
Broadcast Journalism Education and the Capstone Experience

Journalism & Mass Communication Educator
67(3) 219–233
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DOI: 10.1177/1077695812444097
<http://jmce.sagepub.com>



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Abstract

This study assesses the current state of the television news capstone experience in accredited journalism and mass communication programs in the United States. Specifically, the authors employed a mixed-methods approach, interviewing 20 television news capstone instructors and conducting an analysis of broadcast journalism curriculum information obtained from 113 schools. More than 90 percent of accredited schools offer a television news capstone, and faculty had similar insights about television news instruction and how best to teach the television news capstone course.

Keywords

journalism education, television news, capstone course

Mass communication educators have debated how best to train journalists for more than a century. Much discussion has focused on whether a skills-oriented or a liberal-arts-based curriculum is the “best” approach to educating young journalists.¹ In recent years, however, dramatic shifts in the production and consumption of news content have reenergized this debate as educators attempt to find ways to prepare students for an increasingly complex media environment.

Historically, most journalism and mass communication programs have educated aspiring journalists using a traditional approach with students focusing specifically on one area of mass communication, such as print or broadcast journalism.² For broadcast students, this traditional method of training includes a series of courses in which

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students learn how to write, report, and produce for television news.³ A capstone course, which may include some type of hands-on or news-laboratory experience, is typically required so that students can integrate and apply the knowledge they have learned.

But this specialized, medium-specific approach seems to be evolving into a broad-based instructional endeavor, with mass communication administrators and faculty focusing heavily on media convergence and the wide array of conceptual skills that students need when entering the workplace.⁴ As journalism programs trend toward convergence, less instructional time may be devoted to specialized journalism instruction, such as broadcast journalism, as students are increasingly trained across media platforms.⁵ In light of these changes, this study assesses the current state of capstone courses in broadcast journalism programs. Wagenaar has defined a capstone course as “a culminating experience in which students are expected to integrate, extend, critique, and apply the knowledge gained in the major.”⁶ The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) defines a capstone as “a final course that synthesizes the knowledge, values, and skills of a sequence, department or core curriculum.”⁷

Although recent scholarship has examined the current state of journalism education in colleges and universities,⁸ few studies have assessed how curricular changes in JMC programs have influenced the educational outcomes of broadcast journalism courses. Little academic research exists on capstone course experiences in JMC programs.⁹ The current study addresses this literature gap by examining broadcast news capstone courses at the 113 colleges and universities accredited by the ACEJMC. By assessing the capstone course, this study seeks to evaluate how accredited JMC programs are preparing students, through transitional or summative educational experiences, to become broadcast journalists in a new media environment.

Literature Review

As institutions of higher education and accrediting bodies have intensified efforts to document student learning outcomes, they have increasingly emphasized the capstone course as a curricular element across disciplines.¹⁰ The capstone has thus emerged as a key method for assessing and measuring both cumulative student learning in a major and the effectiveness of a program’s educational mission.¹¹ For example, the ACEJMC has identified the capstone course as one important arena in journalism and mass communication education in which student learning can be directly measured through analysis of student performance across time.¹²

Broadcast educators and industry professionals also deem the capstone experience important. Duhé and Zukowski found that the vast majority of educators and professionals believed a capstone semester incorporating a five-day-a-week television news production experience was the best curriculum for training students to become successful broadcast journalists.¹³ The same study found that most journalism programs at the time did not offer such intensive training.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, many journalism educators and news industry professionals debated the proper balance between a liberal arts emphasis and professional skills training in journalism higher education. In 1984, a special task force recommended that journalism education embrace a general mass communication rather than an industry-specific or sequence approach.¹⁴ It also suggested, however, that specialized study (such as broadcast news training) should remain the focus of the final year of a student's program. As the new century began, the ACEJMC recommended that JMC programs emphasize cross-media rather than media-specific education.¹⁵

As convergence has emerged as a major topic in journalism education, researchers have studied the degree to which journalism programs are adopting converged curricula that teach all journalism students print, broadcast, online, and even social media reporting skills. Several studies found that most programs maintained specialized tracks (such as broadcast news and print news) while simultaneously emphasizing convergence.¹⁶ Murray suggests that there are three prototypical approaches to transforming journalism curriculum: "blowing up the curriculum" by creating entirely new courses that converge all theory and practice with the technology of journalism for the new millennium, implementing "pieces" of convergence by integrating new technology into current courses and creating new courses when needed, or "doing nothing," by continuing to teach the way journalism faculty always have.¹⁷

Recent scholarship suggests that a specialized approach should not be entirely abandoned. Brown and Collins found that most newspapers and television news stations do not expect new hires to have robust multimedia production skills and that most broadcasters still want potential hires "who can shoot and edit video."¹⁸ These findings concur with other recent scholarship that show that multimedia skills are not a mandatory requirement for new hires.¹⁹

Nevertheless, curriculum changes—whether consisting of adding new courses, merging existing courses into one, or teaching across disciplines—are challenging for journalism instructors who want students to master a particular skill set that will enable them to work in a professional news environment. Broadcast journalism educators contend that there is not enough time or room in the curriculum to teach technical and journalistic skills for more than one medium, in addition to teaching important principles such as ethical reporting and diversity.²⁰ At the same time, most educators and professionals agree that students should learn a wider variety of skills.²¹

Research Questions

Based on relevant literature, the authors address the following research questions:

RQ1: How are ACEJMC-accredited programs of journalism and mass communication approaching capstone course instruction in the television news concentration?

RQ2: What do television news instructors view as their role when it comes to teaching the capstone course and assessing student outcomes?

RQ3: How are changes in the production and dissemination of news content and corresponding curriculum changes affecting television news capstone instruction?

Method

This study used a mixed-methods approach in an effort to adequately assess the scope and depth of broadcast capstone experiences in journalism and mass communication programs. Becker et al.'s 2010 study of JMC programs in higher education identified 477 institutions of higher education with such programs.²² Of those, 113 are accredited and 364 are unaccredited.

Specifically, the authors analyzed broadcast journalism curriculum information obtained from the websites of the 113 ACEJMC-accredited JMC programs in the United States. We also interviewed twenty capstone course instructors at leading U.S. broadcast programs. Only ACEJMC-accredited programs were examined because students at these schools are required to complete a minimum of eighty semester hours outside the major area of JMC, thus limiting the number of journalism, or professional preparation, courses a student can take.²³ With this constraint, educators at accredited institutions must work to "fit" technical training, hands-on journalism instruction, and journalism-based conceptual courses into a restricted number of credit hours.

Website Data Analysis

The authors began this phase of the research by obtaining a list of the 113 U.S. journalism and mass communication programs accredited by the ACEJMC in fall 2009.²⁴ Of these, only 105 have a television news, broadcast, or telecommunication specialization. Curriculum information was obtained from the websites of these 105 accredited programs. Coding categories included whether a program had a television news, broadcast, or telecommunication specialization or concentration, number of credit hours in the specialization, total journalism and mass communication credit hours a student must have to graduate, and whether the program had a television news, broadcast, or telecommunication capstone course. If a program did have a capstone course, the authors recorded the number of credit hours in the course and the description of the capstone (i.e., full news operation staffed with professional journalists with students, 2+ days/week news program [primarily student-run with instructor interaction and supervision], 1 day/week news program, supervised internship or stand-alone course or lab). The authors also obtained information on each university's size (small, medium, or large four-year institution) and research status (very high research activity, high research activity, doctoral-, master's-, or bachelor-granting university), based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.²⁵

To ensure that the information collected from the websites was accurate, the authors sent emails and made phone calls to broadcast administrators at each school to verify the information. Faculty at 97 of the 105 schools verified the information, for a response rate of 91 percent.

Qualitative Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with instructors of broadcast capstone courses at 20 of the 105 ACEJMC-accredited JMC programs with a specialization in television news, broadcast, or telecommunication. To develop our sample frame of capstone instructors, we focused on programs that were diverse in terms of size and geographic region. We also identified schools that had students who had won or ranked in the top five in national broadcast news competitions (i.e., Hearst Journalism Award Program, Broadcast Education Association Awards, and Society of Professional Journalists) for the past five years. Thirty broadcast programs were selected, and we interviewed 20 capstone instructors or administrators at these schools. The total number of interviews conducted is typical for this type of qualitative research and is consistent with previous studies of journalism practice.²⁶ Reasons for not interviewing a representative from a school on our list included not being able to contact an instructor and the inability to schedule a time to conduct an interview. No potential respondent refused to be interviewed.

Interviews were conducted by telephone between January and July 2010. We began each interview with a summary of our project and an informed consent protocol in which participants were promised confidentiality. Next, we proceeded with a set of semistructured questions, followed by appropriate probing questions.²⁷ At the end of the interview, several demographic questions were asked. Interviews ranged between about thirty and forty-five minutes.

Full transcriptions were created from the recordings. The transcribed interviews were then downloaded into QDA Miner, a qualitative data analysis software used for coding, retrieving, and reviewing textual data. The transcripts were then analyzed using open coding to identify relationships. The coding categories that emerged were related to the questions developed by the authors and based on the literature. The authors also made an effort to allow new themes to emerge from the text, based on the unique answers elicited from the respondents.

Results

Of 105 ACEJMC-accredited programs with a specialization in television news, broadcast, or telecommunication, nearly three-quarters (72 percent, $n = 76$) were large or very large four-year institutions (5,000+ students), 26 percent ($n = 27$) were medium four-year institutions (2,000–4,999 students), and 2 percent ($n = 2$) were small four-year institutions (500–1,999 students). A majority of schools had a Carnegie Research Classification of either “very high” (31 percent, $n = 33$) or “high” (31 percent, $n = 33$). Of the schools, 8 percent ($n = 7$) were classified as doctoral-granting universities (without high levels of research), and 30 percent ($n = 32$) were classified as granting master’s or bachelor’s degrees. Total credit hours required to graduate with a bachelor’s degree, based on the semester system, ranged from 120 to 132, with half of all schools (50 percent, $n = 51$) requiring 120 credit hours for graduation.

To begin answering RQ1, a large majority of ACEJMC-accredited schools (92 percent, $n = 85$) teach a capstone course focusing on television, broadcast news, or telecommunication. Information on the capstone course was unavailable or unconfirmed for thirteen schools. Semester hours for the capstone ranged from one to twelve, although most capstones (80 percent, $n = 56$) were three credit hours and only one capstone assigned twelve credit hours to the course (two universities operating on the quarter system were eliminated from this analysis). Of schools with a broadcast capstone course, half (50 percent, $n = 38$) were described as an experience where students participate in the production of a television newscast, 40 percent ($n = 30$) were internships, and 9 percent ($n = 7$) were described as a traditional college course focusing on some aspect of television news. Of thirty-eight schools with a capstone newscast experience, nearly half (47 percent, $n = 18$) described their newscast as a two- to five-day-per-week newscast that was primarily operated by students, and 42 percent ($n = 16$) produced a student-oriented, one-day-per-week newscast. Only 4 schools (11 percent) had a full news operation run by a professional staff.

Differences emerged when examining the type of broadcast capstone course by Carnegie classification and university size. Programs at universities with a Carnegie Research Classification of “very high” were significantly more likely to produce a newscast in the capstone course than schools in other Carnegie classifications, $\chi^2(df = 6) = 15.093, p < .02$. Regarding university size, large four-year institutions were more likely, $\chi^2(df = 4) = 11.391, p < .02$, to have a capstone newscast experience (56 percent, $n = 32$), medium-sized four-year schools were most likely to classify their capstone course as an internship (69 percent, $n = 11$), and small four-year schools were more likely to have a capstone that was a traditional college course (50 percent, $n = 1$).

Interviews with capstone faculty. RQ1 was also answered by evaluating our interviews with faculty who teach in television news capstone courses. The twenty faculty members had a median of twenty years of professional experience, primarily in local or national news, and none had less than five years of experience. Seven were in non-tenure-track positions (i.e., instructor or academic professional), and eleven were either tenure-track or tenured faculty. Regarding level of education, eight faculty held doctoral degrees, nine had master’s degrees, and three had bachelor’s degrees. The interviewed faculty taught broadcast capstone courses that represented the wide variety of broadcast curricular models identified through our website analysis.

The first category that emerged addressed the rationale, or purpose, for the television news capstone course. Regardless of the type of course taught, most instructors stressed the importance of preparing students for life after college, and many used the phrase “real-world experience” to describe the purpose of the course. As explained by one instructor,

When you hit the capstone, you’re supposedly having an experience that mimics the real world . . . where [the news] has to be done on time and it has to be done well.

The real-world experience of deadline pressure was especially important to instructors who coordinated four- to five-day-a-week newscasts. Instructors who taught capstones that were similar to a traditional college course were more likely to view the course as an overview of the profession, as a means in which to “talk about the current state of journalism and to take what they’ve learned and apply it to best practices in the professional world.”

With so much emphasis placed on professional practice and deadline pressure, many instructors mentioned how other courses conflicted with the intensive and time-consuming nature of the television news capstone. “The main complaint we get from students enrolled in the broadcast capstone is that they don’t receive enough credit hours,” said one instructor. Most instructors also said that students took a full load of other courses while enrolled in the capstone. Instructors also emphasized how their program deals with this challenge, with two themes emerging. Some schools added additional credit hours to the capstone, while other schools extended their “newsroom experience” to students enrolled in lower-level, required courses, thus staggering students’ immersion into the capstone newsroom.

In answering RQ2, first, the role of the television news capstone instructor appears to differ from most teaching roles in the academy. Many respondents described themselves as a “coach” or a “news director” and explained that they have many more contact hours with students than most professors. “[Students] have twenty-four-hour access to me,” said an instructor who runs a newsroom that produces a newscast one day a week. “It works like I’m an executive producer—we’re trying to mimic the real world.” For instructors who support a four- to five-day-a-week newscast, the contact hours with students leave little time for other academic- or service-oriented activities:

When we get rolling on a daily show we start at 8:45 and it’s 6 or 7 until we’re out of here. Our contact hours are 9 to 5, forty hours a week—we have close contact with our students.

Two prominent themes emerged from the data regarding learning outcomes. Instructors stressed the importance of “improving writing, reporting on-air, and TV production skills” and the creation of a professional portfolio, or resume tape. “It’s basically a show-by-show assessment of their performance on the program,” said an instructor who oversees a two-day-a-week, student-run newscast. Another instructor, whose school produces a four-day-a-week newscast, stressed the importance of quality journalism under deadline pressure.

Overwhelmingly, the creation of a professional portfolio was considered the key, “the ultimate proof,” of completing the television news capstone. Most instructors said that they assess students, and the overall success of their television news capstone program, by a “quality tape that demonstrates the skill set you need to get a job” and whether “students can actually get a job in the business.”

Despite the emphasis on student job placement, few capstone instructors could concretely identify how many students land jobs in television news or the broader mass communication field. Although some instructors gave us an estimate of students they believe to be working in the field (i.e., “about 50 percent of our students wind up in the industry” or “we know what happens to 60 percent of our students, the others disappear”), most simply stated that their placement was “excellent” or that “if a student truly wants a job in TV, he or she will typically land one.”

Opinions differed when asked about the biggest challenges they face as television news capstone instructors. Some instructors were critical of the structure of their program or the structure of the capstone course. For example, several instructors who taught a capstone as a traditional course or as an internship or portfolio course wished that they could produce a newscast or that their program was designed so that students came into the capstone with the knowledge and skills needed to work at an advanced level. Many instructors who teach a capstone course with a newscast already in place emphasized that their greatest challenge was “not enough time to teach everything that they needed to teach.” Across the board, instructors stressed the importance of giving students an “intense newsroom experience,” saying, “it is the only way to prepare students to become TV journalists.” Only one instructor had a word of caution about trying to accomplish too much in the capstone:

I’m pretty adamant about not doing [the newscast] too often. There’s a balance between doing it often enough so that everybody gets good repetitions, but not so often that all you’re doing is feeding the beast.

In answering RQ3, multiplatform or convergent journalism is a reality, according to instructors at all but two schools. The manner in which convergence is executed, however, differs, and several themes emerged about how convergence is implemented. Many instructors emphasized that they do not teach across subfields, but that students turn news stories across multiple media platforms, including traditional TV news stories, web stories, podcasts, blogs, and, less frequently, print news stories. They also stressed that this is nothing “new” to practitioners of television news:

We are not teaching across disciplines, we are multimedia, but we always have been. We must stay on top of what’s happening in the industry. While technology changes, good, quality journalism stays the same.

A few instructors explained that convergence is taught in courses other than the capstone or that they have different tracks, which include television journalism and convergent journalism. At the few schools where convergence is not being implemented, the instructors attributed it to a lack of resources or a lack of consensus among faculty members across sequences.

Few instructors considered convergence or multimedia a primary purpose of the capstone. When convergence was heavily incorporated into the capstone, it was largely at schools where students received more than three hours of course credit:

I think part of the beauty of our capstone program is it's not just one class for three credits right before you graduate. We require six minimum hours so there's clear opportunity for multiple experiences.

Instructors indicated that “big” curriculum changes had recently been implemented or would be implemented in the next one to three years. These changes included “blowing up departments,” “cracking the silos,” and having a “huge cross-over of students.” At several schools, these changes will dramatically change the capstone experience, creating “super newsrooms” and “shared journalism experiences.” At other schools, the changes will be more subtle, for example, adding more convergent classes earlier in the curriculum and then allowing students to “choose their own pathways” to progress through the program. Another, less prominent theme that emerged focused primarily on technological changes, such as the addition of a new website. Although many instructors were confident about the direction their journalism program was taking, one theme that emerged was the struggle to determine learning outcomes of the capstone, since students would no longer have specific “television-related” prerequisites.

Discussion and Conclusion

As journalism and mass communication faculty and administrators grapple with how best to educate their students in the new millennium, findings from this study clearly demonstrate that an intensive capstone experience focusing primarily on *television* reporting and production continues to be a prominent feature at most ACEJMC-accredited schools. More than 90 percent of accredited schools offer a television news capstone, and, concurring with findings from a 2005 survey of capstone courses across JMC sequences and majors,²⁸ we found that television news capstone courses employ a wide variety of approaches that differ in method and intensity. For example, half of the capstones were described as an experience where students participate in the production of a television newscast, as opposed to a capstone designed as a traditional college course (9 percent) or internship (40 percent). Journalism programs at universities with a Carnegie Research Classification of “very high” or at universities with more than ten thousand students were more likely to have a newscast capstone experience than programs at other institutions. A large majority of these newscasts (89 percent) are produced by students under the supervision of a faculty advisor or a team of advisors and air one to five days per week.

Faculty had strikingly similar insights about television news instruction and how changes in the production and dissemination of news content are influencing them, the

capstone courses that they teach, and the students graduating from their programs. When asked about the rationale, or purpose, of the capstone, instructors were nearly unanimous on how the capstone experience should focus on professional practice instead of having a more theoretical orientation and prepare students for life after college. This theme reoccurred in different contexts as we sought to understand capstone instructors' perceptions of broadcast journalism education.

For example, regardless of the type of capstone they teach, television news capstone instructors consider producing a newscast, whether weekly, daily, or somewhere in between, as the "gold standard" of achieving a real-world experience for students. As Duhé and Zukowski found, this capstone model is preferred by both educators and television professionals because it offers necessary skills training while fusing knowledge and hands-on experience into one curriculum.²⁹ In our study, we discovered that instructors who did not produce a newscast in the capstone aspired to do so, and many who had a newscast in place wished to increase the number of newscasts that students produced each semester.

Because of this quest for an intense, immersive newsroom experience, "lack of enough time to teach all that needed to be taught" emerged as one of the biggest challenges to capstone instructors across programs. Most instructors attributed the lack of time to the limited number of credit hours students receive for the capstone course in comparison to the many hours of work that go into producing a newscast. In fact, our study found that a large majority of ACEJMC schools (80 percent) assign three credit hours to the capstone course, with most students taking a full load of other courses while enrolled. As ACEJMC-accredited programs require students to take eighty semester hours outside of journalism, thus limiting the number of journalism courses a student can take,³⁰ this finding is not surprising. Two themes emerged, however, that identified how some schools are addressing this challenge. Some schools have extended their newsroom experience to courses outside the capstone, giving students in lower-level courses an opportunity to participate in the "real newsroom experience" before reaching the culminating capstone course. This particularly seemed to be the case at several large, well-established, and well-known television news programs. Only a few schools ($n = 11$) award more than three hours of course credit in the capstone, although several instructors in such programs mentioned that capstone credit hours have been, or will soon be, "taken away" from the capstone course because of changes in the curriculum.

The focus on professional practice also emerged when the instructors were asked about learning outcomes and assessment. Most said their role was that of "news director" instead of "teacher" and considered "improving writing, reporting on-air, and TV production skills" the primary learning outcomes of the course so that students could create a professional portfolio or resume tape. As observed by Berheide, the capstone allows faculty to assess how successful a program is in achieving its learning objectives.³¹ Most television news capstone instructors agreed that their primary assessment of their program focused on "whether or not a student could get a job in television news." Despite this focus on job placement as an assessment tool, few instructors

could quantify the success of their program in terms of how many of their students land jobs in television news or related fields. Results suggest that capstone instructors should make greater efforts to track job placement after graduation.

Nearly all instructors said that their students are involved in multiplatform or convergent journalism. The most prominent theme that emerged was that most capstones are not taught across subfields; instead, broadcast journalism students typically produce news stories across multiple media platforms, primarily turning television news stories into web content. Most instructors did not consider multiplatform or convergent journalism a primary purpose of the capstone. These findings suggest that students in these capstone courses are indeed receiving news training that mimics the multiplatform journalism that is currently expected of working local television news journalists. As recent scholarship shows, news professionals place far more importance on a graduate's traditional news-gathering skills and broadcast production background than on convergence.³² It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of instructors we interviewed—especially those teaching a three-hour capstone course—do not consider multimedia journalism a priority.

We would be amiss not to point out that a majority of instructors indicated that extraordinary curriculum changes, including creating “super newsrooms” and “having a huge crossover of students,” are currently being implemented that could change the television news capstone experience. Interestingly, the themes that emerged in the interviews mirror the three typical approaches to journalism curriculum change outlined by Murray, including (1) creating a new curriculum, (2) implementing elements of convergence, or (3) continuing to teach the way journalism faculty traditionally have taught.³³ Regardless of the approach employed at their school, instructors were apprehensive about the future of their capstone courses. For example, at schools where convergence will be implemented in certain courses earlier in the program, instructors were concerned that less time would be spent on the television-specific skills students need to pursue careers in television news. Some instructors, employed at schools where a “super newsroom” is being created, were uncertain about their role in capstone education, whereas capstone instructors employed at schools where few curriculum changes were taking place were concerned that their program would become a “dinosaur.”

This study has important implications for JMC program administrators who are tasked with rethinking their schools' mission as the media industry reshapes itself in the twenty-first century. The structure of the broadcast capstone experience has come under increasing pressure as budget and time constraints force administrators to examine their programs more closely for efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The broadcast capstone is expensive, both in the equipment required and in the time commitment from faculty and students.

Although broadcast educators and professionals maintain that the capstone is vital to adequately prepare students for what they will face in the profession, findings from this study show that only half of accredited television news programs offer such an immersive laboratory experience. This situation raises important and troubling

questions about the ability of a large number of programs to give students the professional preparation they need.

Study findings also demonstrated a disconnect between the goal of preparing students for the profession and educators' lack of information about what happens to these students after graduation. As accountability becomes increasingly important to higher education administrators and policy makers, greater effort should be made to track JMC graduates to better understand how those with a mass communication degree are contributing to local communities, the journalism profession, and the policy-making process.

Finally, a push to inject more flexibility and multimedia experiences into academic programs is also bringing the television capstone experience into question. Capstone instructors we interviewed made it clear that it is a difficult task to improve on-air reporting and TV production skills and also give students the multimedia skills they will ultimately need. This issue suggests that administrators may need to revisit current ACEJMC accreditation standards and determine whether limiting the number of journalism, or professional preparation, courses a student can take is practical based on the increasingly wide range of competencies expected of our students.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. This study examined television news capstone courses at ACEJMC-accredited institutions because these programs are bound to certain accrediting standards and educators at these institutions strive to provide students with a balance of hands-on journalism instruction and journalism-based conceptual courses within a restricted number of credit hours. Because ACEJMC-accredited programs are not representative, nor a random sample, of all JMC programs, the authors do not suggest that the results of this study can be generalized to all programs. Future research should examine how the 334 nonaccredited programs approach the television news capstone experience and how these experiences compare to those of accredited programs. Furthermore, many findings from this study come from intensive interviews conducted with twenty capstone instructors at ACEJMC-accredited programs. Although we interviewed instructors from a wide array of programs that were diverse in terms of size and geographic region, it is impossible to generalize the study's findings about capstone instructors' perceptions of journalism education. It is important to point out, however, that the authors employed a mix-methods approach (e.g., website analysis and in-depth interviews) in an effort to speak in a generalizable way about the overall structure of ACEJMC-accredited capstone courses, while also grasping a better understanding of how educators pedagogically approach the capstone experience. Future studies should perhaps consider survey research to expand data collection to all television news capstone instructors.

Future research should examine the dramatic curricular redesigns currently taking place in JMC programs. Although a more integrated, cross-media approach to journalism education was suggested by educators more than a decade ago,³⁴ results from this study suggest that these changes are just now being implemented, or will soon be implemented in the next several years. Such changes could profoundly affect how

media-specific journalism training is approached. With the traditional television news capstone experience and journalism education at a crossroads, future research should examine how these changes affect journalism educators and the students whom we teach.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

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