



I have heard faculty members say things like “I’m educating my students and I don’t care about jobs,” or “even if they remain unemployed, at least they will be able to understand literature and engage in critical thinking.” These views are perhaps not entirely unusual. I’ve heard them here in Abu Dhabi where I have been teaching journalism and public relations for three years and handling internships for one year, but I’ve heard similar comments at the City University of New York in the past.

Teaching outside the U.S. even at an institution that bills itself as providing American style higher education and has recently been accredited by Middle States is an experience which may have some unexpected similarities with teaching students from American inner cities and depressed areas. My students are females Emiratis, citizens of the United Arab Republic, instantly recognizable by their black abaya cloaks and shayla head scarves. Many grow up with illiterate parents in a setting where dinner conversation is never about jobs and careers. Privacy at home is not often sought. Rooms are shared with siblings which is the way things are expected to be.

The stated mission of Zayed University is to educate students – mostly female but some males are now admitted to separate but equal facilities – and prepare them for employment outside the home. Like some inner city students, my students need to learn about work, and for most of them, the 8-week long full time internship is the first exposure to a business environment.

Emiratis today are lucky to live in a country where the economy is booming, where the overwhelming majority of decent jobs are held by foreigners, and where Emiratis are eagerly sought by employers who need some minimal quota (five percent or less) of national employees among their staff.

So getting students into the workplace, and learning to deal professionally with men and men and women from a multitude of cultures is an important mission for faculty in the UAE. We have an extreme example of the importance of internships.

However, the basic point is relevant to the U.S. where students may have work experience, but it is likely to have been gofer, laborer, or low level hospitality work, not work at a professional level. The harder it is to find jobs, the more important internships which introduce students to a professional environment become. Today’s economic uncertainty in most of the world means that we should focus on internships and figure out how to make them lead to jobs.

I’m most likely preaching to the converted, but this is a call for you to remind us all about the importance of internships and come up with panel, workshop, and other proposals for us to bring to Boston 2009. Let me hear from you.

Research in Internships & Careers: Factors that Influence Initial Job Search Outcomes

By John Chapin, Research Chair

An article in the spring 2008 issue of *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* by Shawn Neidorf sheds some light on the impact of internships and other factors on the success or failure of initial job searches by journalism school graduates. It also illustrates the value of applied communication research in internships and careers.

The most recent Annual Survey of Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates shows that most students (78%) completed at least one internship prior to graduation. About a third (33%) worked on a student newspaper while in college. Of the 2006 graduates, 76% were employed several months after commencement, with about 75% of these securing jobs in their fields.

Neidorf followed-up the annual survey with in-depth interviews with 16 journalism students representing public and private institutions from programs with and programs without ACEJMC certification. Interviews were conducted prior to and post graduation. All of the students were interested in print journalism positions. Of the 16 participants, nine secured full-time positions within six months of graduation. Of the remaining participants, two had part-time employment in journalism; most of the remaining were working in retail while they continued their search. Three factors emerged across the interviews: internships, college newspaper experience, job search methods and social networks.

Internships: Graduates who completed internships fared better in the job market than peers. In fact, students who completed two or more internships were the most likely to be employed in their field. Whether the advantage came from skills and experience (human capital) or social contacts on the job (social capital), the article suggests that two internships may be a de facto threshold requirement for gainful employment. There was also a positive relationship between internship completion and starting salary.

Students Newspaper Experience: College newspapers provide students with semi-professional experience and work samples (clips), which are useful later for applications for internships and for professional

positions. Most of the participants (14 of 16) had some experience with their college newspaper. Of the two who did not work for their college newspaper, one completed an internship and later found a professional position; the other did not.

Job Search Methods and Social Networks: Most of the participants (75%) named the Internet as their most effective job search strategy. Students from Ivy League programs were more likely to attend formal events like job fairs and campus recruiting, but none listed the formal events as the most effective. Half the participants mentioned using social contacts or networking. Of these eight students, five had jobs in their field and four considered networking their most effective strategy. Five students listed being aggressive (going directly to editors instead of using social contacts) was their most effective strategy. Neidorf notes that only one in five of the students favoring aggressiveness strategies found employment, while three of the four favoring social networks did.

The article provides some useful insight to students as they ready themselves for their first job search and for the faculty who advise them. It also highlights the importance of applied research. It is possible to successfully combine our research, service and teaching initiatives.

I'm looking forward to serving as research chair this year. If you have recently published an article or book that you would like featured in an upcoming newsletter, contact me at jrc11@psu.edu.





AEJMC Convention 2009 planning in full swing

By Tony DeMars, Texas A&M University-Commerce
2008-09 ICIG Head

It may be only a few months since AEJMC Chicago, but things are already in full swing for the next AEJMC Convention, August 2009 in Boston. In case you have not thought much about planning, it's not too early!

For example, 2008-09 Vice-Head and Program Planner Alma Kadragic and I are currently reviewing panel proposals for Boston. In case you're not familiar with the process—and especially so you can be ready to submit something next time—we took proposals through mid-October for Teaching and Professional Freedom and Responsibility (PF&R) panels. What goes into a panel proposal? Essentially the proposer makes arrangements for several panelists who will each speak at the session. Panels are built around themes, like “The Challenge of Arranging Internships for Students Interested in New Media Careers.” So who would speak at such a session? One panelist might be a university professor who supervises a student media news-based web site. Another might be an internship coordinator who has made contacts in new media areas. An industry professional from a TV station or newspaper could speak about ‘new media’ kinds of internships at their facility, and a manager from a standalone web business could describe their needs and expectations.

So would this be a Teaching, PF&R, or even a Research proposal? It depends on the focus. If this example focuses on helping educators improve their curriculum, it would be a Teaching session. If instead the presenters talk mostly about what the industry is and/or should be, it might be a PF&R session. The proposer could have also asked panelists to do a research project on the topic and thus it could be a Research session.

How does all this relate to the research paper you might be working on right now for the Boston AEJMC Convention? The first weekend of December, Alma and I will go to the Mid-winter Meeting in Louisville, where we will put together the basic outline of our ICIG sessions for Boston. At that meeting,

we will schedule our best panel proposals, as well as one session that will contain our ‘top research’ papers submitted. When you get your research paper submitted by the April 1, 2009 deadline, and if it is one of the top paper, it will then be placed into that session. Plus, we will be able to schedule several other top papers into our Scholar to Scholar session.

So, keep working on a good research paper for the Boston AEJMC Convention, but also think next year, as soon as you leave Boston, about submitting a panel proposal in September 2009 to be considered for AEJMC 2010 in Denver.

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Do you have information that you would like us to include in a future issue of the ICIG Newsletter? We are looking for articles, book reviews, tips and advice about internship and careers. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Kim McDonough, ICIG Newsletter Editor.

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