



Can student journalists fill the gaps?

The author believes “teaching hospitals” at journalism schools could help make up for the shrinkage in local news the nation has seen in recent years. Do you agree? Are there enough students? Are they digital enough?

Mu Lin, a former Dartmouth College PhD student now working for Twitter, started a survey of U.S. journalism and communication schools. He could find only a few dozen of the more than 500 programs meeting his definition of “fully integrated.” He then took up the question of how best to develop a digital journalism program. Offering digital classes as electives is not enough, nor is offering a digital track for some students. Lin says all journalism students must take courses in digital or multimedia journalism, you must be able to major in digital or multimedia journalism, and all students must take reporting and production courses in both print and broadcast.

Student activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Divide your state’s colleges up into groups, assigning some to each student. Using Lin’s criteria, how many colleges in your state offer “fully integrated” programs? Research program tracks, course listings (including descriptions), and electives offered. Which schools had the most interdisciplinary curriculums? What student journalism do they offer? Send your results to Lin's blog.

Spotlight: Class discussion: Starting salaries for journalism and mass communications majors average anywhere from \$30,000 per year to \$41,000, depending upon what study you look at. Ask students to research this difference. Could it be that the confusion is caused by whether students work at traditional outlets whether they work at banks, law firms, hospitals ... anywhere there’s a web site? Discuss how to avoid this: Some students wanted a traditional job so much they were scammed with fake job postings.

Searchlight: Have the class prepare a proposal of interdisciplinary courses they would like included in their major, like Missouri’s “drone reporting” or Oregon’s iPad magazine. What classes would they need to brainstorm an innovative journalism software product, service and/or program? How can they make their wishes known?

Extra credit: Several prominent universities -- Harvard, Yale and Duke for example -- do not offer journalism as a major. If you graduate from an Ivy League School, is a major necessary? Why or why not? What are the advantages or disadvantages of having a journalism degree? Find a story like this on writer Michael Wolff, who [called Columbia University's journalism overpriced and underperforming](#). Ask students to add their views.