Also in this issue, read about adjuncts. In fall 2004 I did a survey of ASJMC member schools asking some questions about adjunct practices. Some of the results will surprise you. The survey results were compiled and reported by Mike Abrams, a numbers cruncher par excellence, at my request. There are also articles about the ways adjuncts are treated and should be treated (Kimberly Voss, a former adjunct herself, and Peter Orlik). Adjuncts represent a rapidly growing percentage of university faculty members and thus are becoming more critical to the success of our programs.

Finally, Billy Ross and colleagues report on a survey of j/mc deans. After reading the results, some good people aspiring to higher positions may junk the idea, but Richard Cole follows with good reasons why being a dean can be rewarding and fulfilling. Chris Martin reminds us how skills learned at the lower levels of administration can be transferred successfully to higher levels. She's done it herself.

We're looking for article ideas for future issues along with suggestions of faculty or administrators who might write them. The state of scholastic journalism, how faculty and administrators deal with stress, how you deal with problem faculty or staff (or upper administration, for that matter), how to create an effective advisory board, how the new accreditation standards are working, etc. have all been mentioned. So, let me hear from you—about *Insights'* content, article ideas, authors, **ESPECIALLY if your program has successfully found a way to conquer grammar and spelling problems in your students.**

Thanks.

*Robert M. Ruggles*  
Editor



# When Journalism Majors Don't Know Grammar

*(causes, considerations, and approaches)*

GERALD GROW  
Florida A&M University

---

Journalism graduates need to know grammar, yet many enter the major with poor grammar skills, and the accredited curriculum leaves little room for extra instruction in grammar. Students who come from a background where a dialect is spoken, or where English is not the first language, may present a special problem — not only because they have a greater gap to fill, but because some of them offer the best hope for increasing the number of minorities in newsrooms. What has caused the decline in grammar skills and what are some of the methods and issues in teaching grammar to journalism students?

## The Decline of Grammar Teaching, K-13

Schools of journalism traditionally have assumed that English courses will prepare students adequately in grammar, yet there is reason to believe that this is not working well enough. Indeed, there is evidence that many English and composition teachers are teaching less grammar, not from neglect, but from a deliberate pedagogical choice to de-emphasize grammar.

Some English teachers, of course, continue to emphasize grammar, many still using traditional methods. Prior to the 1970s, grammar was taught “prescriptively”: There is only one right way, you will do it that way, and you will keep practicing until you get it right. And though there is no widespread agreement that this method worked better than current methods, it is the way nearly all older editors learned grammar. The prescriptive method worked for them — and journalistic writing, guided by AP style or other stylebooks, is a prescriptive approach to grammar.

The reason so many students don't know grammar is not new, nor is it simple. As early as the 1970s a movement started among English teachers — and it continues to this day — to teach grammar differently and often to replace grammar with other topics. That movement resulted from several converging influences. We will briefly review several innovations that reduced the teaching of grammar: whole language, the process approach, Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), teaching grammar in context, linguistics, and the misapplication of two important theories: Bloom's taxonomy and constructivism — with a glance at the influence of popular culture on students' language.

## Whole Language

Like every educational innovation, the whole language approach brought important, fresh ideas into teaching, through an approach to reading and writing that worked from whole to part, from the mind's larger impulse to construct meaning, to the mechanics of doing so. Whole language brought new kinds of learning activities into elementary schools, and it was soon widely taught in education departments. When done well, it is marvelous to see: Children learn to conduct research, write so extensively that many develop fluency, and produce every phase of a printed work, right down to making paper and binding their own books.

Unfortunately, whole language was rarely applied in its entirety. Teachers too often emphasized the creative side of whole language (where, for example, students invent spellings for words they do not yet know how to spell), and they too often neglected the final phases in which students were supposed to master the conventions of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage. The method — carried right through many freshman composition courses — produced students who could write capably, but mainly about their first-person experiences, and who had serious deficits in grammar, usage, spelling, and style

(which I'll refer to simply as "grammar" from now on).

### The Process Approach

A cousin of whole language, the process approach to writing contributed to the decline of grammar teaching in a similar way. The process approach brought new insights to the teaching of writing through studying how writers actually work. It taught students to approach writing as a series of phases — a process — that starts with pre-writing (planning, focusing the subject, conducting research), moves through composing (getting the words on paper), and from there to editing and proofreading. Process teachers recognized this as a series of recursive steps, but nonetheless as steps that could be usefully distinguished and practiced. One of the insights of the process approach was to separate writing from editing — an insight based on the theory that the creative mind works differently from the critical mind, and that, when composing, a writer needs to keep the inner editor at bay until it is time to edit the finished copy.

In its full form, the process approach culminated in a step where students edited their work for overall form and effectiveness and in a final step where students conducted a meticulous proofreading of their work to get the grammar right. Grammar did not disappear in the process approach; worries about it were simply moved to the end, after the much more difficult and rewarding work of finding a topic, thinking it through, researching it, getting a draft on paper, and revising that draft. During the earlier phases of the writing process, teachers usually limited themselves to commenting on content, organization, and expressiveness. They stayed away from correcting grammar out of the belief that thinking about grammar would inhibit students' ability to write for content and meaning.

Unfortunately, many process teachers apparently neglected the end phase, and they trained many students to research and write, but not to correct their own writing. Thinking, researching, writing, and revising were so rewarding that many classrooms never got past the creative phases of writing to the grunt-work of fixing the grammar. The result was like a warehouse full of innovative furniture — none of it finished — with baffled customers looking for finished works.

Peter Elbow, one of the founders of the process approach, left an account of this neglect of grammar instruction. He described how he made students entirely responsible for proofreading their work, with no help from him. He even told them that, if they didn't know grammar, they should get outside help, or even hire an editor.<sup>1</sup> In one sense, this approach emphasizes the students' responsibility; in another sense, it abandons them to learn a difficult subject on their own. At any rate, Elbow's account provides a vivid example

of the way grammar instruction could diminish in the writing classroom, not from neglect, but from a pedagogical choice.

### Students' Right to their Own Language

In parallel with whole language and the process approach, another movement among college composition teachers gave new reasons for not teaching grammar. In 1974, the Council on College Composition and Communication, a subgroup of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), published a position paper more than 10,000 words long called *Students' Right to Their Own Language*.<sup>2</sup> Known as SRTOL, this paper proclaimed that students should be encouraged to communicate in whatever dialect they already speak, that they should be encouraged to write in that dialect, and that teachers should not criticize them for failing to know standard English, or correct their grammar. The SRTOL might be dismissed as '70s idealism except for the fact that, in 2003, it was reaffirmed as the official position of the professional organization of college composition teachers.

Overall, SRTOL embodies a profound uncertainty about the validity of standard English, the fear that teaching grammar will deprive minority students of their identities, the belief that standard English is a tool in a class-driven society that oppresses minorities through language, the conviction that it is the duty of the composition teacher not to prepare students for the kinds of writing they will have to do in college, but to redeem this corrupted world — and it advocates a general abandonment of the teaching of grammar. Such themes are not limited to this document; they occur again and again in the wider literature of composition studies.<sup>3</sup> And they may help explain why so many students arrive at journalism classes without a command of standard grammar, usage, and spelling.

### Teaching Grammar In Context

By no means did all teachers of English or college composition abandon the teaching of grammar. The NCTE has a subgroup devoted to grammar, and an interest in the teaching of grammar has produced remarkably useful works like the books of Constance Weaver. Weaver advocates teaching "grammar in context," by waiting for specific grammatical issues to arise in student writing, then giving "mini-lessons" on grammar exactly when they are appropriate.<sup>4</sup> Weaver is part of a group of English teachers who have found reasons to reduce or discontinue the use of traditional grammar drills. Weaver reviewed more than 50 studies and showed how each contributes to the conclusion that drills are ineffective in teaching better grammar or better writing. Those who learned grammar through a liberal use of such drills may feel skeptical of this body of research, but it exists nonetheless.

Journalism teachers will find a specific reason to have reser-

ventions about Weaver's approach. She is a superb embodiment of the ideal of the humanistic teacher. Weaver is clearly a kind, thoughtful, intelligent person. By her own accounts, Weaver instructs not by ordering students to do things, but by making suggestions. Not "Do this," but "You might want to consider reviewing..." Even in a class of students about to become classroom teachers, Weaver describes finding serious grammatical deficiencies. In response, she suggests that the students might want to review those points of grammar before having to teach them.

Journalism teachers are likely to respond with incredulity, because, in the "in context" approach, students never face a tough test of their mastery of grammar. The time never comes when the teacher says, "OK, class, we have reviewed lay and lie, discussed it in class, and practiced it. On Tuesday we will have a competency test on lay and lie. Go home and learn it!" Instead, students are empowered by the sense that, as worthwhile individuals and creators of meaning (both true), they have the option of choosing whether or not to do the hard work of internalizing some eccentric rules of standard English. Journalism students have no such option; they have to master grammar. If kindness is not enough to accomplish that, other means must be employed.

### The Influence of Linguistics

Over the past 40 years, the field of linguistics has changed the way many teachers think about language, starting for many with Postman and Weingartner's 1966 book, *Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching*,<sup>5</sup> which advocated teaching grammar as a subject of inquiry, rather than as a set of necessary skills. Linguistics has directed teachers away from "prescriptive" rules of grammar toward "descriptive" rules — language as people actually use it. The result is a renewed excitement about the vitality of language that is alive, vibrant, and forever changing. Teachers now have a way to validate the power of dialects and to recognize the quaintness and historical, even hysterical, roots of some of our most honored grammatical rules — such as not writing "John and me met yesterday" or "Who did you call?"<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, journalism in any given year is dominated by the prescriptive grammar that governs practitioners at that time — embodied in stylebooks and specific reference works. To journalism teachers, it is fine for students to develop a broad, relativistic understanding of the changing nature of language, and for English teachers to teach this. But our students also have to master the standard grammar of the time — however arbitrary some of it may be — and many things about grammar are arbitrary. Linguistics has led teachers to encourage students to explore language, study it, marvel at its fluidity, but it has not led teachers to put students through the hard work of mastering the grammatical con-

ventions of the time. Many students have emerged in recent decades with an intellectual appreciation of language and an ability to think critically about it — but without the practical skills to write correctly in current standard English. And, though they acknowledge the importance of standard grammar, too many teachers have never taken on the goal of ensuring that their students master it. Indeed, since many of those teachers are products of the trends noted in this article, they may be unprepared to teach grammar.

### Misapplied Theory: Bloom's Taxonomy

What is known as Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Skills<sup>7</sup> has, since it appeared in 1956, had a widespread influence on education. The model contrasts the "lower order skills" of remembering, understanding, and applying knowledge, with "higher order skills" of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating knowledge. Like whole language, Bloom's Taxonomy is another good idea that has been widely misused by teachers who devalue kinds of knowledge that require memorization and practice — and there is no way to acquire grammatical skills without practice. Believing that they are encouraging "higher order thinking skills," many teachers have encouraged students to analyze, write, and take positions without the kind of solid foundation that can be acquired only through the so-called "lower-level" learning of facts, skills, and procedures.

Less known is the fact that Bloom's group also produced a taxonomy of affective skills and planned one on psychomotor skills (later completed by others). The rarely-mentioned taxonomies of affective and psychomotor skills honor repeated practice, automaticity, and high-level integration of skills into thought and action<sup>8</sup> — approaches necessary to the mastery of grammar.

The artificial separation of cognitive knowledge from practice, automaticity, and integration may have contributed to a widespread emphasis on critical thinking at the expense of content knowledge. The result is generations of students who can think their way through almost any subject, but who don't have a lot to think with. Many adequate students can analyze, synthesize, and especially evaluate (in the sense of critiquing and forming opinions), but many have difficulty retaining concrete information and acquiring new skills. Part of the reason may lie in teachers who emphasized higher order thinking skills without first building the foundation those skills rest upon. When journalism teachers teach grammar, they are doing foundation work after the house has been built.

Bloom's taxonomy of the affective domain is especially valuable for journalism education. That domain emphasizes focus, interest, attention, values, and responsibility — con-

cepts central to the professional attitudes that students need to develop, and which guide their motivation and learning. It is strange that such values have been separated from “cognitive knowledge” and that the cognitive part of Bloom’s taxonomy has been widely adopted by itself, as if it covered everything. Reviewing Bloom’s affective domain will remind you that several things normally expected of students are actually skills that can be taught, practiced, and developed — such as focus, motivation, attitude, and commitment. As we will see later, in order for some students to make up for grammatical deficiencies, they may also need to work on some fundamental study skills and affective skills.

### **Misapplied Theory: Constructivism vs. Behaviorism**

In *Teaching Grammar in Context*, Constance Weaver grounds her important thinking about grammar in a questionable contrast between behaviorism and constructivism. She characterizes behaviorism, which she repudiates, as emphasizing facts, drill, practice, while constructivism (which she advocates) uses higher order thinking skills to encourage students to engage critically and creatively with learning, so that they construct knowledge in their own minds in an active way. Constructivism, especially combined with Weaver’s apparent background in humanistic education with its Rogerian gentleness, provides teachers with indispensable tools and concepts. Her theoretical outlook prepares her to accept studies that reject traditional grammar drills, but it does not direct her to investigate how such drills might be made effective, or exactly what is needed in order to ensure that students actually master grammar. A journalism teacher pondering this part of Weaver’s substantial work might wonder who would watch a basketball team composed of critical thinkers who never practiced dribbling, passing, and shooting.

### **Hip-Hop**

We have reviewed several innovations in education that are valuable in their own right but have been applied in such a way that they unnecessarily reduce the teaching of standard English and contribute to the reason so many journalism students have not learned grammar: whole language, the process approach, Students’ Right to their Own Language, teaching grammar in context, linguistics, Bloom’s Taxonomy, and constructivism. This introduction will end with a brief look at the influence of popular culture.

Popular culture has often diverted college students from a focus on mastering the conventions of adulthood; flappers, beats, hippies, Goths, and frat boys all used languages apart from standard English. Today’s version of that phenomenon is hip-hop, based on a remarkable resurgence of interest in a certain kind of linguistic expressiveness. But hip-hop, with its private vocabulary, elliptical expressions, and invented spellings has surely contributed to many students’ confusion

about what constitutes standard English. By acquiring verbal power through slang, rhythm, repetition, neologism, loudness, and profanity, hip-hop can divert students from the sustained task of learning to use standard English as powerfully. Instead of hearing Yeats in their minds — and the way he can move from simple statement to poetic power in a single line — they hear Tupac and his successors.

Hip-hop also idealizes the resourceful, talented, crafty — and uneducated — individual surviving by pragmatic intelligence in the urban jungle. Hip-hop encourages students to think that street language is “real” and standard English is not real. Street discourse is marked by a large set of private words and gestures, understood only by those who already know them. This is not a fertile setting for the cultivation of standard English or lean, public, fact-based, highly communicative journalistic prose. Yet hip-hop is the language many current students think with, and journalism teachers must work with students who arrive heavily draped in the conventions of inner-city street language, as they have learned it through popular culture. One of the greatest challenges in educating journalists — and putting more minorities into newsrooms — is taking such students across the gap between the language of home and of popular culture, on the one side, and the language of journalism on the other. A major part of that journey involves mastering standard grammar. The journalism curriculum was not designed to solve this problem, but it must somehow bend to accommodate it.

### **Responses to the Problem**

How can journalism departments respond to students who don’t know grammar and are not motivated to learn it on their own? If I had the answer, I would have given it by now; at this point, I am trying to understand the question more fully.

This section will review several responses to the problem, including entry and exit tests, tutoring, integrating grammar across the journalism curriculum, academic support labs, journalism support labs, continuous remediation, and online exercises.

### **Entry Test or Exit Test?**

The easiest solution is to accept only those students who already display a reasonable mastery of grammar by using an entrance exam to exclude others. Such a test, however, presents at least two problems: The program might not find enough qualified majors, and the test may exclude students with a high potential to be good journalists, including minority students.

A more comprehensive solution focuses not on *admitting* students who know grammar but on *graduating* students who have a mastery of grammar. This creates other problems. Where will you teach grammar? How will you require

it and test for it? An exit test looks like an easy way to answer the second question, but an exit test on grammar is not much use if you have admitted underprepared students and done little to prepare them in grammar.

It is difficult to answer the question, where will you teach grammar? One solution is a grammar course for journalism students, now offered by many departments (we have a good one at Florida A&M). Such a course works well for students who have a small “gap” to cross between their inner language and standard English — provided they apply themselves diligently. But for some students, that gap is greater than one course can fill. What happens to students who are still deficient in grammar after they have completed the one course designed to help them? Later courses are filled with their own subject matter — mass media, news writing, public affairs reporting, etc. — and there is no time in them to teach grammar. Such courses already have full syllabi.

That leaves us with this sobering realization: If journalism schools take responsibility for making certain their graduates have mastered grammar, then schools must do whatever is necessary to accomplish this end — and they must do so for students who enter the major with grammatical deficiencies.

### **Continuous Improvement Approach**

Even after a required review course, some students still have not mastered standard English grammar well enough to practice journalism. What can journalism programs do?

The first step is to identify such students, and to do so early. Many can be identified in a required course that reviews grammar, spelling, usage, and style — but not all. Those who barely pass such a course are clear candidates for monitoring as they progress through the program. But some students have the ability to compartmentalize their learning so they perform well during a course but do not transfer that knowledge to future activities. Identifying those requires a different method and a greater degree of coordination than some faculty members are accustomed to.

Students with ongoing grammar problems could be identified by teachers in any class — in every class — through a referral process. Under this approach, any student misusing “their” and “they’re” in a written assignment, for example, would be identified and referred. The question then becomes, referred to what?

### **Requiring Remediation**

Glen Bleske and I conducted research in 2005 on how students use one kind of online instructional exercises.<sup>9</sup> One finding struck us as particularly important: Those who were best at grammar and had the most confidence in their gram-

mar practiced the exercises the most. Those with the most problems and least confidence practiced the least. While not a revolutionary finding, it has important implications for journalism schools trying to teach grammar.

The finding indicates that students who are weak in grammar cannot be expected to make up that deficiency on their own — even when provided with the tools necessary. Lack of knowledge is apparently not the only problem; there may well be a gap in something besides grammar — in motivation, confidence, persistence, learning skills, or some other key factor that causes many who are weak in grammar to avoid taking advantage of the many resources that could help them. (A motivated person might master grammar with nothing more than a handbook from the library.)

The finding rules out the simplest and most desirable solution, which is to identify students with problems, tell them so, point them to the necessary resources, and require them to learn grammar on their own. But when faced with their grammar problems, many students seem unable to solve them on their own. Some seem to have something like “grammar anxiety” that propels them into procrastination (we intend to look further into this anxiety).

If students cannot be sent off to learn grammar on their own, that means that journalism schools have to teach it — except for schools that admit only students who have few such problems.

### **How to Require Remediation?**

How can you require students to undergo remediation for grammar problems? No simple solution has surfaced. An exit test comes too late to identify students who have not gained mastery. The curriculum does not have room in it for additional instruction in grammar directed to only a subset of the students enrolled. That leaves the option of required referrals: Teachers in any journalism class, at any level, could refer a student to a special remedial lab and require the student to demonstrate mastery in the lab before receiving credit for the course. Such an approach would make the mastery of grammar a requirement in every course.

Right away, you can see problems with this approach. For example, if students have grammar problems in basic news writing but do not complete the remedial work, how can they enroll in the next course and continue to work on other journalistic skills? It can be done, but it’s not simple. Taking responsibility for student learning requires faculty to monitor specific objectives, supervise work done outside of courses, and complete additional paperwork.

Are we ready to combine the time-based approach of cur-

riculum with the standards-based approach of requiring a mastery of grammar? If so, are we ready to let students who have mastered certain objectives skip certain courses? Such considerations lie down this road.

### Tutoring

Tutors could be used to help close the grammar gap, but such a requirement cannot simply be tacked on: Faculty do not have extra time for tutoring. If a department could hire the world's best junior-high-school English teacher, she might make the perfect tutor — but who has the funds to add a faculty line in grammar tutoring? Another option is peer tutoring — students helping students. Peer tutors would be cheaper than faculty tutors, and some could be recruited as part of their “volunteer requirement,” or as a requirement for receiving certain financial aid.

A peer tutoring program would still require substantial coordination, and new peer tutors would have to be trained every year. Recordkeeping could be quite demanding, and there would be problems maintaining confidentiality.

### Academic Support Labs

*College-wide labs.* Many universities maintain writing labs, to which students can be referred for instruction and practice in specific parts of grammar. Some provide small classes, some provide individual tutoring, some provide paper worksheets or computer drills, and some (like the Purdue Online Writing Lab) have a large online component.

Some writing labs are part of a more comprehensive program of academic support and have wide-ranging offerings. Any college student who is still weak in grammar after completing a review course is likely to be weak in study skills and learning strategies. The question, “Which students don't know grammar well enough?” expands to include, “Do they also have some other learning problems?”

The trouble with college writing labs — for all their usefulness — is that they are primarily devoted to teaching students how to write the kinds of term papers produced in most college classes. They are extensions of English class, not of journalism class. And while journalism students can benefit from learning to write different kinds of paragraphs and from practicing language drills based on examples from literary essays, those activities will not necessarily help them become better at journalism. There is reason to fear that general-purpose writing labs, while helpful in some ways, may teach journalism majors to write more like English majors — primarily focused on producing the personal essay or the MLA-style research report. If your journalism school is faced with a large number of students who need remedial work in grammar, you may need to evaluate the usefulness of the aca-

demical support services available to your students. They may not do what you need.

*Journalism-specific labs.* In an ideal world, your journalism department would have its own academic support lab, designed specifically to help journalism majors who have problems with reading, writing, grammar, or study skills. Because funding such a lab is beyond the budget of nearly every department, it might be possible to train a specialist in the university-wide academic support lab to work with journalism students, then to refer students to that specialist. Such a specialist would help students learn journalistic writing and AP style, instead of academic writing and MLA style.

### Online Instruction

Another option is to employ computer-based instruction as part of a remedial program. Existing online writing labs provide examples of grammar exercises students can practice as homework — but the ones I examined emphasized the language of the college essay, the personal essay, or literary analysis.

In an effort to produce journalism-specific online instruction, the author developed *Newsroom 101* from exercises by Ron Hartung of the *Tallahassee Democrat*. This site presents grammar exercises with feedback that provides a cumulative grammar review, delivered in small units, each in response to a specific problem.

The 700 or so *Newsroom 101* exercises are based on errors made by journalists and journalism interns, some of which appeared in print, and the explanations all take into account the requirements of the AP stylebook. Use of these exercises is free, and the site can be accessed at <[longleaf.net/newsroom101/](http://longleaf.net/newsroom101/)>.

Because the exercises derived from real errors, they were not designed to provide a systematic review of grammar, and they have limited utility for a student who is seeking practice on specific grammatical deficiencies. However, this site does provide a demonstration of journalism-centered grammar instruction, and it would be possible to enlarge the concept to give it a greater usefulness.

The online component of remedial grammar, once developed, would be inexpensive to use — even when students using it need a human coach to monitor and motivate them. I have suggested for years that it might be worthwhile for journalism schools to pool their resources to create and maintain a single national grammar site for journalism students, available free.

### Teaching Students to Remediate Themselves

If grammar problems are caused not just by a lack of previ-

ous instruction but also by a weakness in fundamental learning skills and motivational skills, it is possible that the problem of grammar might prompt journalism schools to re-focus many types of instruction in order to deal with the underlying problems that originally led to the grammar problem. The goal in this case is not to teach grammar, but to teach students to figure things out for themselves — in preparation for a life of figuring things out for themselves. Courses could be re-tuned to place more direct emphasis on teaching students how to remediate themselves — how, for example, to teach themselves to crop pictures in Photoshop, to learn a new way to organize an article, or to overcome a problem with grammar. In an earlier article, I presented one model for how students might be moved, during a class or course of study, from teacher-centered instruction to learning that requires greater self-direction.<sup>10</sup>

*The individualized grammar manual.* In key courses, when students display problems in grammar, you could require each one to develop a grammar manual, following a structured assignment along these lines:

First, identify your grammar problem, and give at least two examples of it.

Second, identify the correct usage, and demonstrate it in at least two sentences.

Third, look up the grammatical rule that explains this problem and copy it.

Fourth, produce your own explanation of that rule.

Fifth, create a mnemonic device to help you remember the problem and the rule.

Sixth, combine everything into a grammar checklist that you use when proofreading your work.<sup>11</sup>

Because students who are weak in grammar cannot be counted on to discipline and motivate themselves to learn grammar alone, such an exercise must be supervised, tracked, graded, and responded to. This requires time, attention, and paperwork — from the teacher, an assistant, or a grammar coach.

This approach has the advantage that it works more directly with the underlying learning skills the lack of which enable a student to continue to have problems in grammar. Of course, nothing is guaranteed; there are students who can perform such exercises perfunctorily without learning from them. Supervision and follow-up are essential.

*The fatal error approach.* To some degree, grammar instruc-

tion can be integrated into most courses, especially when combined with the effort to train students in a specific method for remediating themselves. In the “fatal error” approach, the teacher reviews one or two key grammatical points each week. These go on the “fatal error” list, just beneath errors in names and facts. Anyone committing an error on the list receives an automatic F on the assignment. The list grows slowly, item by item, week by week. Students must proofread against the list before submitting their work, or fail the assignment.

The fatal error approach works with students who can learn on their own. It may not be effective for students who need supervised practice in order to learn new skills. This approach also requires additional record keeping by teachers.

### Improving K-13 Grammar Instruction

The ideal solution would be for the problem to go away, and this could happen if all journalism majors received excellent instruction in grammar in K-12 and in freshman composition. Journalism schools and organizations would do well to take an active role in improving grammar instruction at these levels. Meanwhile, college journalism teachers have to teach grammar.

### Journalism as a Second Language

Since so much grammar is “in the ears,” one approach might be to require students to listen to journalistic language intensively — as if they were in an audio lab practicing a foreign language. They could use audio books, recordings of journalistic articles, NPR. They need to get the language of journalism “in their ears,” so that, when they sit down to write, that is the language they hear inside themselves.

Further, journalism programs might consider defining themselves as “immersion experiences,” in which students eat, sleep, talk, read, and write journalistically. Slang and the language of pop culture would be forbidden — just as English is forbidden in an immersion program on learning Japanese. Students must practice, practice, practice using the power of standard English to express the full range of their experiences, and not revert to street-talk to get real. Reading great writing, writing incessantly, even writing poetry, is a way to learn this. Good grammar is not something students know; it is something they breathe, feel, think, say, practice, write, and radiate — the way a student learning French develops new facial expressions, and a student learning Italian develops new gestures. In the terms of the early cognitive psychologist Vygotsky, learning to write well in journalistic style requires the development of a new organ in the mind.

### Research Needed

*What works?* Everyone has an opinion on how best to teach

grammar, but there is surprisingly little agreement on what works, especially what works with journalism majors. Grammar and AP style present a challenge of enormous magnitude to students who are weak in grammar. It is helpful to recognize how hard this is; it is like starting a foreign language at age 19 that you must write and speak proficiently by age 21. The literature on Teaching English as a Second Language may provide some useful insights.

In a manner of speaking, students cannot learn journalism; they can only learn to become journalists. That is, students cannot remain who they used to be and just add journalism to that self. They must experience a transformation of identity, skills, habits, and values, a transformation in the way they think and know and see the world — the transformation of becoming a producer of journalism and not just a consumer of it. It's like that point in learning a foreign language when you begin to think in that language. Studies are needed to discover what helps journalism students combine this professional acculturation with the changes in personal development they normally experience during the college years.<sup>12</sup>

*How much terminology?* How much or little grammatical terminology do students need to know in order to master grammar? What is the smallest set of terms that will suffice?

*Grammatical disabilities.* There are a few students who can make outstanding journalists, but who, for inexplicable reasons, will never master grammar. Sooner or later, every program admits one of these. Such students can be profoundly motivated, dedicated, creative, and resourceful, and they can come back with stories that make your heart skip. But they can't write an error-free sentence, and nothing seems to help them learn how.

Research is needed on how journalism programs accommo-

date such rare students, and how those students need to be trained in how to deal with their grammatical disability openly and effectively. Most of all, research is needed on how to help such students learn early how to cultivate the comradeship of copyeditors, because their professional careers will depend on the help editors can give them (assuming, of course, the editors are themselves proficient in grammar).

*Different instruction for different kinds of students.* What is a useful typology for identifying different ways different kinds of students best learn grammar, and thus how to teach different kinds of students?

As this article has argued, there are current and historical causes why many journalism students have deficiencies in grammar, usage, and style, and those causes are not likely to go away soon. Because journalism schools and organizations require good grammar, they will continue to have the responsibility for making sure that students learn it. This is likely to require action on several fronts, including changes in curriculum and instruction, the development of support services, strengthening of K-13 instruction, and research. The alternatives—a significant increase in the number of skilled copy editors or an increasing tolerance of non-standard grammar in journalism—are not likely to be acceptable.

It may be time for journalism schools and the media industries to pool their resources to develop widely shared methods for helping students learn grammar, such as a national online interactive grammar-teaching Website specifically for journalism. If such methods prove feasible and useful, they could provide future journalists, and journalism schools, the help they need and are not getting.

*Gerald Grow is professor of journalism at Florida A&M University.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Peter Elbow, "Inviting the Mother Tongue: Beyond 'Mistakes,' 'Bad English,' and 'Wrong Language.'" JAC (Journal of Advanced Composition: A Journal of Composition Theory), 19 (3), 1999, 359-99. Quoted in Smitherman & Villanueva, 104.

<sup>2</sup> "Students' Right to Their Own Language," online reprint of original article from College Composition and Communication, XXV, Fall 1974. Available on the NCTE site at: [http://www.ncte.org/library/files/About\\_NCTE/Overview/NewSRTOL.pdf](http://www.ncte.org/library/files/About_NCTE/Overview/NewSRTOL.pdf). Also Stephen Parks, *Class Politics: The Movement for the Students' Right to Their Own Language*. (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000). A detailed history by one of the original proponents.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Patrick Hartwell, "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar," *College English* 47.2 (February 1985): 105-27. And George Hillocks, Jr., *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching*, (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Constance Weaver, *Teaching Grammar in Context*, (NH: Heinemann, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner. 1966. New York: Dell.

<sup>6</sup> John McWhorter, *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language*. (Harper, 2003.)

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin S. Bloom (Ed.), *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain*. (Addison Wesley, 1956).

<sup>8</sup> The full taxonomy is summarized at many locations on the Web, with a good one at:

[http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/educ\\_school2/docs/stai\\_manual/manual9.htm](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/educ_school2/docs/stai_manual/manual9.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Grow and Glen Bleske, "Why Journalism Students Don't Know Grammar." Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. San Antonio, Texas, August 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Grow, "Teaching Learners to be Self-Directed." *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41 (3), 125-149. Expanded version available online at: <<http://www.longleaf.net/ggrows>>.

<sup>11</sup> The individualized grammar manual is not my idea, but I have not been able to identify its source.

<sup>12</sup> As mapped, for example, in William G. Perry, *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years: A Scheme*. (New Edition, Jossey-Bass, 1998).

---

# Journalism Schools and the Teaching of Grammar

DON RANLY  
University of Missouri

---

Last August, at the AEJMC meeting, I served on a panel about teaching grammar. When I saw that panel proposed, I rushed to present myself as a panelist and was delighted to be chosen.

Journalism teachers have struggled forever with the problem of teaching grammar, I guess – certainly in the three decades plus that I was a professor of journalism at the Missouri School of Journalism (I became professor emeritus last September). Well, perhaps *struggled* is not a good word. Someone usually ends the debate quickly by stating, "They should know grammar before they get to journalism school." How often have I heard that said?

Certainly, all journalism professors think that teaching grammar is the job of the English department.

Years ago I approached the head of the lower-division English courses and asked her for a course in grammar. She assured me that such a course was desperately needed and then told me, "But I don't think we have anyone qualified to teach it." Professors regularly have been hired into English departments with the promise that they will never have to teach a writing course of any kind, let alone something as lowly as grammar. The composition classes are taught by graduate teaching assistants who, of course, usually have never taught in their lives and who are working on their own degrees.

Getting back to this panel, some thought it was really not necessary for students to know all of the technical terms. Besides, students found studying grammar so boring. Others debated just how many terms students needed to know.

One thing they did agree on, though. Every person said that when an editor changes a writer's copy, that editor should be able to explain exactly why.

Now just how do you do that without knowing the "technical" aspects of grammar? Nearly my whole time at Missouri I taught an upper-level magazine-editing class. It was for editors, not writers. And believe me, we got "technical." How do you explain that "between you and I" should be "between you and me" without explaining that "between" is a preposition and that the object of a preposition must be in the objective case?

A news-editing professor told me that he told the class not to end the first line of a headline with a preposition. A hand goes

up. “What’s a preposition?” Answer: “You should know that.”

A broadcast professor told his class to avoid the use of the passive voice. A hand goes up.  
“What’s the passive voice?”

Don’t get technical?

### **The Word is “Consistency”**

First, most English professors have not been editors. They have not had to put up with the ridicule and contempt of readers who spot misspelled words and ungrammatical sentences. I had a close friend in the English department who never tired of poking fun at me for teaching prescriptive grammar – grammatical rules largely based, he said, needlessly and foolishly, on the long-dead Latin language. I would point out again and again that I was trying to teach standard American written English so that my students could take their places on any publication in the country and probably on publications published in English nearly anywhere else.

Nor have most English professors had the experience of having more than one editor look at the same copy. Even though they might write for journals that have a stylebook, they don’t have the day-to-day deadline experience of people being expected to know the “style” the publication uses. Without a stylebook, editors would regularly be changing each other’s copy and wasting each other’s time.

Surely, then, the same can be said about consistency in the use of correct grammar. The first reason to learn correct grammar is that it is correct. The second reason for journalists to learn correct grammar is to be consistent.

I would like to say that a third reason is to be clear, and many times that is true. However, a person is clear when he says “between you and I.” That person also makes it clear that he doesn’t know grammar.

### **It’s not Rocket Science**

Scientists know stuff. Geologists, for example, know rocks. What is so difficult about learning the parts of speech? We’re talking mostly about vocabulary, definitions that I find perfectly and simply explained in a third-grade grammar booklet I found in a grocery store.

I used to tell my students this story. My aunt gave me a bone that someone gave her. The person who gave it to her said the bone was from a shrimp-like fish and was more than 5,000 years old. Find out if that’s true, she said.

My granddaughter loves rocks. In our geology building, the walls are lined with lighted cases of labeled rocks. One day

when I was going to the university, I decided to take Jessie with me to see the rocks. My wife says to me, “Here, take this bone along and find out what it is.” I was not happy, of course, but I did. We got into the geology building, and the dean’s secretary saw my gorgeous granddaughter and invited her into the dean’s office to give her a box of little rocks. Ah, my chance. I pulled out the bone and asked her if she might know anyone who could identify it. “I’ll ask the dean,” she said, and over my objections, we were drawn into the dean’s office. He took one glance at the bone, gave it a name, said it was indeed more than 5,000 years old, told us where they were found in the Rocky Mountains, and then showed us one in a glass case in the hallway.

Scientists know stuff. I’ve told my students: Suppose you were in an operating room and the surgeon said to the nurse, “Hand me that sharp, pointed thing over there.” What would you think? Suppose you were working with a carpenter, and the carpenter asked you to hand him or her the thing with the jagged edge.

Why is it asking so much of students to know what a subordinating conjunction is? If students don’t know the properties of pronouns, how can they be expected to know that pronouns must agree with their antecedents in gender and number? In these days of sexist language, that’s not always easy.

### **We’ve got to Teach the Professors**

The first problem we have with journalism teachers teaching grammar is, once again, they don’t think they should have to do that. Whether that’s a cop-out or not, it’s a problem that must be confronted.

The second problem is many don’t know how to teach it. That shouldn’t surprise us. Many schools still take professionals out of the newsroom who have not had one day of teaching experience anywhere nor any education course of any kind. Think of what an elementary school teacher has to go through to get certified to teach. If a professional has a master’s degree, wow, what more could we ask?

The third problem is that many if not most do not know grammar. Well, perhaps they do, but not enough to hurt them any. That’s what the jazz player said when asked whether he could read music. Not enough to hurt it any. More than that, I’ve heard many brag about not knowing grammar and ridicule people who know the difference between a gerund and a participle. This kind of talk comes mostly from reporters, of course, but it’s damaging to students, nonetheless.

### **The Folly of Grammar Exams**

Many schools have had a grammar test in place that students

must pass before formally entering journalism school or before progressing to more advanced courses. I have studied a few of these, and I know that I am on most dangerous grounds when I criticize them.

Here are some of my contentions. Some of them are prepared by people who know nothing about testing – certainly not enough to ascertain whether students know enough grammar and punctuation to serve them well in journalism.

Some of these tests actually give students a choice of a right or a wrong answer. Is that the way writers or editors would encounter a grammatical problem in real life? Many students have an ear for what sounds right and have no idea of why. If you give them a choice like this, they wouldn't have to be greatly skilled to pick the right answer. What would be wrong with giving them a five-page story with grammar and punctuation errors scattered throughout? At least this would be somewhat realistic.

The worst thing about grammar tests is what happens in a lot of testing. Students are prepped for the test. They are told what to expect. Also, students can pass with a 70 percent in some places. Imagine that. And students can take the exam over and over, with all kinds of coaching in between the tests. What does any of this prove? How does any of this help students gain any real understanding of grammar?

### **The Need for a Separate Course**

What administrators and faculties most often refuse to face is that the only solution is a separate course in grammar. Instead, professors, usually young, inexperienced professors, are expected to include the teaching of grammar in the beginning reporting course. To make matters worse, that course often is a writing-for-the-media course that is expected to cover writing for print, broadcast, and online. Even assuming these professors would have the ability to teach and review grammar, how could they possibly have the time?

To do it right, in a systematic, structured way, takes time. I remember a discussion at a faculty meeting at Missouri when the question was raised: "What happens when students fail the grammar exam?" A great news professor and wonderful friend of mine said, "Well, if there are several students who failed, you may have to take them aside for an hour and go through the exam with them."

An hour, indeed! The only question faculties should have is when they should require the course. And the answer is not difficult. As early as the journalism faculty gets its hands on the students. My magazine-editing students regularly expressed anger and frustration that they had not had the grammar training before their beginning reporting and editing classes.

These students are not the only people upset that they never learned grammar. I have presented all-day grammar seminars to hundreds of professionals at *Folio*: publishing conferences and at meetings of the International Association of Business Communicators, and these people are living proof of how desperately grammar instruction is necessary for them to do their jobs. They are starving for any help you can give them.

The one remaining question is, should the course be for one or two or three credits? That might depend on whether the school is on a quarter or semester system. But I would think it could be done in a two-credit course. Some journalism schools have done and are doing this.

### **Repetition is the Mother of Learning**

Nevertheless, regardless how many credit hours this initial course is, it will not be enough. Unless every professor in the school, at least all of those involved in writing and editing courses, reviews and reinforces grammatical principles, they are going to fall by the wayside.

In the very beginning of my teaching at the Missouri School of Journalism, I taught a beginning news course. In that course I was expected and I did try to drill the students in the sometimes senseless and illogical rules of the Associated Press. For example, I taught them that the period and the comma always go inside quotation marks. Professors in our newsroom simply could not understand why we didn't teach the students that simple rule. There was no way we could persuade them that we tried. One semester was simply not enough. The rules must be reinforced over a long period of time.

So how do you get educated faculty or faculty educated? And how do you get them to explain clearly to those who still don't get them the sometimes intricate rules of grammar? Faculty will complain bitterly that students don't know the rules, but they often are unable or unwilling to explain them.

### **So Where do You Start?**

Discussing how to teach grammar to journalism students would take another article or two. At least. But isn't it interesting that at journalism conventions and meetings the subject doesn't seem to come up much? And how often is it discussed at individual schools and departments of journalism? We all know it must be done, but how?

I could discuss how I do it, but someone might very well have a better method. I start with the sentence or the clause. I start by showing the relationship between the kinds of sentences and punctuation. For example, a complex sentence that begins with a dependent clause must always have a comma before the subject of the independent clause. Every time. In a compound sentence, you must always place a

comma before the coordinating conjunction that joins the two independent clauses.

Look at all of the vocabulary required to understand that. But it is practical. I give them a set of comma rules that work every time.

Then we move on to all the kinds of pronouns. For some of the pronouns, we talk about person, number, gender, and case. All of this is a matter of logic. And then the complicated verb with its person, number, tense, voice, and mood. It's all manageable, and the only thing that works is lots of drills and exercises. There is no other way.

Many people don't think the subjunctive is worth saving. Once I was invited to a meeting of English professors to discuss what students should know about grammar. When they came to the verb, they settled on the tenses and the voices. "That's it?" I asked. One professor looked at me and said, "I

suppose you want them to learn the subjunctive." I looked back and said, "Well, if I was you..." They quickly agreed to include the subjunctive. If I was you! Barbaric.

I swear at least some of my students came to enjoy parsing sentences. And for every verb they had to be able to tell me the person, number, tense, voice, and mood.

Anyone who is a teacher can make it fun. Certainly a teacher can at least make students see why they must know these things, if not to further their careers, then to feel confident and professional in their work.

Now if only deans, administrators, and faculties of schools and departments of journalism could be convinced – and bite the bullet.

*Don Ranly is professor emeritus of journalism at the University of Missouri.*

---

# Homonyms as Teaching Devices in J-classes

BRUCE PLOPPER AND SONNY RHODES  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

---

Teachers in various disciplines continue to struggle with the poor writing skills students bring with them into academic environments. In fact, the literature is filled with descriptions of both the challenges writing teachers have faced in a variety of contexts and the success or failure of writing strategies used with students in these contexts. Among such students were those in commonly taught college classes such as history, geography, economics, and journalism; those for whom English is a second language; and those with language learning disabilities.

Since the 1980s, when assessment became a watchword for academic accountability, an ongoing body of research focusing specifically on the teaching of writing has identified for teachers the importance of mastering organizational writing skills, paying attention to linguistic detail, and understanding rhetorical devices such as antonyms, synonyms, and homonyms.<sup>1</sup>

While the first two competencies typically are taught both in English composition classes and in journalistic writing classes, teaching the last skill has been primarily the domain of English teachers. This study suggests a change may be helpful.

Specifically, researchers in a variety of contexts have concluded that an understanding of rhetorical devices allows students to be more flexible with language.<sup>2</sup> The research reported herein examined whether long-term exposure to homonyms helped journalism students in their subsequent writing courses. Homonyms were chosen as the treatment element because several studies had identified homonyms as a useful rhetorical device that taught students humor and language flexibility.

To answer the question of whether long-term exposure to homonym training has an effect on subsequent grades in writing classes, a longitudinal study of college students taking their first journalistic writing course was conducted. The study began in the fall 2000 semester and continued through spring 2003. Students in some sections of the course were exposed to 11

weeks of homonym exercises, while students in an equal number of sections had no homonym exercises.

During the first 10 weeks of homonym exposure, students were provided with weekly lists of 20 sets of homonyms and asked to look up definitions for each homonym on the list, in preparation for a homonym quiz the following week. In the first week of exposure, the study's director discussed homonyms with the students and described the process that would take place during the course of the semester. Students were told the activity was an attempt to improve their attention to words and to increase their vocabularies.

During week 11 of homonym exposure, students were asked to create five riddles, each involving one set of homonyms. They were given several examples of such creations, e.g., "What do you call a smelly chicken?" Answer: "A foul fowl;" and "What do you call rabbit fur?" Answer: "Hare hair."

Each weekly quiz and the homonym riddles were graded by the same person throughout the study, and, for motivational purposes, grades were averaged into students' total class points for the semester. Unless students had specific questions about the use or application of one or more homonyms on any given list, there was no formal homonym discussion until week 11, when the homonym riddles were shared aloud during class and critiqued by the study's director. Students seemed to enjoy the riddles that were created, although some were "on the edge of sense" and had to be explained by their authors.

All students were tracked academically until either they had been graduated or they had completed at least 70 GPA hours toward their 124-hour degrees and were enrolled in the spring 2005 semester. Ultimately, 59 students completed the homonym treatment (HT) classes and 61 completed the non-homonym treatment classes (NHT). After a review of these students' academic records, 31 HT students and 30 NHT students were discarded from the analysis because they did not meet the established criteria for the study. Most of the discarded students had not taken more than one writing class after completing the first journalism writing class. This occurred because the first journalistic writing class is required by several non-journalism disciplines such as business, which requires no subsequent writing classes.

The remaining 29 HT students consisted of 10 journalism majors and 19 non-majors, while the remaining 30 NHT students consisted of 17 journalism majors and 13 non-majors. A statistical analysis of overall GPAs before and after the HT/NHT classes showed both groups significantly improved by approximately one-quarter of a grade-point. GPA data and individual course grades

were obtained from official university records.

Because a variety of factors can contribute to overall GPAs, additional analyses were performed. One analysis examined overall writing class GPAs before and after the HT/NHT classes. Results showed no overall differences between the groups, but analyses of before-and-after writing class GPAs of sub-groups within the two larger groups revealed that in the NHT group, journalism majors' writing class GPAs dropped significantly.

While the analyses described above were performed on the comparative GPAs earned by each individual student, analyses also were completed on matched pairs of journalism majors and on matched pairs of non-majors. Matching consisted of GPAs in "before" writing classes, as well as number of "before" writing classes taken.

An analysis of "after" writing class GPAs for the matched set of journalism majors showed a significant difference between the 3.57 average "after" writing class GPA of the HT journalism majors and the 2.90 average "after" writing class GPA of the NHT journalism majors. On the contrary, for the matched set of non-majors in the two groups, an analysis of "after" writing class GPAs showed a statistically insignificant average difference.

Despite the limitation of small sample sizes, it is clear that, for the samples of journalism students in this study, there was a relationship between long-term homonym exposure and grades in subsequent writing classes. Although the relationship generally was not evident when overall data from the HT group were compared with overall data from the NHT group, it was clearly evident when data from sub-groups were analyzed.

This raises a question addressed by previous researchers: Do journalism writing courses differ significantly from writing courses in other disciplines, in terms of both structure and content?<sup>3</sup> Some researchers have suggested that this is the case. Thus it might be reasonable to believe that writing class outcomes depend in part upon the writing path taken, i.e., journalism majors taking advanced journalism classes, and non-majors taking advanced English/rhetoric classes might be expected to have similarly good post HT/NHT writing class GPAs.

While this was true for non-majors, it was not the case for journalism majors; journalism majors in the NHT group suffered a subsequent and significant writing class GPA decline despite marked similarities in mean numbers of writing classes taken before and after the HT/NHT classes. In fact, when data for journalism majors and non-majors were

scrutinized in matched groups, it was found that the journalism majors who had had homonym exposure also had significantly higher subsequent writing class GPAs than did the journalism majors without such exposure.

In contrast, the non-majors' before-and-after GPAs did not vary significantly between groups. These findings support the idea that long-term homonym exposure has a protective effect for journalism majors.

They also support the idea that advanced journalism courses require skills different from those required in advanced English/rhetoric classes, and that homonym exposure helps students with those skills. Perhaps it is merely an increased propensity to pay closer attention to content, for both advanced reporting class content and homonym use involve just that: paying attention. On the other hand, advanced English/rhetoric writing classes may be so similar to the general education composition classes in both content and process that the need to pay closer attention is not present.

Several of this study's findings show the value of long-term

homonym exposure to persistent journalism majors. Still, additional research involving other rhetorical devices and larger sample sizes is needed to confirm the findings and support the hypothesis that inclusion of such devices in the journalism curriculum does indeed promote increases in attention to writing and better grades in journalism writing classes.

One recommendation for homonym use in the classroom is that instructors spend more classroom time discussing homonyms and even playing language games with them. This could include asking students to create on-the-spot puns, jokes, and riddles. Such increased attention might produce a more pronounced effect than was found in this study.

(This article was adapted from a paper presented at the 2005 annual meeting of AEJMC in San Antonio, Texas.)

*Bruce L. Plopper is a professor and Sonny Rhodes is an assistant professor in the School of Mass Communication, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Bruce L. Plopper and Jeanne Norton Rollberg, "Assessment and Student Outcomes in Entry-Level News Writing Courses: Another Look," *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal*, 12 (No. 1, 1996): 1-9; Kay Phillips, "Grammar Gremlins Haunt Writers," *Communication: Journalism Education Today*, 32 (Summer 1999): 14-16; Bruce Henderson, "Improving Student Writing Using a Web-based Targeted Approach to Grammar System (TAGS)," *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 57 (autumn 2002): 230-243; and Roanne G. Brice, "Connecting Oral and Written Language Through Applied Writing Strategies," *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 40 (September 2004): 38-47.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Luett Hanson, "Computer-aided Remediation for Grammar, Punctuation," *Journalism Educator*, 44 (winter 1990): 43-49; Frank Peters, "Using Humor to Teach Grammar or The Grammarian as Stand-up Comic," *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Association of Teachers of English Grammar* (Williamsport, Pa.: ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 397 437, 1992): 12-15; and Cathy Tower, "Making Room for Laughter: The Use of Humor in the Writing Classroom," *The New England Reading Association Journal*, 34 (No. 2, 1998): 11-16.

<sup>3</sup> Jack Dvorak, Larry Lain, and Tom Dickson, *Journalism Kids Do Better: What Research Tells Us About High School Journalism* (Bloomington, Ind.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English and Communication, 1994); Lyle D. Olson and Thomas Dickson, "English Composition Courses as Preparation for News Writing," *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 49 (summer 1995): 47-54; and Bruce L. Plopper and Jeanne Norton Rollberg, "Assessment and Student Outcomes in Entry-Level News Writing Courses: Another Look," *op. cit.*

# ASJMC Adjunct Survey Results...and more

MICHAEL E. ABRAMS  
Florida A&M University

What are the working conditions like for adjunct professors in today's journalism schools?

How many journalism schools or departments have established policies for handling adjunct faculty, and how many administrators are familiar with their regional accrediting agency standards on adjuncts?

Who are the adjuncts and why have they attracted so much recent national attention?

They love to teach, but are often unloved by their institutions. These are the teachers who sometimes call themselves the "invisible" or "phantom" professors. Some see themselves part of a cheap labor pool, exploited for their skills, in a two-tier college teaching system.

They're often invited to socialize with regular faculty, but they don't get to dance.

Here's a quick picture of a growing problem and challenge:

- New faculty jobs in higher education went "disproportionately" to adjuncts, reported *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in June, 2005, citing U.S. Department of Education statistics.
- Part-timers are now almost half of all teachers in colleges and universities, the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty reported.
- Degree granting colleges employed some 60,000 more faculty members in 2003 than in 2001, but the increase in full-timers was only 2 percent, compared to 10 percent for part-timers, reported *The Chronicle*.

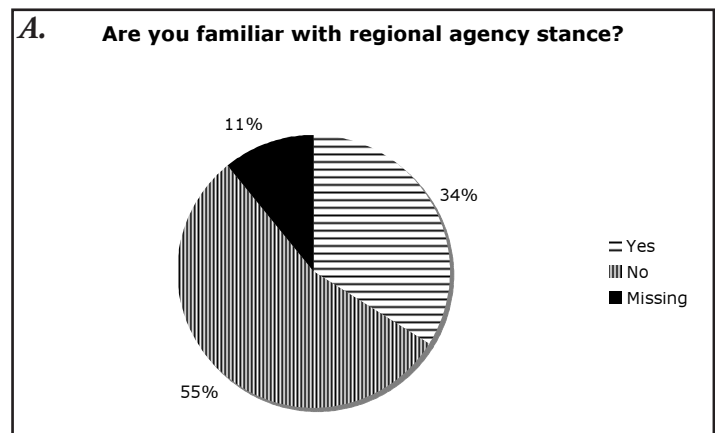
## In the Journalism Schools

A recent survey of journalism administrators revealed that there are some big challenges for schools that wish to provide adjuncts with the necessary tools and for some schools that apparently need to know more about the standards of regional accrediting agencies regarding part-time faculty.

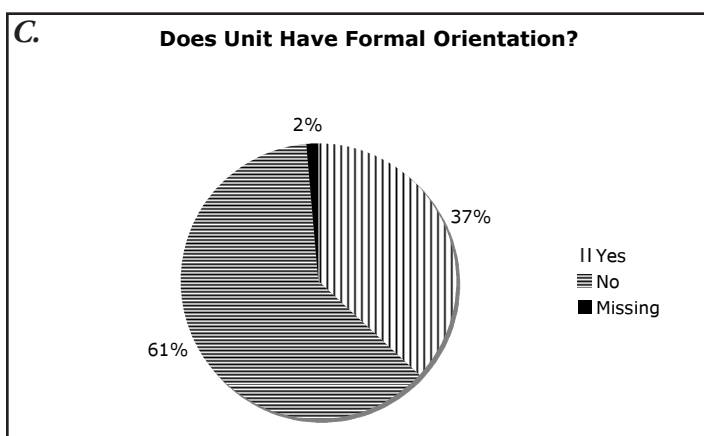
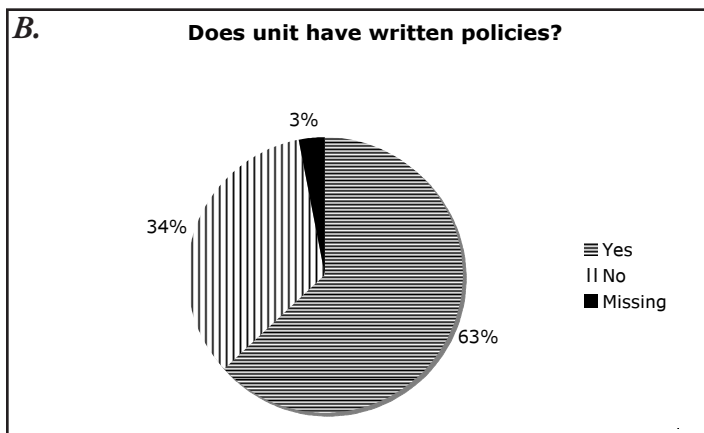
We analyzed responses from administrators at 65 of the 195 public and private journalism ASJMC-member programs. The answers revealed that salaries and conditions vary greatly. Respondents included 19 private and 46 public institutions. These schools reported from 45 to 3,458 journalism majors. They employed an average of 10 adjuncts in their journalism programs.

We found that:

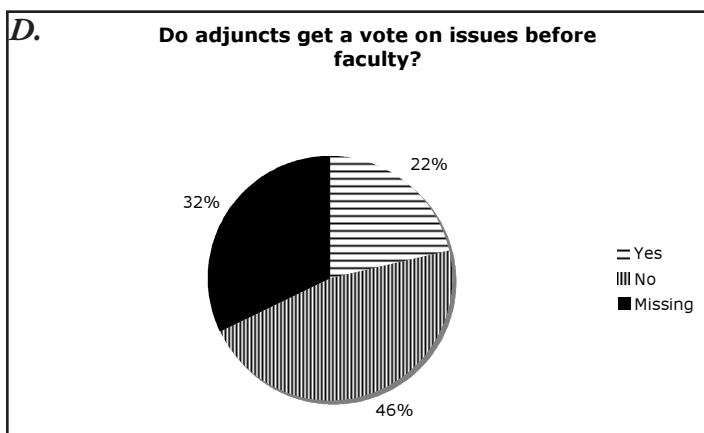
- Only 34 percent of respondent journalism departments or schools said **they were familiar with regional accrediting agency standards.** (A.)



- At least a third of those that responded said that they have **no written policies regarding adjuncts (B.)**, and 61 percent reported that they have **no formal orientation for adjunct teachers. (C.)**



- Three out of every ten of the responding institutions do not invite adjuncts to regular faculty meetings, although some invite adjuncts to attend those meetings when issues of concern to them are on the agenda. **Only 22 percent said that adjuncts get to vote on issues before the faculty. (D.)**



- While the typical salary for an adjunct was \$3,000 per course taught, at least a dozen of the schools paid less than that, beginning as low as \$810 per course for a person with up to three years of teaching experience. All but one of the schools pay by the course. Some schools do offer higher salaries, with one offering \$3,500 to \$7,500 per term “depending on a variety of factors.” Another offered \$5,000 per course “plus benefits.” Public and private schools have about the same median \$3,000 salary.
- A little less than half of the schools require professional experience in journalism to teach in their departments. Fifty-two percent do not. Of those schools requiring such experience, the range was from 2 to 10 years, with the average at 5 years.
- Of those with written policies (B.), about half were written at the university level and half at the unit level.

### Differences Between Public and Private Schools

The survey shows that on several issues, private and public schools differ greatly.

Public schools were more likely to require a certain number of years of professional experience. Half of all public schools require it, but only about a third of private schools do.

Public schools were much more likely to have written policies—30 out of 44 responding—while only 11 of 19 private schools had written policies.

Public schools were also more likely to be familiar with regional accreditation policies—18 out of 40—but only 4 of 18 private schools responding were familiar with these policies.

Public schools are more likely to invite adjuncts to faculty meetings—34 of 44 did so—while only 10 of 19 private schools invite them. Thirteen of the public schools allow adjuncts to vote on issues. Only one of the private schools allows a vote.

On the other hand, private schools were more likely to have formal orientations—11 out of 19—than public schools with only 13 of 45 responding with a ‘yes.’

### Some Positive Results

On the positive side of the ledger, 60 of the 65 responding schools routinely evaluate adjunct teaching.

Eighty-one percent provide office space, and all but three schools make other accommodations for adjuncts if regular

office space is unavailable. Showing that journalism educators do like to socialize, 92 percent of respondents said that they “include adjuncts in social events.”

Some adjuncts serve a long time. The average for the “longest-serving adjunct” is 10 years, with one university reporting an adjunct who has been employed for 35 years.

What do all of these figures mean? How does one put them into perspective?

One way might be to look at regional accrediting standards. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accrediting agency for 11 mainly southeastern and southern states, states that part-time faculty members can enhance educational effectiveness, but the numbers must be “properly limited.” They must meet the same “professional, experiential, and scholarly preparation as their full-time counterparts teaching in the same discipline.”

What seems to be missing from some journalism programs is the next part of the SACS criteria: “Each institution must establish and publish comprehensive policies concerning the employment of part-time faculty members. It must also provide for appropriate orientation, supervision, and evaluation all part-time faculty members. Procedures to ensure student access to part-time faculty members must be clearly stated and publicized.”

Granted, requirements of the regional bodies vary, but one would think that written policies governing adjuncts should be a no-brainer.

### **What Journalism Educators say about Evaluations**

In the survey, respondents were asked some open-ended questions. They were asked to describe how they supervise adjunct faculty. Administrators “sit in on classes occasionally” at one institution. Classroom visits are not uncommon, and one school asks for classroom observations by a tenured faculty member. Student evaluations are used frequently.

Wrote one administrator, “We are a fairly small department. We know our adjuncts well, and most of them teach for us regularly. I do pay close attention to course evaluations and would not rehire an adjunct if serious problems were evident.”

One school asks department chairs to supervise adjuncts, and these adjuncts are “evaluated in the same manner as are regular faculty.”

At one public school, union regulations require adjuncts to be evaluated annually. Informal feedback from students, course evaluations, and evaluations by faculty committee are used.

At another school, the associate director “visits/observes each adjunct. We have lead instructors (full-time faculty) for multi-section courses often taught by adjuncts. Every adjunct (and full-time faculty member) is evaluated by students in every class.”

After student evaluations are assessed, any areas of deficiency are discussed with adjuncts, wrote one administrator.

### **What Journalism Educators say about Orientation, Supervision**

One institution says that at the start of the term, adjuncts are gathered at regular meetings to discuss course content, grading, troubleshooting, problems, etc. It is not uncommon at some schools for “mentors” to be appointed.

At some institutions, the syllabi and texts are provided for the adjuncts, while at others, the adjuncts develop their own syllabi with guidance from faculty members and get help with selecting the appropriate books for students.

Another institution offers a “training luncheon,” and another what it calls a “stewardship program.”

At another, “Adjuncts are hired under university guidelines with three-year authorization; I brief them and show them sample syllabi and mentor them or assign them a mentor. I review performance during the term and meet with them after the term and discuss evaluations, which are public under state law.”

One administrator mentions that a handbook is distributed. E-mail communication is used, and frequent meetings with administrators are encouraged.

One school helps adjuncts by “providing syllabi from full-time faculty for any first time adjunct- taught course. Adjuncts are connected with full-time faculty for informal advising and discussion. Another has a process to help adjuncts select and order textbooks, develop syllabi, tests, and other course materials. There is frequent conversation with adjuncts on teaching related issues “they have or will encounter.”

Syllabi, course grades, and student evaluations are reviewed at one institution. At another, “the long-term adjuncts are checked with occasionally; new adjuncts are typically mentored by a full-time faculty member in the area. All adjuncts have their teaching, evaluations and course material evaluated by a faculty committee on an annual basis.”

### **The National Perspective for College Adjuncts**

A good deal of ferment is obvious on the national scene, as

financial problems at universities press institutions to hire adjuncts at lower salary rates than regular faculty. Many of these adjuncts depend on university salary. Many feel exploited by what are seen by some as sweatshop wages. Part-time academic workers are organizing themselves, from the Metropolitan State College of Denver to the prestigious universities in the Northeast.

“Do yourself a favor and do not go to graduate school in the humanities,” wrote one adjunct teacher to *The Boston Globe*. She earned a doctorate in history from a top-10 school and spent five years looking “fruitlessly” for a tenure track job, wrote reporter Christopher Shea. The adjunct gained a national reputation and much sympathy from her Invisible Adjunct.com blog.

The American Association of University Professors Collective Bargaining Congress has taken steps to organize adjuncts in the Boston area. Their survey found that faculty members averaged \$2,200 a course, and “only a few enjoyed health benefits, and almost none had a role in college or university governance,” wrote Richard Moser in *Academe*, Nov./Dec. 2000.

At Emerson University in Boston, part-time teachers, guided by the AAUP, established a labor union. The United Auto Workers and Adjuncts Come Together (ACT/UAW) formed to unionize adjunct professors at New York University. A part-time teacher union has been formed at the University of Vermont, guided by the AAUP.

Complaints from adjuncts about work overloads, and complaints from students about being taught by professors who are not adequately prepared to teach, can be commonly found on the Internet and in the national media.. One union spokesperson calls adjunct instructors “the burros of academe.”

The question of whether all adjuncts are exploited could be at issue. Some adjuncts use their salaries to supplement income from other jobs, according to the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty. Some comparisons were made.

The average total income in 2003 for full-time faculty and instructional staff was \$81,200, including \$67,400 in basic salary from the institution, \$5,000 in other income from the institution, \$2,200 in outside consulting income, and \$6,600 in outside income.

Part-time faculty and instructional staff averaged \$37,000 in outside income, compared to the \$6,600 for full-time staff,

reported the survey, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

### Possible Strategy for Journalism Units

At the very least, journalism educators should be aware of the growing numbers of adjuncts and should take more steps to address their needs. Accreditation agencies look toward current faculties to bring adjuncts into the circle of teaching excellence by providing orientation and evaluation and by having written policies for guidance of adjuncts. A handbook for adjuncts might be of good use.

The ASJMC survey statistics show that many journalism units have little knowledge of accreditation criteria regarding adjuncts. This must be corrected from within. Committees within faculties should be organized to look at the standards and find ways to comply with them.

Fortunately, many journalism departments have taken strong steps to evaluate adjuncts. This is the strong suit for j-schools. There are numerous ways to conduct evaluations, reflected in the comments of those surveyed.

Ensuring student access to adjuncts, as required in the SACS standards, is promoted by giving adjuncts office space. Most of the universities surveyed do this much. Whether the adjuncts are mandated to keep office hours regrettably was not a survey question, but the necessity seems obvious.

Is it possible to obtain higher salaries for adjuncts? This is contingent upon the situation at each university. Some responding schools are paying much more money per course than others. However, a teacher who relies solely upon an adjunct’s salary would be close to or below the established poverty level in the United States.

Journalism schools are nourished by bringing in professors with professional experience. Schools lend themselves to the kinds of skills that adjuncts bring into the classroom, while students are given the benefit of current professional practice.

If journalism schools treat adjuncts as they would like to see journalism students treated when they enter the professional world, the j-schools would be on firm footing in this uncertain and changing academic environment.

*Michael E. Abrams is professor of journalism and director of graduate studies in the Division of Journalism, Florida A&M University.*

## References

- The data for this study were collected by Robert M. Ruggles, editor, in fall 2004.  
“AAUP At Work” [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3860/is\\_200011/ai\\_n8912726](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3860/is_200011/ai_n8912726)  
Forrest Cataldi, E., Fahimi, M. and Bradburn, E.M. (2005) National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:04) Report on Faculty and Instructional Staff in Fall, 2003 (NCES 2005-172), U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved August 22, 2005, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>  
“More Faculty Jobs go to Part-Timers,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 3, 2005, p. 8  
Moser, Richard. *Academe*, November/December, 2000  
“[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3860/is\\_200011/ai\\_n8912726](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3860/is_200011/ai_n8912726)”  
Shea, Christopher. “The case of the Invisible Adjunct,” *The Boston Globe*, May 9, 2004

**Editor’s Note:** The U.S. Department of Education reported in December 2005, after the completion of these three articles relating to adjuncts, that the percentage of faculty members working part time has risen from 33% in 1987 to 43% in 2003, with no change in the percentage between 1998 and 2003. At the same time, the percentage of full-time faculty members **not** on the tenure track has risen from 8% in 1987 to 21% in 2003, with a 3% increase between 1998 and 2003. Source: *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 20, 2006.

---

# Best Practices: How to Value Part-time Journalism Faculty

KIMBERLY WILMOT VOSS  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

---

Adjuncts “are the temps and day-care workers and field hands of academe, hired sometimes the week before classes start, segregated thereafter into basements or separate buildings, snubbed by the tenure-track people, invisible to real faculty” (Matthews, 179). There are numerous studies that have documented the plight of adjunct, or part-time, faculty members. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the main publication for academia, features a regular column, *Adjunct Track*, that highlights the problems of part-time faculty. The difficulties range from low pay and no benefits to a lack of access to resources.

Adjuncts certainly make up a large part of the college community. The American Association of University Professors has reported that adjuncts account for more than 60 percent of all faculty positions in U.S. higher education. Between 1998 and 2001, the number of these positions grew by 35.5 percent.

While some adjuncts teach on an academic year contract, a majority of them are employed on a semester or course basis. Their salaries range from a \$400 to \$4,000 per course. They are most often employed in the departments of English, mathematics, and modern languages and typically teach entry-level courses (Avakian, 34).

Although many adjunct faculty members bring important real-world professional experience to their departments, they rarely have the opportunity to share their knowledge with full-time members (Wickun, 1).

One extended study found that women represent the majority of the part-time faculty members nationally (Tutkoushian &

Bellas) and another found women are more likely to be part-time faculty than full-time instructors (NEA). The study found the part-time/full-time mix of male faculty was about one-third/two-thirds, and the female mix was about fifty-fifty.

In one of the most significant studies on part-time faculty members, Tuckman, Caldwell, and Vogler identified five main categories of part-time faculty. **First**, those who said that their primary reason for working part-time is that they are semi-retired. **Second** is a student category or those instructors who are employed in departments other than the one in which they are registered to receive a degree and who are called part-timers rather than graduate students. **Third** are “Hopeful Full-Timers” or instructors who said they are only part-time because they could not find a full-time position. **Fourth** are full-mooners or those who hold full-time jobs in addition to their adjunct teaching assignments. **Fifth** are home workers or instructors who said that their primary reason for becoming part-time is to take care of relatives or children. Based on survey and anecdotal evidence, a majority of adjunct faculty in mass communications programs are working journalists, retired journalists, or doctoral students.

While much has been written about the exploitation of part-time faculty, it is important to remember that there are strengths to the adjunct faculty system. As active practitioners in their respective fields, adjuncts draw on real-world knowledge and professional experiences. Students benefit from adjuncts’ expertise, and the educational institution also gains recognition for its association with the profession. In addition, adjuncts allow schools to offer additional courses that ordinarily would not be scheduled. When done well, adjunct faculty members complement the full-time faculty and improve a program’s mission (Wickun, 1). Researcher McGuire promotes a positive approach to the use of adjuncts. He wrote that adjuncts who are active in their profession bring “breadth, depth, and relevance” to the classroom.

Despite their value to the institution, too often adjuncts feel unappreciated, and that can result in lowered morale and enthusiasm, detrimental to classroom teaching (Maguire, 30).

In order for the adjunct system to work well, cooperation from full-time faculty members is needed. This can be difficult to achieve based on research that has found the relationship between the two groups is not always collegial. For example, Cassebaum researched the attitudes of permanent faculty toward adjuncts and found the following: “Adjuncts aren’t as good as other teachers; we hire them in August sometimes.” “They work for so little, they can’t be putting in

much time.” “They’re lucky they don’t have to do all the committee work and extra stuff we do.” “If we paid adjunct faculty on a prorated basis, there wouldn’t be enough money for our pay increases.”

Improving the quality of adjunct instruction and their working environment is important to any department that employs adjunct faculty (Kamps, 3). While many adjuncts have strong mastery in their subject areas, attention is often needed to transfer that knowledge to students. To overcome inexperience in the classroom, successful programs have used several approaches. Carson has suggested that colleges or departments create a supervisory position to coordinate instruction for adjuncts that includes recruitment, hiring, scheduling, orientation, counseling, in-service education, and evaluation.

In a speech on making adjunct faculty members valued members of academic community, Kristensen named several areas for improvement. He said that programs needed to consider a basic question: “If the academy depends on adjuncts to teach their students, how does the academy then value the contribution of adjuncts and support them in their endeavors?” He said areas to consider included “identity, involvement and inclusion in the institution, faculty development opportunities, and respect (including full use of facilities, service and support, and salaries).”

### Discovering Best Practices

To find models that successfully fit Kristensen’s model, a review of adjunct-related material in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* was done, along with a review of materials from adjunct-related organizations. An informal request from adjuncts for examples of best practices was made using Survey Monkey, a Web-based survey tool. An appeal for best practices was also put out on Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication listserves. Not all of the practices were used in mass communications programs at four-year schools, although the practices are applicable. Because community colleges use the largest percentage of adjuncts in higher education and are beginning to include adjuncts in professional development efforts (Grant & Keim), practices from two-year schools were also included. While better pay and benefits would be the best practice, limited funds at most schools prevent part-time faculty members from receiving raises. Because of tight budgets, the recommendations described in this article are based on little or no cost to departments.

### Identify and Include

While some part-time faculty members are interested only in teaching their classes, others would like a bigger role in their departments and campuses. To these adjuncts, being left out

of the business of the school leads to feelings of marginalization, as if their opinions did not count. This feeling of isolation has been addressed on some campuses by simply inviting adjuncts to be a part of committees and meetings. These opportunities were optional and not tied to the adjuncts' job descriptions, but they encouraged those adjuncts who were interested to take part.

In some programs, such as at Estrella Mountain Community College, adjunct faculty members are actively involved in assessment efforts. They include an adjunct faculty representative who attends monthly student academic assessment committee meetings and is responsible for updating other adjuncts on campus. There are teaching workshops that adjunct faculty members are invited to attend and for which they are paid.

Towson University has held a weekend event for adjuncts to present the research they have been conducting. One of those who attended said that she felt more valued by the university as a result. Another adjunct reported that it was a great networking opportunity to meet other adjuncts on campus. It was a way of recognizing the research that part-timers were doing, as is often done for tenure-track professors.

Several programs use adjuncts as a pool from which to hire full-time faculty members. In 1989, Austin Community College reported that 69 percent of its newly hired full-time faculty came from its part-time faculty. Also in 1989, Foothill De Anza Community College District reported that 64 percent of its new hires came from its adjunct faculty ranks (McGuire, 2).

Some adjuncts feel alienated from their departments and campuses (Smith 1990). Due to their schedules, which often include early morning, weekend, or evening classes, adjuncts often don't know how to access resources or know which policies may apply to particular situations. To help ease the feelings of isolation, Paradise Valley Community College created the Adjunct Faculty Collegial Support Partnership Program in the fall semester of 1998. "The general goal of the program is the successful integration of newly hired adjunct faculty members into the college community" (Christiano, 1). This is done by having a common place for questions to be answered and for networking to take place.

Several campuses provide adjuncts with office space near other faculty members from their departments, making networking easier. Voice mail was also cited as a helpful factor. One adjunct mentioned that simply mixing adjunct mailboxes in with full-timers' mailboxes made her feel more included in the department versus departments where

adjuncts were in a separate part of the mailroom.

At Penn State University, faculty development workshops are held each semester on a rotating schedule directed toward the needs of part-time faculty. Part-time faculty members are expected to attend at least one of these workshops each semester. A part-time faculty orientation also includes textbook order forms and syllabus preparation handouts.

### **Faculty Development**

Many mass communication adjuncts are a part of the industry. While they may be experts at their craft, they often don't have teaching backgrounds. They need some training on attendance policies, syllabus requirements, and classroom lectures.

Some schools, such as Gateway College, offer a paid in-service training session for all faculty on a Saturday morning to discuss the school's critical thinking outcomes. This includes an adjunct faculty in-service at the start of each semester. Other programs offer in-services at various times to meet the often hectic schedules of adjuncts better.

At Johnson County Community College, part-time faculty members have the opportunity to go through adjunct certification training. The certification training requires the faculty member to complete eight modules addressing policies and procedures. Upon completion of the training, adjuncts become certified and receive a one-time stipend of \$800.

Often adjuncts are hired at the last minute. Westminster College, a private, non-denominational college in Utah, undertook a project to improve the treatment of adjunct faculty on its campus. In its findings of best practices, it recommended that adjuncts be hired as early as possible in order to give them the necessary time to prepare for classes. When last-minute hires are necessary, the report suggested that assistance be given to those adjuncts throughout the semester. (Best Practices, 1).

### **Encouraging Respect**

The Adjunct Track in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* regularly chronicles the disrespect that part-timers encounter. For example, Jill Carroll, who has a Web site devoted to adjunct issues, wrote that some tenure-track faculty subscribe to the theory that "part-time status equals part-time availability" (July 25, 2003). She argued that this concept is flawed as tenure-track faculty members have numerous service and research requirements that also keep them away from students. She wrote, "Adjuncts have to be committed to students, or else we wouldn't keep doing this work for the paltry pay we receive."

While pay continues to be a problem, there are subtle ways to show adjuncts that they matter. There are universities and community colleges that economically reward adjuncts who successfully complete various training programs. Mid-South Community College grants a six percent pay increase to adjunct instructors who complete 35 hours of faculty development classes. Charles County Community College has a three-tiered process for faculty development. It pays adjunct faculty members an additional five to ten percent of their salaries for completing each tier.

In at least one mass communication program, an award for most valuable part-timer of the year, based on student nominations, is given each year. The finalists are invited to an end-of-year party and words of praise about each nominee are read before the winner is announced. Each nominee gets a certificate, and the winner gets a plaque and has his or her name engraved on the sign that resides on a wall in the lobby of the department's offices. Other mass communications units have similar programs.

Several programs use Websites and newsletters to recognize adjuncts and promote their work. For example, the Department of Mass Communications at Iona College's Website includes lengthy bios on both regular and adjunct faculty members. To improve communication and status, some campuses have a column by and about adjuncts in the faculty newsletter (Hibbison and Koerner, 2). One former mass communications administrator wrote that she worked to make part-timers feel a part of the department by involving them in honor banquets and putting up a bulletin board in the department office with the adjuncts' pictures and short bios so students could learn more about their teachers. In addition, students in the program would practice writing faculty profiles using adjuncts as subjects for the department newsletter.

Several programs pay transportation and lodging costs for adjuncts who present papers at conferences. While most adjuncts view teaching as their primary responsibility, that does not mean they are not doing research. According to one recent study, one-third of part-time faculty members had their work published in the past two years (NEA). One respondent who was an adjunct in the past reported that her school paid her conference expenses. She wrote, "That was above and beyond what they had to do. For both of us, I think, it was money well spent. My colleague is now a chief academic officer at a university, and I am a full professor at my university. So these things can pay dividends for the universities and departments, I firmly believe!"

Some schools allow their adjuncts to take credit courses for deeply reduced costs. At Wayne State University, adjunct faculty members are given "reasonable perks" such as paid-for

on-campus parking, business cards, in-service workshops (adjuncts are paid \$100 for attending), and an invitation to attend one or more class sessions of a full-time or "established" adjunct faculty member teaching the same course the new adjunct teaches (Hulbert, 2).

There are mentoring systems on many campuses; some of these programs pair adjuncts and full-time faculty members. The University of Maryland University College uses a mentoring system that allows adjuncts to mentor each other (Witcher, 1). At the State University of New York Farmingdale, a campus program that addressed part-timers was initiated in 2001. Under the program, full-time faculty members mentor adjuncts. Full-time faculty and adjuncts who were a part of the program were paired for an all-day workshop that provided information about campus and student resources and innovative teaching methods. According to Mary Kirby Diaz, who initiated the program, "It heightened campus awareness that we had a high proportion of adjuncts and that adjuncts had special needs." Diaz also tapped into another grant that is paying adjuncts \$250 in extra-service pay to present at professional conferences (Frenette, 1).

There is also the simple concept of kindness. One mass communications adjunct remarked that when she was hired, she was told that she would not be paid well, but she would be treated with kindness. It was a promise fulfilled.

A full-time journalism faculty member shared a practice that helped adjuncts without much time or effort:

Since most of our adjunct classes are evenings, there's little overlap of the two groups. There is overlap of full-timers' office hours and the arrival hour for evening adjuncts. For example, on days that I'm in the office but don't have a 6 p.m. class, I try to stay until 6:10 and say "hi" to adjuncts who pass by en route to their mailboxes between 5:15 and 5:55. And there's hardly a week that I don't have a chance to help someone out in a small way ("Where do they hide the staples? This machine is empty...") or, occasionally, a big one ("There's another class in my room!...The computer projector won't come on...")

Lastly, the programs that adjuncts reported that they most felt a part of were the ones where they felt heard. The concept was summed up best in a report of an adjunct faculty focus group, conducted for the Virginia Community College System: "Much more listening to adjuncts should be occurring, especially by change agents who have the capacity and follow-through to provide substantive answers and fixes to remove often trivial barriers so that adjuncts can devote their

energies to teaching” (Hibbison and Koerner, 2).

## Conclusion

Improving the lives of adjuncts need not take much time or money. While adjuncts certainly deserve better salaries and benefits, there are smaller steps that can be taken to make adjunct faculty members’ jobs more comfortable. Consistent responses from adjuncts who were pleased with their jobs were grounded on respect and kindness shown them. Friendly e-mails and mentions in department newsletters did a lot to make adjuncts feel less marginalized. Even minimal efforts such as paid parking fees were appreciated by

adjuncts. It appears that creativity and etiquette can help to balance the low pay and lack of job security that come with being an adjunct.

**This article is based on a Council of Affiliates panel presentation at the 2003 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication convention, Kansas City.**

*Kimberly Wilmot Voss is an assistant professor in the Department of Mass Communications at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and a former adjunct at several community colleges and universities.*

## References

- Abel, D. (Fall 2000). Building a Web of Inclusion, *The Forum*.
- Adjunct Certification Training. (Summer 2005). Johnson County Community College. [http://jccc.net/home/depts/staffdev/site/Initiatives/Faculty\\_Development/welcometoact](http://jccc.net/home/depts/staffdev/site/Initiatives/Faculty_Development/welcometoact)
- American Association of University Professors. (2005). Contingent Faculty Appointments, Available at: <http://www.aaup.org/Issues/part-time/index.htm>
- Avakian, A. N. (1995). Conflicting Demands for Adjunct Faculty, *Community College Journal*, 34-35.
- Best Practices. (2004). Westminster College Adjunct Study. <http://www.sciedconsultants.com/Best%20Practices.htm>
- Burke, M. (March 16, 2004). On the Half-Time Track, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Carroll, J. (Aug. 5, 2002). Adjuncts, Students, and E-mail, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Carroll, J. (June 7, 2002). Avoiding the Adjunct Burnout, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Carroll, J. (June 25, 2003). Do Adjuncts Have Time for Students? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Carroll, J. (Jan. 18, 2002). How to Be One of the Gang When You’re Not, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Carroll, J. (July 27, 2003). We’re Exploited, Not Unqualified, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Carson, V. M. (1988). Supervision of Part-Time Faculty: A Model for Community Colleges, Report No. JC 880 318.
- Cassebaum, A. (1995). Adjuncts with an Attitude?: Attitudes Encountered in the Struggle for Fair Pay and Job Security for Adjunct Faculty, Washington, D.C.: *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, (Report No. CS 215 002).
- Cristiano, M. (May 2005). Adjunct Faculty Collegial Support Partnership Program at Paradise Valley Community College, *The Forum*.
- Frenette, L. (November 2001). Full-time, Part-time Mentoring is Win-Win Situation, United University Professions, *The Voice*. <http://www.uupinfo.org/voice/nov/nov01n.html>
- Galbraith, M.W. and Shedd, P.E. (Fall 1990). Building Skills and Proficiencies of the Community College Instructor of Adult Learners, *Community College Review*, 41-47.
- Grant, M.R., and Keim, M.C. (2002). Faculty Development in Publicly Supported Two-Year Colleges, *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 793-807.
- Helgesen, S. (1995). *The Web of Inclusion*, New York: Doubleday.
- Hibbison, E. and Koerner, K. (June 23, 2000). Adjunct Focus Group, Virginia Community College System. [http://vccslitonline.cc.va.us/mrcte/adjunct\\_focus\\_groups.htm](http://vccslitonline.cc.va.us/mrcte/adjunct_focus_groups.htm)
- Hulber, L.L.( Fall 2003). Community is the Key to Building a Successful Adjunct Faculty Pool, *AGLS NEWS*, APPENDIX XIV: Part-time Instructor Orientation.
- Johnson County Community College. (Summer 2005). Adjunct Certificate Training, [http://jccc.net/home/depts/staffdev/site/Initiatives/Faculty\\_Development/welcometoact](http://jccc.net/home/depts/staffdev/site/Initiatives/Faculty_Development/welcometoact)
- Kamps, D. (1996). *Continuous Quality Improvement in the Employment of Adjunct Faculty: A NIACC Plan*, Mason City, Iowa: North Iowa Area Community College, Report No. JC 960 1400.
- Kristensen, E. (Nov. 17, 2000). Meeting the Challenge of Change: Adjunct Faculty as Vital Members of our Academic Community. Paper presented at the Association for Continuing Higher Education Conference.
- Ladner, B. (Oct. 3, 2001). Fulfilling the American University Paradigm. <http://www.american.edu/15pointplan/speech.html>

- Lankard, B.A. (1993). Part-Time Instructors in Adult and Vocational Education, *ERIC Digest*.  
www.ericdigests.org/1994/part.htm
- Maguire, P. (1984). Enhancing the Effectiveness of Adjunct Faculty, *Community College Review*, 27-33.
- Matthews, A. (1997). *Bright College Years: Inside the American Campus Today*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- McGuire, J. (1993). Part-time Faculty: Partners in Excellence, *Leadership Abstracts*, World Wide Web Edition.
- Mosbey, W. (Fall 2000). Professional Development for Adjuncts— It's Not an Oxymoron! *The Forum*.
- National Education Association Higher Education (NEA). (September 2001). Part-time Faculty." *Update*.
- Osborn, R. (1990). Part-Time Faculty Development, *Community Services Catalyst*, 17-21.
- Story, N. and J. Moore. (Fall 2000). Devil's in the Details: Creating a Meaningful Adjunct Faculty Development Program, *The Forum*.
- Thompson, H. (1984). Utilization of Adjunct Faculty Members, Kokomo, Indiana: Indiana University at Kokomo. Report No. HE 017 472.
- Toutkoushian, R. K. and Bellas, M. L. (2003). The Effects of Part-Time Employment and Gender on Faculty Earnings and Satisfaction, *Journal of Higher Education*, 172-95.
- Tuckman, H. P., Caldwell, J., and Vogler, W. (1978). Part-timers and the Academic Labor Market of the Eighties, *The American Sociologist*, 184-195.
- Wicklein, J. (September 1994). No Experience Necessary: In the Battle for the Soul of Journalism Education, the Ph.D.'s Are Beating the Pros, *Columbia Journalism Review*, <http://archives.cjr.org/year/94/5/experience.asp>
- Wickun, W. and Stanley, R. (2000). The Role of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education, <http://mtprof.msun.edu/Win2000/Wickun.html>
- Witcher, P.M. (November 2003). "Innovative Faculty Peer Mentoring at the University of Maryland University College." Center for Teaching and Learning. Office of Distance Education & Lifelong Learning.
- 

# Nurturing the Contingent Colleague

PETER B. ORLIK  
Central Michigan University

---

With operational costs generally rising faster than tuition, public appropriations, and contributions, campuses are turning more and more to the use of non-tenure-track appointments to cut costs and preserve what is euphemistically known as "institutional flexibility."

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that there were 617,868 full-time faculty employed at Title IV (federal student aid-receiving) institutions in fall, 2001. Over a third of these, 213,232, occupied non-tenure-track slots.<sup>1</sup>

Current hiring practices are doing nothing to decrease this percentage. In fact, "the U.S. Department of Education has found that more than half of all new full-time faculty members at four-year institutions are not on the tenure track".<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, non-tenure *part-time* positions comprise a substantial additional segment of the college teaching corps. As early as 1998, 40% of all professors were serving in these partial and temporary positions.<sup>3</sup> While there was an overall increase of 60,000 faculty members between 2001 and 2003, the number of full-time faculty increased by only 2% while the number of part-timers grew by 10%.<sup>4</sup>

These full and part-time instructors laboring outside the tenure system are what the American Association of University Professors labels *contingent faculty*. According to the AAUP, "Whether these faculty members teach one class or five, the common characteristic among them is that their institutions make little or no long-term commitment to them or to their academic work."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, "I did not feel like a teacher," said Ph.D. holder and former adjunct Jim Stockinger. "I did not

feel like a member of an ancient and honorable society. I did not feel like someone who was making important contributions to his society. I did not feel like someone whose educational attainments got the respect and dignity they deserve. I felt like a Kleenex tissue, disposable.”<sup>6</sup>

The heavy reliance on adjuncts and their potential feelings of exploitation can be exacerbated in mass communications programs by three key factors: (1) the shortage of terminal degree holders in the field due to the relatively small output of doctoral graduates; (2) the skimming off of terminal degree holders by the industry — particularly in such fields as public relations and media research; and (3) the temptation to cede lower-level, lower-prestige “practical and production” courses to local media practitioners.

In the case of broadcast education, for example, Guterman discovered that, while the mean number of applicants for broadcast education faculty positions was 20, many searches yielded pools only in the single digits. And this number reflected all applicants — including those who did not possess the needed degree qualifications for a tenure-track hire.<sup>7</sup> Commercial marketability certainly contributes to this shortage. As the communications industry moves more and more to consumer-centric measurement and message packaging, doctoral degree holders comfortable with mass communications research methodologies are finding employment options in business that offer compensation packages far outstripping even senior level faculty appointments.

Finally, the ready availability of contingent faculty in the work forces of local media outlets presents a temptingly easy way to fill teaching slots for basic classes. Local reporters, air personalities, and photojournalists can be hired “on the cheap” to teach basic writing, performance, and production courses, thereby leaving more advanced theory and seminar courses to the terminal degree holders on tenure lines.

While these dynamics do not inevitably lead to defective instruction and exploited instructors, they all too often can result in both if administrators and departments do not create and maintain an environment that treats adjuncts as colleagues rather than serfs.

As on the campus as a whole, contingent appointments are a fact of life in mass communications programs — and likely to remain so for the foreseeable fiscal future. So the challenge becomes how to integrate fully these full and part-time term appointees into an academic program’s work and culture.

Adjuncts need to feel fulfilled in their labors. And departments need to feel pride in the totality of their instructional product — not just that portion of the product delivered by

those occupying tenure-track slots. To consistently meet these twin desires, the unit should make a long-term commitment to the following four-step process, a process that can be dubbed the DRMC:

1. Define roles specifically
2. Recruit people proactively
3. Monitor and mentor continuously
4. Compensate equitably

### Define Roles Specifically

There is a natural tendency to use contingent faculty as stop gaps. An instructor must suddenly be found for a course vacancy that has developed, or a backlogged class requires an extra section. The word is put out on the street, and the first applicant possessing some familiarity with the subject matter is thrown into the breach. Chances are reasonably good that the person will know something about this subject. Chances are not necessarily good that s/he knows how to teach (in general — or that subject in particular.) Certainly, unexpected vacancies do occur. And the timeframe for filling them may be short. However, without due diligence, such emergency situations can set the pattern for every adjunct hire. All adjunct-staffed vacancies are routinely filled as per-course assignments with little forethought or position design. Even courses regularly slated to be handled by contingents are casually filled on a last-minute basis. People are hired because they have been available in the past — not because of their specific background or teaching expertise.

A much more effective alternative to this cavalier approach is the studied identification of courses that can effectively be handled by adjuncts on a regular basis. Few deans or provosts will allow a unit to be staffed completely with tenure lines. By administrative mandate, specific or “understood,” a certain percentage of the load must always be adjunct-served.

So, why not systematically identify those assignments that best lend themselves to staffing by part- and full-time contingent faculty and design these non-tenure lines to conform to this reality? Offerings in such areas as writing/reporting, editing, design, production, and performance can be assigned to non-terminal degree practitioners — not because these classes are less worthy — but because they involve skills these current or former practitioners have honed throughout their careers.

In profiling contingent positions, it should not be assumed that they will involve only lower level courses. Gaps in the tenured staff’s expertise should be factored into contingent position construction. If an upper level class in media management or programming can more suitably be staffed by an

appropriate adjunct hire, an adjunct position should be configured accordingly. This not only places faculty in the slots for which they are best prepared, but it also signals to adjuncts that their role in (and importance to) the program has been considered as carefully as that of their tenure-track associates.

By conceptualizing the role-defining goal as one of strengthening those portions of the curriculum that contingents can deliver best — rather than sacrificing those portions in which they will do the least harm — a mass communications administrator capitalizes on the strengths that adjunct colleagues can bring to the enterprise. Such conscientious planning usually will result in the sculpting of well conceived full-time slots rather than randomly chipping off part-time assignments. This thereby creates positions for contingent colleagues whose full-time status makes them much more available than part-timers to involve themselves in the department's workings and lifestyle.

“Being ‘one of the gang’ has a psychological component,” veteran adjunct Jill Carroll observed. “If you believe you don't belong, or are bitter about your adjunct status and wear that bitterness on your sleeve, you won't belong.”<sup>8</sup> Full-time appointments go a long way toward initiating a contingent faculty member's feeling of comfort in the clubhouse.

### Recruit People Proactively

Once adjunct positions have been definitively identified, and amalgamated into full-time slots whenever possible, recruitment can be initiated. Clustering of cohesive course assignments will create salaried positions more attractive to candidates than per-course scraps. This in turn will result in hires who are better qualified to perform the instructional work to be done. Such pre-planning liberates the department from the strictures of per-class local picks. Recruitment can be done on a regional or even a national basis because the position being advertised evidences a well-focused long-term need rather than a short-term grab bag of course leftovers. Candidates will know what they are being asked to teach and be in a much better position to appraise how this definitive teaching profile meshes with their professional background and interests.

Pride of ownership is a central component of high employee morale. The adjunct who knows up front that s/he will be given responsibility for a specific segment of the curriculum is likely to be more attracted to the assignment and, subsequently, committed to improving the courses which it comprises.

Even though the institution's hiring process for adjuncts may be much more streamlined than for filling tenure-track appointments, the department should not take it any less

seriously or cast the recruitment net any less expansively. Once on campus, adjunct faculty are indistinguishable from tenure-track instructors in the eyes of most students. Therefore, it makes little sense to devote seven months to a national tenure-track hire and fill adjunct slots via same-week exchange of a few local phone calls.

“Inequities begin in the appointment process,” asserted the AAUP's 2003 *Policy Statement on Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession*. “Appointments of full-time tenure-track faculty typically follow rigorous national searches, which include a review of the candidate's scholarly record, an assessment of teaching potential, and consideration of other attributes by faculty in the department offering the appointment. Contingent faculty, by contrast, are often hired in hurried circumstances. Department chairs select likely candidates from a local list.”<sup>9</sup>

Little wonder that the department consequently invests less faith in its adjuncts and the adjuncts feel less appreciated by the department. An off-the-cuff initial hiring procedure tends to generate mutual feelings of dissatisfaction and even disrespect. Conversely, a hiring process that takes contingent selection seriously is the first indication to candidates that their teaching contributions will be taken seriously as well.

### Monitor and Mentor Continuously

Creating well-conceived adjunct positions and comprehensively recruiting for them are vital first steps in the effective utilization of non-tenure-track instructors. However, such efforts will be wasted if the contingent colleague is not properly oriented and assisted to achieve classroom success. Adjuncts require no less support than tenure-track hires in this regard. In fact, if they are coming from the industry rather than the academy, they may well need even more guidance in how to carry out the instructional task.

This guidance should begin at the very start of the year. Enlightened campuses offer orientation sessions for all new faculty regardless of their employment classification. These sessions optimally include components in which adjunct and tenure-track faculty all meet together as well as separate (and shorter) breakout meetings to cover the unavoidable differences in employment paperwork completion.

Longtime San Francisco adjunct Melissa Maley argued that “a regularly scheduled meeting designed especially for new hires at the beginning of each semester could make a world of difference. That meeting should include the basics about student demographics and retention rates, as well as the all-important copy-machine codes and restroom locations.... A group meeting has the benefit of introducing new faculty and staff members to one another so that they feel less like a

voice in the wilderness and more like a part of the pack.” 10.

Grouping new tenure-track and contingent hires together in these initial sessions helps to build a climate of collegiality among the two newcomer cadres. Following this procedure over time will lessen if not eliminate what previously might have been an entrenched academic caste system. Each year's new hires now develop shared and common experiences instead of fixating on differentiating employment classifications. Whether or not the institution as a whole provides such common orientations, the mass communications unit should include all hires in all department meetings beginning with the very first conclave of the year. This is essential in evidencing an unmistakable commitment to inclusiveness.

Once the term is under way, oversight and assistance for both tenure-track and contingent appointees should be similarly uniform if for no other reason than that they are all expected to provide the same quality of instructional experiences to students. Peer classroom visitations, one-on-one faculty mentoring, and scheduled feedback sessions with the chair or other designated senior faculty member are all important vehicles for instructor orientation and development. Such mechanisms should be made available to — and required of — tenure-track and contingent faculty alike. The time investment involved in extending monitoring and mentoring services to adjuncts pays significant dividends in two fundamental ways: (1) classroom performance and management weaknesses can be improved and strengths complimented; and (2) the adjuncts' sense of their role in the instructional mission is bolstered by the serious attention paid to them and the concrete encouragement of their efforts.

Even in the worst case scenario, mentoring and monitoring are advantageous. The process identifies those who, despite their past professional successes, are simply not predisposed to be viable teachers. The “war story Jerrys” can be detected and their contracts not renewed, making room for more effective teachers before the image of all adjuncts in the unit is tarnished by association.

Committee assignments also should be made available to non-tenure-track faculty as these experiences constitute valuable vehicles through which newcomers come to know colleagues inside and outside the department as well as becoming players in campus decision-making. Of course, adjuncts should not be required to accept such assignments because committee work is usually outside their contractual responsibilities. But those who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity should be encouraged to do so. While committee labors are something more feasible for full-time rather than part-time adjuncts to pursue, this constitutes yet another benefit to consolidating contingent appointments into

full-time slots. Though committee meetings can be tedious, they are also empowering by making the adjunct professor a stakeholder rather than an outsider in the overall educational enterprise.

Additionally, contingent faculty should be eligible for the same training and conference attendance opportunities as tenure-track personnel because such experiences pay off for everyone. Students benefit from the insights their instructors thereby gain, and adjuncts in particular are gratified by the investment the department is making in their continued professional development. If travel and training opportunities are extended only to tenure-track professors, however, contingent faculty can get the distinct feeling that for them, instructional improvement is neither required nor expected.

### **Compensate Equitably**

Of course, travel support is also an aspect of employee compensation. Nurturing contingent colleagues means providing as close to equal pay for equal work as the department is able. Institutional policies do not always make this easy to achieve. But adjuncts appreciate departmental efforts to come as close to this goal as possible.

On many campuses, full-time adjuncts are expected to teach one more course per term than are tenure-track hires. One way for a unit to mitigate this inequity is through the assignment of non-course load. If, for example, tenure-track personnel teach nine hours per semester, contingent staff must teach twelve. However, each tenure-track person can be given a three-hour mandatory academic or co-curricular advising assignment, activities that adjuncts are not expected to perform. The result? Equated twelve-hour loads for everyone. A variation of this pattern would involve release time for research. This works too — provided that both tenure-track and adjunct members are uniformly eligible for such research release if they have developed worthwhile proposals that are germane to their teaching profiles.

Base salary and benefit discrepancies between contingent and tenure-track postings are usually a function of college or university-wide policies that the mass communications unit cannot directly impact. Even in this area, however, some accommodations can be made that demonstrate departmental commitment to adjunct well-being. The unit head can continue to push for salary scales that treat relevant academic and industry experience equally in years-of-service calculations. The annual salary surveys published by ASJMC and BEA can be used with upper administration to benchmark the faculty as a whole, since a “rising tide lifts all boats.” Such efforts may be only partially successful. But contingent faculty are much more likely to feel like colleagues when their unit is aggressively presenting such argumentation on their behalf.

Even small gestures can significantly aid in building collegiality. At the writer's own institution, for instance, the employee parking fee was raised from \$100 to \$185 per year. However, tenure-track faculty were in the third year of their collective bargaining agreement that froze their parking fees at \$100. Suddenly, adjuncts were forced to pay almost double to park their cars as compared to "regular" faculty. The department was powerless to change these external assessments — so it adjusted internally. The departmental travel allocation for each adjunct and non-faculty staff member was raised \$85 over that of tenure-track faculty, thereby bringing all full-time members of the unit back to parity. The dollar amount involved in this decision was minor. But the message of equal treatment it signaled to adjuncts and other staff was major. (With these and other departmentally-determined perks, proportional calculations can be utilized in the case of part-time adjuncts to benchmark equitably the benefit to the instructor's employment percentage.)

### The Collegial Unit

More than many departments on the campus, mass commu-

nications units tend inherently to rely on teaching expertise that derives from both academic and industry experience. Sometimes such experience is blended in the same terminal-degree person. Often, however, it resides in different individuals possessing different career backgrounds. Our discipline benefits by bringing faculty from both perspectives together in a common educational mission regardless of their tenure-track or adjunct status. Today's economics simultaneously decree that this mission be accomplished in as cost effective a manner as possible. The solution lies in finding and employing practitioner faculty to compliment the contributions of those on tenure track. If these contingent colleagues are truly recruited and treated as *colleagues*, the department has everything to gain in providing its students with a rich and variegated perspective on our field. Ideally, distinctions between tenure-track and adjunct faculty are discernible only in the personnel office's data base.

*Peter B. Orlik is professor and chair, Broadcast and Cinematic Arts, at Central Michigan University.*

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. [E.D. Tabs] *Staff in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2001, and Salaries of Full-Time Instructional Faculty, 2001-2002*, NCES 2004-159, by Laura G. Knapp et al. Washington, DC: 2003, 38-40.

<sup>2</sup> Piper Fogg, "For These Professors, 'Practice Is Profit'," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 16, 2004, A-12.

<sup>3</sup> Valerie Martin Conley, supplemental table updates to *Part-Time Instructional Faculty and Staff: Who They Are, What They Do, and What They Think* (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002), Tables 1 and 12.

<sup>4</sup> See U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Staff in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall, 2003, and Salaries of Full-Time Instructional Faculty, 2003-2004*.

<sup>5</sup> *Contingent Appointment and the Academic Profession*, policy statement of the American Association of University Professors Committee on Part-Time and Non-Tenure-Track Appointments, and Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure (adopted by the national Council, November 9, 2003), 2.

<sup>6</sup> "Teachers without Tenure," *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* transcript, January 8, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Jeff Guterman, "Telephone Survey of Mass Communications Programs Advertising on the BEA Web Site in the Fall of 1999," presentation to the Broadcast Education Association 2000 Convention, Las Vegas.

<sup>8</sup> Jill Carroll, "How to Be One of the Gang When You're Not," *Chronicle Careers*, January 18, 2002, 3.

<sup>9</sup> AAUP, *Contingent Appointments*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Melissa Maley, "Integrated and Informed," *Chronicle Careers*, May 12, 2005, 2.

# So, You Want to be a Dean?

ANNE C. OSBORNE, ALAN D. FLETCHER, and BILLY I. ROSS

Louisiana State University

---

You think you want to be a dean of a school or college of journalism or mass communication. It's a great title, and think of the power that goes with it! You are the top level of your academic unit. The doors to the provost and president's offices are open to you. And, then there are the professional meetings where deans are something special. But wait, before you go too far, see what really goes with the job.

Are you ready to spend a 60-hour workweek on the job? Are you ready to spend some 30 hours a week reading, watching, and reviewing media? These are only the tip of the iceberg for nearly two dozen deans of independent schools and colleges of journalism and mass communication who responded to our survey.

## The Study

This is not a formal study of higher administration in mass communication education. Rather, it is an informal description of the activities of deans of journalism or mass communication (j/mc) programs. It is based on a survey of administrators of independent units as listed in the 2001 *Journalism and Mass Communication Directory*. Following a pre-test among five former deans, the final questionnaire was mailed to 43 deans of independent units, as listed in the *Directory*, of whom 22 (51%) responded.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts: Personal Data, Workweek Hours, Media Habits, and Importance of Groups. In addition, each respondent was asked either to submit a copy of his/her vita or to answer questions regarding professional media experience, professional activities/memberships, military service, and awards received. Twenty of the 22 respondents provided vitae.

The Personal Data section broke out gender, age, weight, height, marital status, and the number of children. The Workweek section asked for an estimate of the number of hours spent in administrative work, meetings, teaching, research, service, routine office work, media relations, fundraising, and other dean-related activities.

The Media Habits section asked for the estimated number of hours spent reading newspapers and magazines and hours spent watching television, listening to radio, and using the Internet.

The section on Importance of Groups brought out how the deans rated the importance of students, faculty, campus colleagues, top administration, alumni, media executives, and local/state/national academics. There were also questions asking for the most important aspect of the job, favorite and least favorite parts of the job, management skills, means of communications, and administrative structure of the school/college.

## Prior Studies

A search was made of the past two decades of *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* and *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, along with other academic publications. This review of the literature shows that this type of study has rarely been done.

Early studies focused on leadership traits. Studies described "leader" in many ways. A leader was serious, friendly, or aloof, depending on the study.<sup>1</sup> Researchers cited a large number of traits that presumably were associated with leadership, leading to the conclusion that research based on personality traits of persons in leadership positions was insufficient to describe leadership.

Later research placed emphasis on the situation surrounding the person in a leadership position. "[T]he situation approach maintains that leadership is determined not so much by the characters of the individuals as by the requirements of social situ-

ation.<sup>2</sup> Researchers maintained that organizational structure, climate, characteristics of the leadership role, and characteristics of subordinates constituted the situation and would determine leadership. Because situations change, leaders must be able to adapt easily. An article published in *Business Horizons*, for example, concluded that, “effective, real-time executive leadership involves the ability to “represent” the current organization and to “compensate” for organizational shortcomings by initiating and orchestrating change.<sup>3</sup> Other research has focused on relationships among personalities, behavior, and the situation.<sup>4</sup> Still other studies examined leadership vision and, recently, leadership and management, and interaction between leaders and followers.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to leadership literature, education journals offered several articles addressing the role of a dean, often through qualitative case studies or personal accounts. These articles tended to focus on a particular field or type of college or university. For example, one dean detailed her three-year experience as the dean of Cleveland-Marshall College of Law.<sup>6</sup> She addressed many of the difficulties faced in faculty governance and changing perception and treatment of her among faculty and colleagues. A similar study presented to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education offered a three-year case study of a new dean. The study concluded that socialization into the new role took place in five stages: taking hold, immersion, reshaping, consolidation, and refinement. Strategies used for successful transitioning included writing an entry plan, building strong working relationships, establishing credibility, and protecting scholarship interests.<sup>7</sup>

A number of studies were published as a series in *New Directions for Community Colleges*. One article in the series looked at economic issues faced by community college deans such as local tax assessment and financing new construction and offered a glossary of accounting terms.<sup>8</sup> Another in the series addressed dean and faculty relations, with attention to the dean’s role in conducting faculty evaluations and determining teaching and learning outcomes.<sup>9</sup>

*Research in Higher Education* published a similar series titled “The Professional School Dean: Meeting the Leadership Challenges.” This presented the personal accounts of the roles and challenges facing deans in engineering, divinity, social work, and social services. Recurring themes throughout the articles related to the dean’s role in balancing administrative duties with fundraising as well as with promoting scholarship and faculty development. Also important to the role of a dean in a professional school was the need to adapt to changes in the respective professions and to act as an advocate for growth and continued change.<sup>10</sup>

This review of the literature offers some insight into the chal-

lenges faced by deans. Most addressed the role of deans at community or professional schools and related the experiences of a single dean. None of the studies, however, focused on mass communication and journalism. This study offers insight into the qualities and experiences most valued by deans of j/mc schools or colleges. It also gives a glimpse into the day-to-day duties of those deans.

### Survey Results

The 22 deans included in this study preside over programs within a wide variety of colleges and universities. In 2000 Carnegie updated and collapsed its classification system. Based on the new system, 13 (59.1%) of the deans work at Doctoral/Research Universities-Extensive, while six (27.3%) are at Master’s Colleges and Universities I. The other three (13.6%) are at Doctoral/Research Universities-Intensive. Five (22.7%) of the schools represented are private, while the remaining 17 (77.3%) are public.

### Personal Data

Of the 22 deans in the study, 19 (86%) were male and three (14%) female. The ages ranged from 42 to 67 with a mean of 56.1 years. The deans’ heights ranged from 5’2” to 6’2” with a mean of 5’10”, the weights from 120 to 220 pounds with a mean of 182 pounds. The one common trait was marital status. All were married. Reading and golf were the two most mentioned hobbies. There was, however, a wide range of other hobbies listed including such things as bird hunting, listening to classical music, cooking, squash, and collecting paintings.

### Education and Work Experience

Seventeen of the deans hold Doctor of Philosophy degrees as their terminal degrees, one has a Doctor of Education, one a Doctor of Jurisprudence, and three, Master of Arts degrees. Eleven listed journalism/mass communication/communication as their major field of study. Other degree concentrations include history, sociology, American civilization, and speech and English. The deans’ terminal degrees came from 20 different universities; Southern Illinois University and the University of Iowa each granted two of the doctoral degrees. There appears to be no relationship between the type of terminal degree held or area of concentration and the Carnegie classification of the college/university in which the dean works.

Based on a review of the vitae submitted, it appears that mass communication deans have enjoyed long academic careers. They averaged 21.3 full-time years in the academy, with the number of full-time years ranging from 5 to 41. The deans have averaged 7.0 years as deans, with a range of one to 22 years. Two of the respondents have held dean positions prior to their current appointments. At this writing, two are acting as interim deans.

The importance of previous professional experience, in news, public relations, advertising, or broadcasting, has long been debated in mass communication education. The full range across the classic green eye-shades versus chi-squares debate is reflected in the 22 deans in this study. Based on information gathered from the 20 vitae submitted, it appears that two deans have no full-time, professional work experience. Others come to academe with as much as 31 and 34 years of journalism experience. The average number of full-time years in the field is 9.1. Of those with work experience, the majority (85.7%) worked in journalism, while two have professional advertising/public relations experience, and one has a broadcasting background.

### The Typical Workweek

Meetings top the list of activities in the deans' typical week (16.0 hours). One dean indicated that 32 hours were spent in meetings with another listing only five hours in meetings. Closely following meetings came routine administration, with a mean of 14.7 hours and a range from 8 hours to 30 hours. Fundraising was the third most time-consuming activity during the week with an average of 7.38 hours. Three reported 15 hours in fundraising while one listed no time. Service came in fourth with an average of 5.67 hours a week. Five reported 10 hours on service activities with two indicating only two hours. Media relations came in last of the listed activities on the questionnaire. Some spent as many as 5 hours a week while four did not allot any time to media relations. The range was from none to five hours.

### Hours Spent With Various Workweek Activities

Activity	Range in Hours	Mean Hours
Meetings	5-32	16.0
Administration	0-30	14.7
Fundraising	0-15	7.4
Service	2-10	5.7
Routine office work	0-15	4.6
Teaching	0-12	3.8
Research	0-16	3.5
Media relations	0-5	3.3
Other	0-10	2.1
Total hours	40-71	59

Teaching and research were in the bottom third of the list. The average amount of teaching time was 3.8 hours, with 3.52 on research. One dean reported teaching 12 hours a week. Six indicated no teaching responsibilities. Many indicated that there was little time left in a workweek for research. One dean commented, "Research (ha)." In research, the highest estimate was 16 hours a week, with seven indicating no time allotted.

As a group, the deans estimated an average of 59 hours a week for a typical workweek. Seven deans estimated their workweek was 65 to 71 hours. The least time reported was 40 hours.

### Media Habits

Following national trends, deans spend more time watching television and listening to radio than reading newspapers and magazines. In a typical week, they watch television more than 8 hours and listen to the radio 4.8 hours. The time spent reading newspapers is 6.4 hours and reading magazines is 3.0 hours. As a group, the deans estimated that they spend 27.5 hours per week reading, watching, or listening to the various media.

The deans' choices of television shows, however, are somewhat different from the average television viewer. The television program most watched was the *McLehrer News Hour*. CNN was the most watched television network. Other specifically listed programs included *60 Minutes*, *The West Wing*, *Meet the Press*, *Nightline* and Cubs baseball. Although three indicated no hours watching TV, 12 indicated 10 hours or more. *The Morning Edition* was the most frequently listed radio show.

### Hours Spent With the Media

Medium	Range in Hours	Mean Hours
Television	0-15	8.1
Newspapers	2-10	6.4
Internet	0-20	5.0
Radio	1-14	4.8
Magazines	1-5	3.0
Other	8	8.0
Total hours	11-44	27.5

*The New York Times* headed the list of newspapers read. Other top-listed newspapers include *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Top magazines read include *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *The New Yorker*. Top websites are Yahoo, ESPN, Amazon, and CNN. Time spent on the Internet ranged from 0 hours to 20 hours a week. The mean number of hours spent on the Internet is 5.0 with the mode being 10.0 hours.

### Importance of Groups

There was no doubt which was the most important group to the deans – faculty. Twelve listed faculty first and all the rest except one listed faculty second. Students ran a close second with only three deans listing them fourth or below. Top administrators followed with alumni next. Four of the deans listed top administrators as the most important group. No one listed alumni as first. Campus colleagues, media executives, and local/state/national academics were listed last. Three

deans listed staff and supporters as other groups that they felt were important.

### Relative Importance of Deans' Constituencies

Constituency	Range	Mean Hours
Faculty	1-3	1.5
Students	1-6	2.4
Top administration	1-5	3.0
Alumni	2-6	4.1
Media executives	3-7	5.1
Campus colleagues	3-7	5.5
Local/state/natl academics	5-8	6.6

### Most Important Roles of Deans

According to the deans, the two most important roles of a dean are fundraising and leadership. Examples of other replies included:

- Path clearing
- Creating the right environment
- Motivating
- Vision
- Recruitment and retention
- Faculty development
- Meeting with media and alumni
- Bridge building at the campus level and with professionals
- Facilitating productivity of faculty
- Working with the administration

### Most Valuable Experience

#### Deans Received to Aid them as Deans

Being a department head was the most reported experience valued by the deans. Other answers included other academic administrative positions, being an Army officer, newspaper editor and reporter, TV reporter, and other media experience.

### Most Enjoyable thing About the Dean's Job

There was a wide range of replies to this question. Those mentioned most often included meeting people, solving problems, and working with students and parents. Some included lobbying administration for funds, and raising funds. There were many responses to working with students, parents, media, administration, other administrators, and alumni.

### Things Deans Like Least about their Jobs

Paperwork, meetings, petty personal issues, and worrying about money. One dean listed "saying NO" as his least liked part of the job. As would be expected, tenure, faculty infighting, fundraising, and bureaucracy were all included in the many replies.

### Most Important Management Skill Needed

Listening and patience were the most often reported management skills needed to be an effective dean. Three other things listed more than once included interpersonal skills, focus, energy, and ability to delegate.

### Charisma Needed to be an Effective Dean?

Most deans reported that charisma was definitely needed to be an effective dean, yet there were many that downplayed it. "Very important" was the most common answer to the question. Those who thought it was not as important as others responded: "not critical, but doesn't hurt," "it helps," "mostly overrated," "not necessarily needed," and "having none, I pass."

### Structure of Deans' Units

Most reported that they thought the structure of their unit was more like a newspaper, which is considered a horizontal structure with many sub-heads reporting directly to the dean. Some thought of their unit's structure more along the lines of a military or vertical structure with a dean, associate deans, department heads, and sequence heads. Two claimed that their unit was a combination of the two.

### Most Used Means of Communication within the Unit

Direct personal communications and e-mail were the two most mentioned means of getting information from the dean to the faculty. Other types mentioned included "through program heads," "memos," "meetings," and "phone."

### Summary/Conclusion

Do you still want to be a dean? Are you ready to devote significant hours to administration and attending meetings, the most time-consuming aspects of the job? Do you feel you have the necessary charisma to be an effective fundraiser? Do you have the patience and listening skills needed to work well with faculty? If so, then this may be the job for you. Particularly, there appears to be a need for women to serve as deans. Deanships remain male-dominated positions. According to these respondents, while there are aspects of the job they do not like, generally being a dean is a rewarding experience. Should you choose to pursue this career path, the participants in this study suggest the best experience to prepare you for a deanship is time spent as a department head.

*Anne C. Osborne is associate professor, Alan D. Fletcher is designated professor emeritus, and Billy I. Ross is distinguished professor in the Louisiana State University Manship School of Mass Communication.*

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Stogdill, R.M. (1948) "Personal factors associated with leadership: a survey of the literature," *Journal of Psychology*, 25, 35-71.
- <sup>2</sup> Hencley, S.P. (1973) Situational behavior approach to the study of educational leadership. In L.C. Cunningham and W.J. Gephart (eds.), *Leadership: The science and art today*. (pp. 139-164) Itaska, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers.
- <sup>3</sup> Magnusen, K. O. (1995). The legacy of leadership revisited. (traits of successful executives), *Business Horizons*, v38 n6 p3(5).
- <sup>4</sup> Hoy, W.KI. and Miskel, C.G. (1987), *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice*. Third Edition. New York: Random House, p. 274.
- <sup>5</sup> Kirby, P.C., Paradise, I.V., and King, M.I. (1992) Extraordinary leaders in education: Understanding transformational leadership. *Journal of Educational Research*, 85 (5), 303-311.
- <sup>6</sup> Becker, Susan J. (1999), Thanks, but I'm just looking: Or, why I don't want to be a dean, *Journal of Legal Education*, 49(4), 595-600.
- <sup>7</sup> Gmelch, Walter H. (2000), The new dean: Taking charge and learning the job. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 52<sup>nd</sup> (Chicago, IL, February 26-29).
- <sup>8</sup> McBride, Susan A. (2000), Academic economics: The academic dean and financial management, *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 109, 51-62.
- <sup>9</sup> Andrews, Hans A. (2000), The dean and the faculty, *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 109, 19-26.
- <sup>10</sup> Ahearn, Frederick L. (1997), A day in the life of a dean, *New Directions for Higher Education*, Theme issue: The Professional School Dean: Meeting the leadership challenges, 25(2), 9-20. Allen-Meares, Paula (1997), Serving as dean: A public university perspective, *New Directions for Higher Education*, Theme issue: The Professional School Dean: Meeting the leadership challenges, 25(2), 83-88. Fagin, Claire M. (1997), The leadership role of a dean, *New Directions for Higher Education*, Theme issue: The Professional School Dean: Meeting the leadership challenges, 25(2), 95-99. McCoy, John J. (1997), The dean as advocate for change, *New Directions for Higher Education*, Theme issue: The Professional School Dean: Meeting the leadership challenges, 25(2), 109-13. Newsome, Clarence G. (1997), What does a dean do?, *New Directions for Higher Education*, Theme issue: The Professional School Dean: Meeting the leadership challenges, 25(2), 101-07. Patti, Rino J. (1997), The role of the dean in strengthening faculty and student scholarship, *New Directions for Higher Education*, Theme issue: The Professional School Dean: Meeting the leadership challenges, 25(2), 67-73.

# The Joy of...Deaning

RICHARD COLE

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

---

The joy of deaning is radically different from *The Joy of Cooking* or *The Joy of Sex*. But the rewards and self-fulfillment can be extraordinarily satisfying. The big caveat is that what you're doing is for your school, not for yourself. You have to get your kicks out of putting your school, not yourself, forward. Everything has to be conceived, couched, and done that way — ingrained in your mind that way. If you can master that basic principle, you can enjoy your job to the fullest and be truly effective.

Looking back on my 26 years as dean of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I know that the most fulfilling and most fun part of my job was creating. Building new programs such as sports communication, medical journalism, new media, and business journalism. Obtaining additional positions and bringing in outstanding new faculty and staff members. Encouraging faculty, staff, and students to advance and excel. Creating 16 endowed professorships. Magnifying the School's permanent endowment from a half million dollars to more than \$25 million. Creating a new home for the School in a big, renovated building in the heart of the campus. And so many other things, all of them great fun.

There's still a sign on my desk: "Innovate or Die." That says it all. Always strive for excellence not just for today, but also for tomorrow and long thereafter. You'll start some programs that won't work, but that's OK because most will come out beautifully if you think innovatively and are able to come up with at least the resources to get the programs off the ground.

The job of dean encompasses many areas, far beyond the scope of this article. Let me look at just a few.

## Working with the Faculty and Staff

Many years ago, Dr. DeWitt C. Reddick was dean of the School of Journalism and later the College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin. I was one of his students in the 1960's and learned enormously from that gracious, generous man. Dr. Reddick was radically different from me. For one thing, he didn't drink, smoke, or cuss. Despite those shortcomings, he was truly beloved. In fact, he gave Lynda away at our wedding (her father had died long before). What I learned most from Dr. Reddick, I think, was about working *with* people instead of *against* them. Although I never came close to achieving his gift for interpersonal relations, I'm far better because of him.

Deans know that personnel problems are always the hardest, and budget problems come in second. People like to be treated as individuals, not as part of a mass. So you should meet with all faculty members separately at least once a year— every semester if you can — to listen to what is on their minds. Take each to lunch; you can do it. Hear their hopes and desires along with what they've done. The most important thing is to *listen* to them. Then give them all the counsel you can.

Even more important is working with faculty members in the day-to-day operation of the school and in planning for the future. Regular, frequent faculty meetings are crucial, of course, but I believe that talks with faculty members individually and in groups about school activities and their hopes are more effective. Ideally, you want to make everyone on the faculty team look better and play better. Some structure can help. Consider having a mentoring system, with one or two senior faculty members mentoring each younger one. Make the new folks feel welcome AND an important part of the school.

As for staff members, they have to feel that they are appreciated as a crucial part of the school, for day-to-day operations and for planning for the future. Again, some structure helps. Each Monday morning, I had a staff meeting with associate deans and other faculty members as well as the chief staff members in all areas of daily operation. We talked not only about current

school events and issues but also about the future. The staff members love being part of the planning, and it helps them understand your vision for the school.

The joy in working with the faculty and staff lies in seeing established faculty members continue to excel, take on new roles, or win named professorships or national honors. It lies in seeing outstanding staff members receive promotions and assume new responsibilities and be successful. It lies in seeing new faculty members do outstanding research and teaching and get promoted. Occasionally, however, there will be an assistant professor in his or her first term who is not so good as a teacher or researcher. Here you have to do what's right. Instead of making the appointment to a second term as assistant professor in the slight hope that the person will be re-born, go ahead and cut the cord. That's far better for the person and for your school.

### **Working with Students**

As dean, you can't work nearly so closely with students as you did as a professor. What happens is you get to know the very best undergraduate and graduate students plus those with big problems about grades, graduation, or almost anything else.

Don't isolate yourself from students. Include students on all school boards and appropriate committees (including search committees). Meet with the heads of all the student association chapters together at least once a year. Set up a regular procedure whereby student leaders have access to you and your assistants. Reserve an hour or two each week for an open-door period to meet with students.

The joy in working with students is not only in seeing their eyes light up when the light bulb goes on, but also in learning from them and knowing that their participation makes for a much better school and a much better you.

### **Creating the Means to Work with Other Constituencies**

A school needs structure for effective relations with such constituencies as the industries, foundations, corporations, alumni, and friends. Boards can be effective. Some schools in our field don't have their own advisory board or board of visitors. That's a big mistake. Our school has 10 or more boards, depending on how you count them. A primary one is the Board of Visitors (a better name than an advisory board, in my opinion, because sometimes you won't want to take the advice). The Board of Visitors has 25-plus members, including prominent professionals from all areas of mass communication. Other entities include the board of directors of our Foundation (I always capitalize the Foundation!), which is composed of dedicated, powerful

people. We have the Journalism Alumni and Friends Association (JAFA) board of loyal, talented folks, and some regional JAFA chapters. And we have separate advisory boards for our medical journalism program, the Carolina Community Media Project, and the business journalism program. We'll have another board for the Sports Communication Program. We have three selection boards for the North Carolina Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations Hall of Fame. And we work closely with the North Carolina Press Association, the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters, and other such organizations. You simply have to. And we've been mighty fortunate to have all these excellent people working with us and for us.

The joy lies in interacting with all these outstanding people from the profession and other areas who learn about your school and come to love it almost as you do. Their eyes light up when the school fares well, they hire students as interns and alumni as full-time employees, they give money, they give time, and they give of themselves. Your joy lies in nurturing it and watching it evolve.

### **Working with the Higher University Administration and Other Parts of the Campus**

You can't be invisible or even shy in this regard. I served under six chancellors and, I think, 11 provosts, some of whom were much better than others. But for all such top administrators, including vice chancellors of research and finance, you must put your school forward in their *minds*. They have to have your school *in mind*, not forgotten. Demonstrate how effective your faculty and students are so that your school gets at least its fair share of the discussion on important campus-wide issues and, obviously, of the budget pie. And don't neglect the university magazine, news bureau, and other publicity opportunities. Surprisingly, some mass communication deans don't foster a system of ongoing news releases and other information on their schools.

Reach out to the business and law schools—two natural partners with our field—to create joint programs in business communication and media law studies or innovative areas. Cooperate with other appropriate units as well; such cooperation will only boost your own school on the campus. Provosts like joint programs, and funding for them may be obtained from an array of sources.

Where is any joy in this regard? The joy comes in your school's advancing on the campus, and in the state and nation. And in the creation of innovative programs that can become nationally renowned.

### **Fundraising**

You have to like raising money for your school. I've seen

some deans freeze when it comes down to “the ask,” when you smile and ask the donor to give, say, a million dollars. You must remember that you’re not out there asking for money for yourself; you’re asking for money for the school, for its faculty, students, staff, and alumni and for the betterment of the profession. Remember that, and you won’t freeze up.

Sometimes the rewards are great. Once I flew from Chapel Hill to Denver and back in a day to meet with a wonderful guy, a great friend of our school’s, the father of an alumna, a previous donor—and a billionaire. I wanted to tell him that a fund drive was being started for a \$3 million distinguished professorship in my name and warn him that he would receive “an ask.” We laughed as he was driving me back to the airport, and he said: “Well, Richard, I’ll just do the whole thing myself.” This endowed professorship will go on indefinitely and will always be a boon to our School.

At other times, the rewards are small but still important. Once we worked for more than a year to raise \$10,000 to endow a \$500 annual scholarship in the name of a faculty member who had retired. Many alumni and friends of his gave small gifts, and we finally surpassed the goal. Often it’s harder to raise a slew of little gifts than it is to cultivate and bring in the big ones. But you have to do both. Indeed, you have to juggle *many* fundraising balls at the same time, large and small. If you don’t have a lot of balls in the air at once, you’re not doing your job.

Part of the fundraising job is showing your school flag. You have to work countless professional meetings and represent your school, obviously, but you also have to go out to individual newspapers, broadcast stations, Web operations, ad agencies—and on and on—to press the flesh and laud your faculty, students, and overall school operation. You also have to attend lots of funerals. Don’t hesitate to mention how much your school would be honored to have a scholarship, award, or other appropriate program in the name of the deceased; people appreciate it if you do it right. And you have to write numerous cards and e-mails and send flowers to alumni, media people, and friends of the school to congratulate them on winning a prize, getting promoted, or becoming a mother. We mail out birthday cards throughout the year to prominent alumni and friends; the birthday card has a cartoon on the front drawn by Jeff MacNelly, who attended our School and went on to international acclaim as an editorial page cartoonist.

And you have to keep foundations in mind always. Fortunately, in journalism and mass communication we have a number of wonderful foundations across the country eager to help support good ideas to improve not only undergradu-

ate and graduate education for our majors, but also continuing education and special programs to benefit the profession. Go out and meet these people; tell them about your school’s faculty, students, and programs. In consultation with an appropriate person in a foundation, always have a well-thought-out and researched proposal ready for consideration. During my long tenure as dean, we (always say “we,” not “I” in regard to fundraising), raised way more than \$40 million. Much of it came and still comes from foundations.

You also have to wave your school flag as high as you can on the campus. You can raise enormous loot by demonstrating the needs of your school to your provost or president. Some good outside fundraisers neglect the inside aspect of fundraising. But getting an additional faculty position out of your provost because you have to cover all those sections of news writing, or to start a badly needed program in business journalism, means an enormous amount to your school over the years. You must always have a list of demonstrable needs, with the requisite dollars required, to flash in front of your provost at any time. Heck, carry the list with you. And keep those cards, e-mails, and phone calls going to your provost to brag on your faculty’s and students’ accomplishments; provosts like that. Just remember that you’re bragging on others, not on yourself.

What about joy in fundraising? It’s enormous fun to see the big gifts come in. People used to laugh at me when I yelled “Hotdamn!” after a donor called to promise \$2 million for a new professorship. And it’s mighty rewarding as well to read handwritten notes that accompany \$25 checks from new alumni who say they truly love the school and will do more as their careers advance.

**Obviously, there are many other aspects of deaning,** but the joy of the job lies in your being the ambassador for your school at all times, in the office, on the campus, and everywhere else. You must be relentlessly competitive on behalf of your school, but if you don’t let your own ego get in the way and if you can do it with a smile, you’ll be much more effective. And remember that you’re an ambassador not for yourself but on behalf of all the school’s constituencies and everyone associated with the school. We’re all in this together. The richest joy of deaning lies in the creating.

On second thought, maybe that’s the same as in *The Joy of Cooking* or *The Joy of Sex* after all.

*Richard Cole is John Thomas Kerr, Jr. distinguished professor and dean emeritus, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

# Skills can be Portable to Bigger Jobs

CHRIS MARTIN  
West Virginia University

---

Not long ago, when I was making a tough decision, a friend asked me a question by way of advice.

“Where do you want to be in five years? What’s your career path?”

Career path?

I wish I could say I had one. I wish I could say that long ago I charted a course or drafted a nice, progressive plan leading me through a series of successes into the shelter of my golden years.

But I hadn’t. Like many other people, I’ve never really plotted a path for my career. I’ve just been lucky. Since I began my professional life as a reporter 25 years ago, I have landed in some extraordinary jobs — all of which I’ve loved. But I can honestly say that I never mapped out a plan to get there.

To borrow a term from birding, I’m an accidental— a person who landed quite unexpectedly in leadership. I certainly never planned to be an administrator or a dean. The opportunities found me. And they usually found me less than prepared for the transition.

But the truth is, like most teachers, like most journalists, I was far better prepared than I realized. The skills and attitudes honed in those disciplines really do form the foundation for good leadership. Take vision, for example. It’s one of those advanced-level attributes that everyone expects in a leader. And yet, in the truest sense of the word, vision is one of the first lessons of reporting.

I came to understand fully that truth two years ago. And like most of the important lessons in my life, it came from a student — a young photojournalist in the Poynter Institute’s Summer Newswriting and Reporting Fellowship. On the final day of the program, she presented her portfolio, a stunning compilation of photographs, a CAT scan of her heart over six weeks.

“I thought I was lost when I started this program,” she told the group of students and faculty. “But now I know I belong in journalism; I know I am a photographer. I can’t open my eyes wide enough.”

Ahhh.

“I can’t open my eyes wide enough.”

I thought about what she said. And I saw that I had followed a path after all. I remembered myself as a college graduate, standing across the street from the squat, gray building that housed the *Herald-Standard* — circulation 40,000, Sunday 75,000. I remember staring up at the Uniontown Newspapers Inc. sign, thinking, “If I could get a job as a reporter, it would be the best job in the world.”

And it was.

I couldn’t open my eyes wide enough. Couldn’t learn enough, do enough, see enough, write enough.

And, as a young reporter, I remember interviewing university professors—experts, teachers, seekers of truth in a world of foregone conclusions. I knew if I could get a job as a professor, it would be the best job in the world.

And it was.

And I remembered my first years in AEJMC, meeting Trevor Brown and Richard Cole — people who led great schools, who helped build the future of journalism. I thought that being a journalism dean, leading a faculty, would be the best job in the world.

And, of course, it was. It was all about open eyes and open possibilities.

Then, over a year ago, quite out of the blue really, I was offered a position as a vice president. It was a big and daunting job. And, frankly, I didn't believe I was ready for the move. I certainly didn't think I had the right stuff, whatever it is, to take on that kind of leadership. But when I looked back on how I got there —from my first job as a reporter, to my first job as a professor, to becoming a dean— some things seemed fairly constant. I realized the skills of journalism led to the skills of leadership. They were portable, transferable, and true. Journalism teaches us how to have open eyes, open ears, an open mind, and sometimes, even an open heart. It offers up the right stuff, the vision.

And because I believed that journalists and communicators held the keys to creative leadership, I decided to question some people who moved into leadership roles. I talked to editors, publishers, CEOs, chairs, deans, a few provosts, even a university president— all former journalists— and I asked them to talk about the right stuff, to discuss the criteria for climbing the academic ziggurat. How did they get there from here? What lessons let them rise from the pack to become the lead dogs? What skills were portable to the top? And based on that extremely informal anecdotal research, plus the bulk of my own experience, this is what I found.

### The Portable Right Stuff for Leadership

- **Vision** — *You can't open your eyes wide enough.*

A sense of awe leads good reporters to great stories. Being wide open to wonder guides leaders to vision. In every job search the big question is usually about vision. "What's your vision for this group, this place, this time?" Recognizing the potential for a good idea, a fine project, a great piece of research, an innovative class or curriculum — are all the products of eyes wide open. In the end, it comes down to the ability to see possibility, not just in projects, but also in the people who initiate them.

- **Persuasiveness** — *You've always got to argue your case.*

My first editor taught me that every story is an argument, that every idea is an argument. Good leaders are good communicators... period. The ability to articulate a plan, an argument, or a vision is paramount to realizing any one of

them. In the end, the power to persuade trumps just about any other attribute for success.

- **Persistence** — *Stay in the ring.*

Sometimes it's enough just to persevere. To rise to the next level of leadership, you have to be the one who won't be ground down. Reporters learn to stay with the story; lead dogs learn to endure. And success often falls to the last man or woman left standing.

- **Patience** — *When the trap snaps shut, it's the second mouse that gets the cheese.*

Photographers, especially, understand the importance of patience — of searching for the precise moment to take the shot, of letting a picture unfold in its own time. It's all about timing, momentum, holding your hand. Timing is also everything in leadership. From fundraising to personnel decisions, learning to wait is as important as learning to act.

- **Intelligence** — *You are as smart as the questions you ask.*

In every leadership manual, from Kouzes and Posner to Ram Charan, openness to learning is the most desired attribute in a boss. So you should ask questions —of everyone, all the time. Don't be afraid to look stupid. The smartest reporters, the smartest leaders, are the ones who know what they don't know.

- **Big Ears** — *And when you ask questions, you need to listen.*

As communicators, we've all learned how to interview— how to shut up and pay attention. Too often, though, we forget those lessons as leaders. We spend more time making a point than hearing a position. But, if you listen, people will never fail to tell you incredible things.

- **Optimism** — *Sometimes it's best not to know what you can't do.*

There is a fine line between being a pioneer and being a fool, and I think you must walk that line to lead. A little wide-eyed optimism is essential to pushing past boundaries. And the only way to carve out new turf is to go farther than usually makes sense.

- **Courage** — *It's not about being unafraid; it's about being lion-hearted when you are afraid.*

There are a lot of risks involved in leadership, and they get bigger as the job does. Sometimes you have to risk being foolish, risk facing failure, risk being wrong, risk telling people you were wrong. Leadership raises the platform for risk. It makes you afraid that you will fall farther and harder. But in the end, the biggest danger is in not taking the plunge at all.

- **Empathy** — *You can't direct people you don't understand.*

Good reporters understand motive and character. Good leaders take the time to figure out what drives the people they serve. It is impossible to create a shared vision if you don't share the view.

• **Flexibility** — *Adaptability is the big, honking mother of all attributes.*

You have to learn to love (okay... like) change. No one welcomes those things that wrench our routines, twist our straight paths, flip our expectations end-on-end. But when you're in charge there's always something, a hardship, a mistake, a giant, disgusting blot on your otherwise perfect plan. When you do more, you take more pratfalls. And in the end, you just have get up off your face and change direction.

• **Passion** — *Energy and enthusiasm are viral; they spread to everyone from you.*

If you don't come by passion naturally, you need to create it. In some jobs passion might be an option. As a dean or director, it's not. Your heartbeat is the metronome that guides others' success. And your passion can carry your best work. If you worry about your ability to inspire others, remember that charisma is often just unbridled conviction.

• **Faith** — *You must believe that good people, good ideas, and good work will prevail*

Leaps of faith are critical to success. You can be a skeptic—journalists and academics are skeptical by their nature and their trade. But there is a huge difference between a skeptic and a cynic. And in the end, if you don't have faith in the good folks you hire and direct, they will never perform beyond your expectations.

• **Honesty** — *Transparency is credibility.*

Again, in every survey, this is a leadership attribute most valued by employees. But it's a mistake to confuse it with bluntness. Honesty, tempered with diplomacy, creates trust.

• **A Tender Heart** — *Working with people requires compassion.*

Compassion is taking the time to care about the people whose lives you direct. It's stopping to say hello. It's thinking before you judge. It's knowing that most people would rather do well, and even do good, if you give them the chance to find meaning in their work... and if you find meaning there, as well.

• **A Tough Hide** — *You will inevitably make people mad; be prepared to take some pokes.*

When you are in charge, you will have to do things that hurt people— even if you do everything you can to avoid it. You will make extremely unpopular decisions. You will be the boss. That alone will set people off. Being able to balance compassion with a thick skin is truly an art. It takes confidence, courage and a whole lot of patience. It also takes a big sense of humor.

• **A Sense of Humor** — *Try to find and articulate meaning in the work you do. And... be able to laugh when you can't.*

### Some Final Lead-Dog Lessons

**You've Got to Serve Somebody** — Being in charge is a service job. It's less about being the boss and more about fixing something, helping someone, and solving everything.

• **It's Not About You** — You must be able to find satisfaction in the success of others.

• **It's All About You** — In the end, every buck will stop at your desk.

• **Enjoy the View** — You have to like your job to be good at it. And the bigger the job, the more you have to love it.

• **Be Willing to Grab a Mop** — No job is too big; no job is too small. Be willing to micro-manage, macro-manage and manage just getting through the day.

• **The Lesson is Always in the Student** — People really do know when something is or isn't working. You've got to be willing to coach them to understanding.

• **Work Over Your Head** — Don't stay with the jobs you think you can do. Jump into the ones you know are impossible. Remember: When you tread water, you really don't go anywhere.

• **Nobody Gets Enough Attention** — On one hand, benign neglect quickly becomes malignant. On the other, people blossom in the light of your recognition.

• **"People Don't Have to Like You; They Just Have to Respect You."** The folks who first crafted this adage were obviously not talking about university deans.

• **The Lead-Dog Never Pulls the Sled Alone** — Leading is always a team sport, and building the team is as important as guiding it.

This article was adapted from a presentation the author made at the 2005 AEJMC convention in San Antonio.

*Christine M. Martin, former dean of the Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism at West Virginia University, is now vice president for institutional advancement at WVU.*

---

# Advertise your job posting in the best possible place.

## Late Breaking Ads!

Advertise your job opening  
online with AEJMC

- *Hire qualified professionals*
- *Fast postings at any time*
- *Remains online for two months*

E-mail ads to: [aejmchq@aol.com](mailto:aejmchq@aol.com)  
and type "website ad" in the subject line

\$125 for the first \$200 words, & .25 per additional word

Visit: [www.aejmc.org/jobs/index.html](http://www.aejmc.org/jobs/index.html)

---

**ASJMC President**  
**Pam Creedon**  
University of Iowa

**ASJMC President-elect**  
**Loren Ghiglione**  
Northwestern University

**ASJMC Vice President**  
**Thomas Kunkel**  
University of Maryland

**ASJMC Past President**  
**Russell Shain**  
Arkansas State University

**ASJMC Executive Committee Representatives**

**Ron Yates**  
University of Illinois

**James Stewart**  
Nicholls State University

**Patsy Watkins**  
University of Arkansas

**ACEJMC Representatives Chair**  
**Judy VanSlyke Turk**  
Virginia Commonwealth University

**ASJMC Publications Committee Chair**  
**Beth Barnes**  
University of Kentucky

**BCCA Representative**  
**TBA**

**ASJMC Executive Director**  
**Jennifer H. McGill**

***ASJMC Insights* Editor**  
**Robert M. Ruggles**