

PROGRESS REPORT

Working Group Name: Journalism Department

Working Group #: 11

Chair: Tim Scott

Date: March 21, 2022

Update on Actions Taken Since Last Report:

The two initial subgroups of the working group and an additional subgroup have been meeting.

The **internal (academic) subgroup** has met twice: on March 2 and March 9. Before the first meeting, the subgroup members received questions to consider related to the meaning of Aggie Journalist, routes to journalism careers, existing programs and resources to build upon, and lessons from the previous journalism department. Points from discussions at the first meeting about the expanded journalism program included the following: the values underlying the program should be the core journalistic values, which are consistent with the core Aggie values; the program should have rigorous criteria for transfer into the major; minors can be extremely valuable for journalism majors; potential exists for additional cross-listing of courses; and the structure of the program could well evolve with time. Between the two meetings the subgroup considered questions related to the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and the specificity of recommendations. The main point emerging from the second meeting was that the expanded journalism program should both provide excellent general journalism education and distinguish itself in some areas related to Texas A&M's mission and strengths. Among areas in which Texas A&M was identified as being potentially well suited to develop prominence were community journalism, sports journalism, specialized journalism (including journalism focusing on areas such as science or policy), journalism serving Hispanic communities, and visual and interactive storytelling.

The **industry subgroup** is looking at industry standards and has met twice, Feb. 28 and March 7. The subgroup discussed and came up with questions for industry leaders that focus on what skills are needed for a modern journalist, including digital, multi-media, new media, print offerings, etc. They broke the research effort into four categories: content (writing/reporting, visual media, digital media, data, design); sustainable business models; audience development/engagement; and partnerships/internships needed to get a good job upon graduation. Also the subgroup discussed what academic offerings already exist for the University Studies with a journalism concentration degree to learn more about how we can build upon these courses. Discussed how faculty and administrators involved with current journalism program strongly support President Banks' "bold decision" to grow journalism at A&M.

The subgroup is interviewing various Texas and national media organizations to discuss industry standards and the skills needed for a modern journalist. Some examples include: Dallas Morning News, WFAA, KPRC, KHOU, Houston Chronicle, Texas Tribune, Austin American-Statesmen,

KUT, San Antonio Express-News, WOAI, KENS-TV, Laredo Times, Tyler Morning-News, New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, FOX, MSNBC, ESPN, Huffington Post, Upworthy, Amy O’Leary (chief story officer and editorial director at Upworthy & formerly at the Times; helped craft its innovation), Nieman Foundation, Poytner, Knight Foundation, Scripps, The American Journalism Project, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Pew Research, Hearst, Gannett Foundation, O’Brien Fellowship in Public Service Journalism and The Sports Video Group. Also the subgroup is looking for best practices at online-only newsrooms, such as News Leaders Association (APME and ASNE merged), News Initiative, Google online newsroom, Facebook journalism effort.

The working group added a third subgroup, the **Battalion subgroup**, to examine topics related to student newspapers within the state and nationally. The Battalion subgroup met twice: on March 2 and March 9.

At its first meeting, the Battalion subgroup reviewed the expanded charge related to the Battalion. Further, the subgroup reviewed documents from the 2018 Student Media Task Force and agreed to build upon that work. In addition, the subgroup discussed BATT operations in its current structure under the Division of Student Affairs and in its previous structure under the department of journalism.

Members of the subgroup began researching student newspapers at select Texas, SEC, and national universities. The subgroup is focusing on research questions such as size of student body, details of association with university, additional types of student media and modes of delivery, elements of funding, staffing and compensation, space/where located, etc. Also the subgroup members are compiling a list of pros and cons of the BATT being under student affairs versus the academic department that will house the journalism program.

At its second meeting, the subgroup reviewed notes from interviews about a student newspaper in the state. Also the subgroup members discussed their wish list for the BATT (elements, resources, etc.).

The three subgroups will continue to coordinate with each other, as some of the research crosses all three. The three subgroups will meet during the week of March 21, and the working group will meet on March 23.

Next Major Issue to be Addressed:

The academic subgroup is exploring two major questions: what is needed to start a journalism degree program of the type envisioned and what few areas of potential distinction to focus on. The industry group is gathering information to inform those two issues.

The Battalion subgroup is developing a common understanding of how the BATT operated when connected to the old journalism department and how it operates now connected to Student Affairs. Pros and cons document started.

Problems or Barriers Encountered and Solutions Identified:

- This working group is trying to establish a baseline for a journalism program, as well as what association The BATT will have with the university. A great deal of research is needed before meaningful discussions can start.
- Having to reach out to dozens of organizations because of the different toolboxes required by online, print and broadcast jobs. Check back with the non-responders by phone if they don't return emails.
- Occasionally, the groups get sidetracked; need to stay focused on agenda items.

Deliverables Completed:

- Completed interviews with several of the organizations. (Will take some time.)
- Comparisons to other universities with regard to student media.

Timeline for Completion of Remaining Deliverables:

Upcoming deliverables and anticipated dates:

End of March – Complete research

End of April – Recommendations regarding journalism program curriculum and components

End of May – Recommendations regarding the administrative structure of the journalism program and the Battalion