



Recommendations from the 2016-2018 AEJMC Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Professions



Submitted June 28, 2018 for approval by the AEJMC Board of Directors at the 101st conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Washington, D.C., August 6-9, 2018.

2016-2018 Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Professions



Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
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2016-2018 AEJMC Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Professions

Co-Chairs:

Dr. Deb Aikat, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
and

Dr. Battinto Batts, Scripps Howard Foundation

Committee Members

Professor Jake Batsell, Southern Methodist University

Professor Sue Burzynski Bullard, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
(Served from 2016 until October 2017)

Dr. Sonya Duhé, Loyola University New Orleans, 2017-2018 ASJMC President

Ms. Gina Gayle, Syracuse University
(Served from August 2017)

Dr. Nancy L. Green, Southern Newspaper Publishers Association,
AEJMC Council of Affiliates Chair

Ms. Vicki Krueger, The Poynter Institute
(Served from 2016 until October 2017)

Dr. Paul Parsons, Elon University

Ms. Vidisha Priyanka, The Poynter Institute
(Served from August 2016 through December 2017, and from April 2018)

Dr. Paul S. Voakes, 2016-2017 President of AEJMC
(Voakes formed this Task Force in August 2016 and served as Task Force member from August 2017)

Ex-officio members:

Dr. Jennifer D. Greer, 2017-2018 President of AEJMC, Alabama
(Served from August 2017)

Ms. Jennifer McGill, Executive Director, AEJMC and ASJMC

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Preface



Paul Voakes

From the moment I began to consider running for the AEJMC presidency, I've been focusing on what we might do to strengthen the relationship between media professionals and media educators. The two groups were facing similar challenges, especially in the arenas of economics (“doing more with less”) and technology (keeping up with an ever-quickenning pace of change).

That was three years ago. By the time I actually assumed office in the fall of 2016, a third challenge had arisen: ideological (and practical) challenges to the very legitimacy of journalism.

I don't think there has ever been a time in which a symbiosis between educators and the professions was more urgently needed. Editors, directors and managers say they need our research to help them address current challenges. Educators say they need help from the professions in preparing their students for success in a protean media environment. Our educational institutions retain expectations of faculty that are not necessarily conducive to relevance or immediacy.

Our AEJMC mission is very much committed to this symbiosis. Included in the goals of the organization we see “the improvement of education in journalism and mass communication to the end of achieving better professional practice,” and “fostering scholarly research and inquiry . . . and facilitating the publication and distribution to the public of reports based on such activity.”

So in Fall 2016, I assembled a Presidential Task Force, composed of experienced and insightful members, and asked them first to study the current relationship between the JMC academy and the media professions, and then to suggest how our organization can reach out to improve synergies. Their charge has been to develop strategies over the course of two years, beginning in Fall 2016. The group wasted little time in getting to work – first in organizing its own tasks and recommendations to AEJMC, and then in actually implementing two of the early recommendations. The first recommendation to appear in the Task Force's 2017 interim report to the AEJMC Board of Directors was to conduct two nationwide surveys, of JMC programs and of media professionals, to gauge the current state of the academy-profession partnerships. Both surveys have been completed, and the results have informed this report; a formal report of findings is forthcoming. Second, the Task Force this year has piloted its recommendation to establish the AEJMC Research Prize for Professional Relevance. A team of 14 judges – seven media professionals and seven scholars – judged 28 semi-

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finalist papers on the path to announcing our first recipient and runners-up. The Task Force now hopes to make the competition permanent.

The new recommendations that follow are the results of the Task Force's evolving thinking in Year Two of its charge, about the ways in which AEJMC can leverage its strengths to forge stronger bonds with media professions, for our mutual benefit.

Another important aspect of the Task Force's work is its desire to encourage the entire membership of AEJMC to embrace the idea of Bridges to the Professions. Thus the Task Force has submitted a resolution to the AEJMC BoD, in the hopes of putting it before the members electronically, during or before the 2018 conference.

Finally, I wish to thank this document's authors, the 10 talented Task Force members, ably led by Co-Chairs Deb Aikat and Battinto Batts. I very much appreciate your time and your talent!



Paul Voakes,
2016-17 President, AEJMC



Recommendations from the 2016-2018 Task Force on Bridges to the Professions

Our 101st conference in Washington, D.C. marks AEJMC's rise as a singularly collegial, interdisciplinary organization fostering education, research and professional freedom. AEJMC's rich heritage dates back to November 30, 1912, when a motivated group of journalism educators and professionals convened in Chicago to create an organization that is now AEJMC.

In our commitment to sustain AEJMC's relevance, the 2016-2018 AEJMC Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Professions has developed ideas to bridge the gap between the media industry and academia. Our 11-member task force represents a thoughtful collaboration of intellectual strengths of leading administrators, innovative researchers and dedicated teachers. We interacted for three years to carefully consider and propose three recommendations for approval and action by AEJMC Board of Directors (BoD). We remain committed to incorporating your feedback.

We request the AEJMC BoD to approve our three recommendations (see page 6-8) and the related resolution (see page 10) to rededicate ourselves to forging, renewing, and improving relationships between educators and media professionals by

- ⊙ Enhancing partnerships with media professionals and their organizations;
- ⊙ Nurturing and recognizing research that, in addition to building theory and expanding intellectual horizons, can offer findings relevant to media professionals and our students;
- ⊙ Assisting each other as teachers, in better preparing our students for success in a fast-changing professional media environment.

To ensure the success of our recommendations, we have conceived an implementation plan (see page 9). We urge the AEJMC BoD to invest increased resources to forge stronger ties between media professionals and educators. From a personal perspective, I cherished the power of AEJMC's collective wisdom when I was awarded a 2015 Scripps Howard Foundation Research Grant to research strategies to foster sustained ties between the academy and the media industry.

Our recommendations are based on insights and ideas from AEJMC members like you.

Deb Aikat, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Co-Chair, 2016-2018 AEJMC Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Professions

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⊙ Recommendation # 1: **Professional-Academic Partnerships**

A. At the Organizational Level: AEJMC should enhance partnerships between AEJMC and professional organizations in a variety of ways, including the following:

1. AEJMC members who attend meetings of professional organizations should be encouraged to report on “Takeaways for Academics” – and AEJMC should share those reports in a single location.
2. AEJMC should reach out to professional organizations to secure *ex officio* places on their boards of directors, just as they have a place on our board (through the Council of Affiliates). AEJMC members who sit *ex officio* on those boards should receive travel support from AEJMC.
3. AEJMC should work with professional organizations on a “mutual discount” system, whereby members of each organization can attend the other’s annual conference with lower registration fees.
4. AEJMC should communicate its “five-year plan” for future conference dates and locations to all professional media organizations, to minimize overlap in meetings.
5. AEJMC should encourage each division/interest group to solicit brief essays or reports from their relevant professional counterparts, on “What I’m Dealing With” currently, and post the essays on the divisions/ or interest groups’ web pages.

B. At the Program Level: AEJMC should encourage educators to forge symbiotic partnerships with local professionals in a variety of ways, including the following:

1. AEJMC should offer guidance (e.g. a recurring conference panel) to programs without professional advisory boards on “how to create and manage an effective advisory board.”
2. AEJMC should offer guidance to members (e.g. a recurring conference panel) on how to create summer programs whereby faculty members work or “intern” at local media companies.
3. AEJMC should offer guidance to members (e.g. a recurring conference panel) on how to create and sustain a mentoring program whereby students are assigned to be mentored by local professionals doing relevant media work.
4. AEJMC should offer guidance to members (e.g. a recurring conference panel) on how to create partnerships with professional organizations.

⊙ Recommendation # 2: **Professionally Relevant Research**

AEJMC should foster research initiatives that impart clarity and insight to emerging media practices, cultures and business imperatives, including the following:

A. AEJMC should make permanent the pilot Research Prize for Professional Relevance, launched in 2018.

B. AEJMC should establish a relationship with a professional partner (such as the Poynter Institute) to develop a program for quickly publicizing media-relevant research presented at recent AEJMC conferences – summaries that do not hinder the authors' abilities later to publish the full manuscripts in reviewed journals.

C. AEJMC should reach out to professional organizations to seek suggestions on which research questions and topics would be most valuable to them.

D. AEJMC should encourage conference programming that enables media professionals who conduct their own social-science research (e.g. data journalism or advertising/market research) to present their work to AEJMC's academic audience.

⊙ Recommendation # 3: **Professionally Relevant Pedagogy**

AEJMC should enhance the value of media education by encouraging educators and their students to derive key lessons from technological trends and disruptive changes in the media industry ecosystem

A. The principal vehicle for this linkage should be the **AEJMC Connectors** program.

1. The purpose is to enable any AEJMC member to replicate the programs that supply advanced-level student work to local news organizations or other media companies.

2. AEJMC would assemble a team of volunteers – educators as well as former media professionals – to provide consulting on such tasks as developing course proposals, developing rubrics for media use of student work, establishing lines of editing authority, etc.

3. Training could take place either at AEJMC conferences or via Webinars.

B. AEJMC should, through its Standing Committee on Teaching and through the divisions' and interest groups' own programming on teaching, provide guidance on best ways to teach professionally relevant areas, which might include:

1. Innovation and Creativity

2. Experimentation

3. Entrepreneurship and Prototypes for Business Models

C. AEJMC should, through its Standing Committee on Teaching and through the divisions' and interest groups' own programming on teaching, provide guidance on how to develop a program's alumni as a resource for professionally relevant teaching.

Implementation of the Recommendations 1 through 3

A. AEJMC's Council of Affiliates (CoA) should assume primary responsibility for the coordination and implementation of these recommendations. The Task Force also recommends that the CoA reach out to the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (ASJMC), for assistance with and joint implementation of several of these initiatives.

B. The CoA should be encouraged to plan more joint sessions with the divisions and interest groups.

C. AEJMC should provide increased budgetary support to the CoA, in view of its expanded role, which would include, for example:

1. An annual stipend for a graduate student to work with a professional partner (such as Poynter Institute) in writing "Research You Can Use" summaries of relevant research from each year's Relevant Research paper competition.
2. Travel funding for AEJMC members attending board meetings *ex officio* of professional organizations.

D. The Council of Affiliates should revise its membership criteria so that AEJMC-member educators (as well as media professionals) can belong to the Council and help implement its new, expanded duties.

E. Following are examples of the expanded responsibilities of the CoA:

1. Curate a "Best Practices" database (in conjunction with ASJMC) for many of the activities described above.
2. Make contact with the professional organizations referenced in 1A above, to negotiate the various arrangements.
3. Communicate regularly with the appropriate divisions and interest groups on matters of conference programming or other activities, on behalf of all of these goals.
4. Keep the CoA website current, by regularly supplying fresh content to the central office staff working on the AEJMC website.



DRAFT COPY:

Resolution from the 2016-18 Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Professions

WHEREAS the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) is committed, in its mission statement, to “the improvement of education in journalism and mass communication to the end of achieving better professional practice;” and

WHEREAS Direction 1 of AEJMC’s Strategic Plan calls for transforming our teaching, scholarship and service in order to “promote storytelling, innovation and engagement across platforms;” and

WHEREAS AEJMC enjoys a history of support and partnership with the media professions, in its structure (especially with its Council of Affiliates and the Standing Committees on Teaching, Research, Publications and Professional Freedom and Responsibility), its programmatic ties to the professions (including outreach activities at conferences and recurring Presidential Statements), and its awards (several of which recognize service to the media professions and to freedom of expression); and

WHEREAS the institutional health of media education and the media professions is being challenged today as never before, principally through financial constrictions, the pace of technological change and ideological threats to their very legitimacy;

THEREFORE be it resolved that we, the members of AEJMC, rededicate ourselves to forging, renewing, and improving relationships between educators and media professionals — principally, and in accordance with the recommendations of the 2018 Task Force on Bridges to the Professions, by

- * enhancing partnerships with media professionals and their organizations;
- * nurturing and recognizing, research that, in addition to building theory and expanding intellectual horizons, can offer findings relevant to media professionals and our students;
- * assisting each other as teachers, in better preparing our students for success in a fast-changing professional media environment.

We’ll table August 7, 2018 this Resolution for consideration by the AEJMC membership. AEJMC Conference, Washington, D.C.



**2017 Recommendations and Priority Areas from the
AEJMC Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Professions**

Click [here to view](#) the **2017 Report from the AEJMC Task Force for
Bridges to the Professions**

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2016-2018 AEJMC Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Profession Panel



Event# M039: 11:45 to 1:15 p.m., Aug. 6 (Monday), 2018

Location: Renaissance Hotel Downtown, 999 9th St NW, Washington, DC 20001

Task Force Panel Session: Strengthening Our Community: Closing the Gap between Professors and Professionals

Moderating/Presiding:

Paul S. Voakes, 2016-2017 AEJMC President, Colorado-Boulder

Panelists:

Strengthening our Community: Working Together to Build Scholars, Educators, and Engaged Academic Citizens

Jennifer D. Greer, 2017-2018 AEJMC President, Alabama

Forging Professional Partnerships, A Nationwide Look

Sonya Forte Duhé, Loyola University New Orleans, 2017-2018 ASJMC President

Recognizing Professional Relevance in Academic Research

Jake Batsell, Southern Methodist

Building Bridges between AEJMC and Professional Organizations

Battinto Batts, Scripps Howard Foundation

Providing Academics Information and Insights into Workplace

Nancy L. Green, Southern Newspaper Publishers Association & AEJMC Council of Affiliates Chair

Inspiring Journalists and Media Leaders

Vidisha Priyanka, The Poynter Institute

Engaging Professionals to Share Insights That Inform Academics of Themes and Trends

Paul Parsons, Elon University

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Strategies to Close the Gap between Journalists and Journalism Educators

Gina Gayle, Syracuse

Reimagining New Modes of Inquiry and Establishing a Knowledge Base for Our Field

Deb Aikat, North Carolina, Chapel Hill

31 Years of the C-SPAN Video Library

Howard Mortman, C-SPAN

Google News tools for Trust and Verification, Immersive Storytelling, Data Journalism and Data Visualization

Nicholas Whitaker, Google News Lab

Ways to Bridge the Gap between the Media Industry and Academia

Jennifer Benz, The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Chicago

Understanding the Power of Media Platforms to Serve the Audience

Tom Rosenstiel, The American Press Institute

This interactive session will engage conference attendees in an open forum to manifest strategies for “Closing the Gap: Media, Research and the Profession.” Our goal for this session is a fast-paced, informed and participatory discussion. Panelists will offer brief remarks, then address issues suggested by attendees.

We will address industry innovations to bridge the widening divide between professors and professionals. We will discuss strategies to enhance the symbiosis between media professionals and media educators. Added to the business and technological challenges that we both face is the new political challenge to journalistic practices, educators need help in preparing students with the skills that editors and directors now need in professional settings. News organizations need not only a well prepared entry-level work force but the knowledge that media researchers can share about trends in journalism.

The 2016-2018 AEJMC Presidential Task Force on Bridges to the Profession has developed ideas to bridge the gap between the media industry and academia. Read [2017 task force report and recommendations](#)

If you have suggestions for issues or ideas that we may discuss, please email them to Task Force Co-Chair Deb Aikat (da@unc.edu), North Carolina-Chapel Hill, with the email subject line “2018 Bridges.” The agenda for this interactive session will be based on issues and ideas raised by AEJMC members like you.

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Charge to the AEJMC Task Force for Bridges to the Professions

By AEJMC President Paul Voakes, Oct. 24, 2016

The theme of my term is “Closing the Gap,” which refers to a number of different contexts for “gaps,” but the “gap” that chiefly concerns me is the gap between JMC educators and media practitioners. I don’t think there has ever been a time in which a symbiosis between media professionals and media educators was more urgently needed. But I don’t see it happening to the extent that it should.

Too often, for example, JMC research is ignored by media professionals, because it’s either out of date or its topic is irrelevant to professional concerns.

Too often JMC researchers have little reason to undertake applied research, because their career paths (to tenure and promotion) require theory-building work that must be published in academic journals.

It’s not just research relevance that needs help. The skills that educators are teaching in the classrooms have lost some relevance for what editors and directors are needing in professional settings. To add to the challenge, work that academics could do in building Bridges to the Professional world is considered by campus administration to be “service,” which is rewarded far less than teaching or research, in promotion or in salary increases.

But I don’t think JMC educators and media professionals are destined to live in separate worlds, so I’m forming the task force to contemplate how AEJMC, as an organization, can help increase the relevance of what its members do, and how we might engineer something approaching symbiosis for the pros and the pros.

I hereby charge the Presidential Task Force with designing a plan by which AEJMC can bring the JMC community and the media professions closer together, for the enhancement of achievement in both fields. Specifically, I am requesting this:

The task should start with an analysis of the relationship between JMC educators and media professionals. Where are the bonds already firm and strong? Where are they weak and distant? In what contexts would it make the most sense to engage closely? Please consider research, teaching and service.

What can our organization, AEJMC, do to leverage our particular strengths as an organization to improve synergies between educators and media professionals?

- * Please consider incentives that AEJMC might offer to individuals or to divisions/interest groups.
- * Please consider programmatic initiatives that might help to close the gap.
- * Please consider possible partnerships with various types of professional organizations, whose resources might combine with our own and whose interests might dovetail with our own.

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- * Please consider recommendations that could be sustainable over time rather than a brief explosion of brilliance that is unlikely to be replicated.

In past communications, I have offered suggestions like these:

- * *We could pursue incentives, including an “awards” structure, to effect more applied research.*
- * *We could establish a system whereby academics could frequently learn which research questions managers, editors, publishers, producers and other media professionals deem important.*
- * *We could pursue ways to recognize strong applied research as soon as it is peer-reviewed and presented at conferences, through fast, brief and accessible dissemination to the media professions.*
- * *We could imagine and encourage more sponsored research grants from the private sector, whose findings would land in both professional and scholarly venues.*
- * *We could increase number and size of programs that put professors into newsrooms during the summer.*
- * *We could organize a database of tech tools and how to teach them, updated regularly and highlighted by webinars.*
- * *We could encourage professional organizations to recognize JMC research, much like SPJ’s “Researcher of the Year” award.*
- * *We could learn from the successes of AAF and PRSA in bridging education with professional practice.*

These thoughts comprise the tip of the iceberg. Depending on your own analysis, you may supplant these with entirely more promising recommendations.

And, finally, I ask you to consider an early pilot to demonstrate “proof of concept” for an idea that seems exciting to you, during our conference in Chicago in August 2017. This could emerge in the form of a panel or as the keynote speaker, or both (The president is authorized to create one invited panel each year, apart from the panels planned by the Council of Divisions).

Thank you for your service on this Task Force, and I look forward with great anticipation to your thoughts on this issue of relevance.



Toronto, Canada

August 7-10

(Pre-conference day: Aug. 6)

Sheraton Centre Toronto

2019

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