




Fall 1995

Integrating Students into the Operation of a University-Owned Television Station

Christine Taylor

Butler University, ctaylor1@butler.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ccom_papers

 Part of the [Education Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Buck, Christine A. (1995). "Integrating Students into the Operation of a University-Owned Television Station." *Feedback*. 36 (4). pp 11-14.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Communication at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scholarship and Professional Work - Communication by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact omacisaa@butler.edu.

categories of teaching, research, service and citizenship. Notably, it integrates into the material suggestions for building evaluative and appraisal systems that are founded in strong academic ethics and forcefully and convincingly argues that anything less serves neither academic institutions nor faculty.

To accomplish this integrative goal, the opening section of the book discusses ethics, criteria and evidence in academic performance appraisal. Part two concentrates on the all-important criteria to be used in teaching, research, service and citizenship evaluations. Considerable space is devoted to teaching and research evaluation, as would be expected. Equal attention is given to service and citizenship with a distinction being made between them. Citizenship is defined as "... (the) contribution to the joint efforts of the academic unit so that it may continue to function." Service, on the other hand, is professionally based. This distinction in other evaluation discussions is not often made or it is unclear, and the level of attention to both is generally minor. Brief attention is also given to the evaluation of academic administrative (academic officers) service as distinct from higher-level administration. The final section summarizes the external influences of law and collective bargaining on faculty performance appraisal.

The authors wrote the material

to be generic across disciplines. Experience suggests, however, that colleagues from academic areas with a performance component, i.e., radio or television or the fine arts, will be disturbed by no reference to creative activity. That should not be a handicap to finding this material useful. Just substitute the term where appropriate. It fits.

Do not think that these 187 pages will require several hours of your busy schedule. The actual text is barely over 100 pages, and it is highly readable. The rest is an appendix of 19 selected excerpts from AAUP Policy Documents and Reports (in fine print) covering faculty evaluation -- good research material. The book concludes with a well-explicated, selective, and annotated bibliography along with the usual index.

Of course, as good research should, serious questions for further research are raised. Among others, it is pointed out that little is known on whether faculty are motivated extrinsically (responding to external stimuli such as reward systems) or intrinsically (responding to their own value systems). It is noted that chairpersons' evaluations, student ratings and colleagues' views are the most used and most influential methods for evaluating teaching, but we do not know why they are considered important. We know something (although we do not always use it) about constructing questionnaires for student evaluation

of teaching, but very little about procedures for administering the instruments.

As the pressure for more and more accountability increases, including the area of faculty performance assessment, it is important that evaluation systems not become entangled in a web of multi-page evaluation forms with often meaningless numerical rankings that have little if any relationship to the goals of faculty performance assessment as it relates to the scholarly and academic mission of the department or institution. Unfortunately, it can easily be speculated that this is happening too often. If true, that does not portend well for the quality composition of tomorrow's faculty. It is not yet too late. An appraisal system should be based in strongly scholarly and academic ethics. Dilts, Haber, and Bialik have the right direction.

References

- Creswell, John W., Daniel W. Wheeler, Alan T. Seagren, Nancy J. Egly, and Kirk D. Beyer, *The Academic Chairperson's Handbook*. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, Nebraska, 1990.
- Dilts, David A., Lawrence J. Haber, and Donna Bialik, *Assessing What Professors Do: An Introduction to Academic Performance Appraisal in Higher Education*. Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut, 1994.
- Hickson III, Mark, and Don W. Stacks (ed.), *Effective Communication for Academic Chairs*. State University of New York Press: Albany, New York, 1992.
- Miller, Richard, *Evaluating Faculty Performance*. Joe Bass Inc., Publishers: San Francisco, California, 1972.
- Tucker, Allen, *Chairing the Academic Department*. 2nd edition. Collier Macmillan Publishers: New York, 1984.

Students and University-Owned Television Stations

Integrating Students into the Operation of a University-Owned Television Station

Christine A. Buck
Butler University

Most journalism and mass

communication programs provide opportunities for students to acquire some "hands-on" experience as undergraduates.

There remains some considerable argument as to whether this "hands-on" educational experience should be part of the academic curriculum. I will review this debate briefly.

In 1984, the University of Oregon studied curricular change in journalism and mass communication programs. Educators were urged to provide students with a more generic and unified approach to study in their disciplines (The Oregon

Report, 1984). A few years later, these same educators were criticized by industry executives for failing to provide students with "hands-on" experiences (Roper, 1987).

As a response to these studies, some programs moved toward the holistic approach suggested by the Oregon Report. Jeffrey McCall of DePauw University writes that liberal arts colleges are "asserting themselves in the education of future mass communicators" and that liberal arts institutions "may well be at the forefront of revising the way mass communicators are educated for

the industry" (McCall, 1987, p. 18).

But not everyone agrees that a more liberal arts based curriculum benefits students. A survey of heads of undergraduate journalism and mass communication programs shows that a majority of those surveyed favored "an interrelated curriculum, but not an integrated curriculum at the expense of [industry-oriented] sequences" (Dickson, Sellmeyer, 1992, p. 35). Experiential learning through professional internships is permitted in most journalism and mass communication programs (Meeske, 1988). Students continue to rate their internship experiences highly (Rowland, 1994). At the same time, the legitimacy of internships in the curriculum continues to be questioned (Ciofalo, 1989).

It would seem that both the "holistic model" recommended by The Oregon report and the "industry-oriented" model favored by Roper exist side-by-side.

This article makes no attempt to persuade the reader toward one curricular model over another. Butler University's Telecommunication Arts department had a tradition of providing "hands-on" experiences in professional radio, and we sought to duplicate that experience for our students at the newly acquired television station. This article outlines how that integration is accomplished.

Before I begin, it is important to note that using the facilities of the university-owned TV station as a laboratory for students is not unique. A 1990 study by Frederic Leigh concluded, "Clearly, public broadcasting stations do not operate with the primary mission of providing educational experiences for students. And yet, this survey revealed that significant opportunities for student training and experiences still exist in on-campus public stations. These opportunities exist where there is a spirit of cooperation between academic heads and station managers (Leigh, 1990 p. 11).

The "spirit of cooperation" between the academic unit and the station staff had been fostered at the university-owned radio station for 40 years. The key was to duplicate that environment in the new television facility. The challenge faced by university administration, teaching faculty and station staff at Butler University was to design a supervisory structure for the station that ensured continued student participation in the day-to-day operation of the television station without harming the credibility of the institution or that of the department.

Steps Taken to Integrate students

Lead by the chairman, the teaching faculty worked with station staff to develop an organizational structure that would allow student participation in all areas of station operation except at managerial levels.

As both general manager and academic head of the department, the chairman was in a position to structure the station mission statement in a way that dove tailed with the mission of the department.

The commitment to "hands-on" learning within the curriculum, using the university-owned television station as an educational lab, is evident in the explicitness of the station's mission statement which is

Mission of WTBU-TV

The mission of WTBU is three fold:

- (1) To serve as an instructional laboratory for Telecommunication Arts and other communication students.
- (2) To present effectively, in partnership with other externally directed units of the university, University and its academic program offering to the university's multiple publics.
- (3) To serve the community with local programming not available from other stations in the market.

excerpted here.

The mission statement is only a beginning. It is important that all of the station staff support, both in theory and in practice, the educational mission of the broadcast station or it is unlikely that students will be integrated in a meaningful way into the station operation.

In order to foster the much needed cooperation between departmental faculty, students and station staff, job descriptions for staff positions include the responsibility for teaching a class each Fall and Spring semester. Similarly, faculty members contribute to overall station operation as a requirement of their academic appointment. Each faculty member is given a course load reduction in order to provide the time to contribute their professional expertise to station operation. These requirements help foster a sense of connectedness between faculty/students/staff.

Joint faculty/staff projects provide the opportunity for students to contribute to the television station.

A project that has been successful over several years utilizes students from a beginning production course and students taking a 300 level 1 credit lab course. By the third week of class, even beginning students are knowledgeable enough to crew a small interview show. In this heavily supervised environment, underclassmen are given the opportunity to practice basic production skills and aesthetic judgment. For upper-level students, it is necessary to provide some opportunities that allow individual students more responsibility and self-direction. To meet this need, the news director for the station provides the editorial support and modest supervision for an upper-level lab student who will act as producer and host of the show.

For more advanced productions, like a weekly newscast, the full-time faculty and station news director can work out a more complicated cooperation of classes to

get the program on the air. For example, an advanced production class acts as studio crew for the newscast as part of their practical lab. The supervision of the advanced students is certainly less rigid than it was for those students in the beginning production course. Students are allowed more freedom in decision making, aesthetic design, and students are encouraged to hone leadership skills. An electronic field production class is paired with an advanced reporting class to produce packages and VO's and VO/SOT's for the newscast. Each element in the production process is managed by faculty and/or staff. But certainly the level of that supervision is moderated according to the learning needs of the students. (Naturally, the staff and faculty work together to remove any objectionable or technically inferior material from the program before it is produced for air. Additionally, text lessons on applied aesthetics and tests supplement the practical lab instruction.)

Students are also able to get some "live" production experience. Live events are generally limited to sporting events such as basketball and football. Staff and faculty again combine their supervisory skills, technical and editorial expertise to offer the students the opportunity to produce, direct, call play-by-play and crew a sporting event using the station's remote truck.

In each of these examples, student work results in a program that will air on the university-owned television station. The oversight responsibility for each show is divided among teaching faculty and station staff.

Although the examples cited above list only production opportunities for students, all areas of the station operation, with the exception of upper-level management, are open to the students.

Team efforts, like those described above, go a long way toward cementing a comfortable

working relationship between academic faculty and station staff. Additionally, these experiences provide a structured opportunity for students to begin to understand the deadline demands and the responsibility of exhibiting professional behavior at all times while in a crew or editorial position.

Faculty and staff meet bimonthly to set schedules, discuss problems and review station and academic procedures. These meetings provide a forum for reporting the progress of students, faculty and staff as well as providing a place where disagreements can be aired and solutions to problems can be found.

Conclusions

The meaningful integration of students into this university-owned professionally-run television station was made possible by a number of unique factors existing at Butler University.

The first unique element is the novelty of getting a non-commercial broadcast license in the 1990's. Secondly, expanding the opportunity for "hands-on" experiences at the television station was a logical extension of the more than forty years of student integration in the university-owned radio station. Additionally, the fact that the station is housed in the Telecommunication department and the academic chief acts as station general manager -- quite rare (Leigh, 1990).

These elements and others worked to provide the foundation for integrating students into the operation of the professionally-run television station. The only task remaining was executing a plan that provided meaningful educational experiences for the students.

Policies and procedures that affected students were developed as a joint effort between station staff and academic faculty. Faculty operate as advocates for the students lobbying for continued student participation in station operation, while staff have an obligation to see

that these students are held to professional standards. Students benefit from the natural struggle that takes place over how much and what types of opportunities students should have in the day-to-day operation of the station.

This integration of students works only as long as station staff and faculty communicate. The supervision of students is a joint responsibility requiring time, energy and patience. The benefit that results from this joint effort is seeing good students turning into competent, confident professionals.

Recommendations

Clearly, the model of integration outlined above is only one avenue to providing students with "hands-on" opportunities in academic programs. "Hands-on" learning can take place in any media environment as long as faculty make sure that the right type of educational opportunities exist for their students. Those opportunities should help provide students with learning environments where they can build confidence through task completion, where they are held to professional standards and that provide avenues for students to grow into leadership positions.

Underclassmen can learn in heavily supervised settings where the emphasis is on building production skills and good editorial judgment. This can be done as part of the curricular activity of a student or through some arrangement of supervised learning at a media outlet where a student receives pay or co-curricular experience.

Upper-level students, having mastered the basic skills required for task completion, can engage in more self-directed, responsible jobs in the "hands-on" environment. This experience can be part of an internship opportunity at a commercial or non-commercial media outlet or result from a student taking on leadership responsibilities at media outlets on campus.

Faculty should work with station managers in commercial, non-

commercial and student-run media to help ensure that students are receiving the right types of opportunities. Providing opportunities where students will learn self-motivation and self-confidence involves opening up opportunities for students beyond those that require only basic skills. Upper-level students should have opportunities that utilize their problem-solving and decision-making skills in addition to those requiring basic production and writing skills.

Gerald Grow writes, "Employers seem to recognize that the best applicants combine well honed skills with good 'horse sense' about how to apply those skills -- all integrated in a functioning,

cooperating, motivated, ethical human being (Grow, 1991).

Faculty clearly have a stake in ensuring that the students who graduate from our programs are successfully adapting to "real world" demands of employers. Providing opportunities for students to get "hands-on" experience does not violate our commitment to graduating a well-rounded, liberally-educated student. Rather, through these opportunities we help students develop leadership skills, confidence, adaptability, and cooperative behavior that will stand them in good stead as employees and as members of the larger society.

References

- Ciofalo, A. (1989). Legitimacy of internships for academic credit remains controversial. *Journalism Educator*, 43 (4), 25-31.
- Dickson, T. & Sellmeyer, R. (1992). Responses to Proposals for Curricular Change. *Journalism Educator*, 47 (3), 27-35.
- Grow, G. (1991) Higher-order skills for professional practice and self-direction. *Journalism Educator*, 45 (4), 56-65.
- Leigh, F. (1990). Searching for cooperation with public broadcasting. *Journalism Educator*, 45 (2), 5-12.
- McCall, J. (1987). Liberal arts focus provides training for media careers. *Journalism Educator*, 42 (2), 17-20.
- Meeske, M. (1988). Update: Broadcast intern programs and practices. *Journalism Educator*, 43 (2), 75-77.
- Roper Organization Inc. (1987). Electronic media New York: Roper.
- Rowland, M. (1994, June 5). Getting Before-the-Job Experience. *The New York Times*, Sunday, sec 3, p:15.
- University of Oregon. (1984). Planning for curricular change in Journalism and Mass Communication education.

Why Don't They Watch What's Good for Them?

You Can Lead Them to a "Public Service" Newscast, but You Can't Force Them to Watch!

Pamela Doyle
Kevin J. Arlington
University of Alabama

If you create a newscast to answer the critic's complaints, how come the critics won't watch? That's the question that evolves from a study of viewership of Birmingham, Alabama newscasts. The study shows that business/opinion leaders in the city do not choose to watch an in-depth style newscast. The numbers from the study and the qualitative replies from participants may help us understand what business/opinion leaders in a community are really looking for in a newscast.

Studies show that elite opinion leaders have been found to have enormous appetites for consuming

information in the mass media (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948, Rosenau, 1964, Weimann, 1994). Researchers have found that these opinion leaders satisfy that appetite most often through in-depth print and electronic media (Weimann, 1994). Birmingham, Alabama, ranked the fifty-first television market in the United States, appears to have a mix of daily television newscasts that includes such a news presentation.

Of the five television stations licensed to the market, only three have news departments: WBMG, a CBS affiliate; WBRC, an ABC affiliate; and WVTM an NBC affiliate. WBRC and WVTM have

newscasts that feature news gathering and reportage methods consistent with the majority of other local newscasts in the county, but the news segment of WBMG differs significantly from the other two casts.

WBRC and WVTM concentrate on spot news while WBMG devotes most of their newscast time to investigative political or community coverage. WBMG produces longer news stories that feature extended "sound bites." WBMG's management has put a financial emphasis on newscast resources and research as opposed to state-of-the-art production graphics or news anchor personalities (H. Broome, personal

Table 1. Topic Areas and Newscast Selection

Question 6. The percentage of respondents receiving information on selected topics from specific Birmingham television newscasts is represented by the figures in bold.

	WBMG Channel 42	WBRC Channel 6	WVTM Channel 13
Sports ^A	13.9%	56.9%	29.2%
Local Government	40.0	34.7	25.3
Local Crime&Accidents ^A	9.5	54.0	36.5
Business News&Stocks ^A	9.7	54.8	35.5
Weather ^A	8.0	57.3	34.7
Local Politics	42.1	36.8	21.1
National Events ^A	6.3	56.3	37.5
International Events ^A	6.5	58.1	35.5
Other	20.7	37.9	41.4

^A significant difference of $p \leq .0001$