

spectra

A Publication of the National Communication Association



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PAC
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**The High
Price of Free
Campaign
Speech**

Plus:

**Department Buzz
Graduate Enrollment
Learned Societies**

ABOUT

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About Spectra

Spectra (ISSN 2157-3751), a publication of the National Communication Association (NCA), features articles on topics that are relevant to communication scholars, teachers, and practitioners. *Spectra* is one means through which NCA works toward accomplishing its mission of advancing communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.

The NCA serves its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, the NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems.

Spectra is published four times a year (September, November, March, and May), and all NCA members receive a subscription. *Spectra* is also available via individual subscription for non-members.

In addition to feature stories about career development, external representation of the discipline, funding, higher education and disciplinary trends, pedagogy, public policy, and publishing, *Spectra* offers readers a column from NCA's president and job advertisements. Each September and March issue focuses on a specific theme.

In order to ensure that the content of *Spectra* reflects the interests and priorities of NCA members, the association has appointed a rotating advisory board that is composed of representatives from each of the four regional communication associations. The members of this group meet a few times a year to discuss ideas for themed issues, article topics, and authors. Advisory board members include:

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President



Anyone who knows me recognizes that there is one quality that defines both my leadership style and everyday interactions: candor. In fact, for better or worse, I'm a tad obsessed about being truthful, to the point that I sometimes catch people off guard. This column is written with that spirit of forthrightness as I embrace and discuss one of my NCA

presidential themes: difficult dialogues.

NCA is a robust, engaged, and solvent organization that tries to meet the needs of an expansive membership. Our members reside in all 50 states and 20 countries. Yet I am perplexed that some topics that have lasting importance have been relegated to the margins or not discussed at all. That noted, please indulge this and my remaining *Spectra* columns as I try to elucidate some items that will likely prompt tough discussions across our organization. I begin with one area that affects nearly every person reading my words.

Dialogue 1: Should we re-envision the “basic” communication course (BCC)?

Hundreds of thousands of college students enroll in the basic communication course over an academic year. For most, it is their sole introduction to an exciting field of study. And yet, the course has, over the years, undergone so many iterations that I question whether such a myriad of approaches is worthwhile, useful, or of lasting value.

Let's consider the following: The structure and content of introductory courses in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, or political science, for instance, are more likely to be similar on campuses across the country. Moreover, the introductory texts in these three fields more or less present a consistent template of information. Such consistency does not exist in communication. Maybe some view this as acceptable. Yet, as I consider the textbooks and the approaches to the BCC, I'm left wondering about the value of our content diversity, especially as we try to articulate the foundation of our field to the uninitiated.

One approach to the BCC may emphasize public speaking, while another approach is interpersonal in nature. A third orientation may reflect a history of the field, while a fourth speaks to a hybrid orientation. Still another is theoretical, while a sixth option explores the course with a business anchor. In my opinion, such variations on a theme are not, well, symphonic.

Two overarching views on this topic emerge. On one hand, such heterogeneity suggests that our discipline is

a tapestry of various textures and receptive to multiple ways of looking at communication phenomena. On the other hand, such a mosaic seems to imply that we haven't agreed upon a universal foundation for our students (and others) as they embark upon a path toward knowledge and articulation.

I believe the time is ripe for NCA to start this challenging conversation about how best to conceptualize and structure the BCC. The goal of such a dialogue is certainly not to quell imagination or disciplinary freedom in the course. Certainly, I believe that our field is rich with different threads of exploring communication.

Still, with people in and outside of the academy wondering what “communication” is, the multiplicity of BCC approaches is worthy of (re)consideration. We already know that what we teach makes a difference in the lives and career choices of our students. But can/do the various incarnations of the course really help assuage the ongoing scrutiny of our field by those who look at our basic courses and wonder: “What are they talking about?”

NCA—the premier leader in the study, teaching, and practice of communication—should begin the difficult dialogue of whether the BCC should undergo some effort at national standardization. (Note: Yes, I know that's a very annoying term to some readers.) I believe it's time for our organization to undertake a thoughtful examination of the basic course and ascertain its value for a generation of students whose career opportunities, now more than ever, will necessitate some sort of understanding of the power of communication. An examination of the BCC and all of its vectors is long overdue.

I know that what I write here begins a dialogue that will be filled with some anxiety, uncertainty, and varied perspectives. For most of you reading this, life experiences teaching this course will certainly influence your points of view. Yet, if we are to adopt a common appreciation and understanding of our discipline, an arguable claim to be sure, reexamining the basic course seems to be a critical way to move in that direction.

When I introduced this topic to a convention program in New Orleans, the words of one audience member were instructive: “I don't mind this being discussed in NCA, but remember that we have a lot of opinions on this topic.”

Indeed, the words remain instructive today. Let me know your opinion.

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The High Price of Free Campaign Speech

By Dale A. Herbeck

President Theodore Roosevelt famously denounced the “malefactors of great wealth” who sought to use their resources to influence public policy. As part of his effort to rein in the corporate and financial elite, Roosevelt signed the Tillman Act of 1907, a law that prohibited “corporations from making money contributions in connection with political elections.” Ever since, lawmakers and jurists have struggled over the proper balance between fostering free speech and preventing campaign contribution corruption.

In the decades that followed, campaign spending increased dramatically, raising new concerns about the corrosive effect of large political contributions. Reacting to the abuses of the Watergate era, Congress passed a series of “good government” laws designed to restore public confidence in elected officials. Two of the most important were the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1971 and the Federal Election Campaign Act Amendments of 1974. Among other things, these statutes (1) limited the amount of money any individual or group could contribute to any single candidate for federal office to \$1,000 (later raised to \$2,000 and indexed to inflation), (2) limited expenditures by individuals or groups supporting the election or defeat of a candidate for federal office, and (3) provided for some public financing of presidential campaigns.

In *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the constitutionality of the FECA. The justices upheld the limits on contributions as necessary to

prevent corruption. At the same time, the justices held that the expenditure limits were an impermissible burden on free speech and thus violated the First Amendment. Finally, with respect to the public finance scheme, the justices held that, as long as the presidential candidates had the option to decline public financing and raise their own money (without any limitations on total campaign spending), these provisions did not violate the First Amendment.

To appreciate the current controversy over campaign finance, it is necessary to delve a bit more deeply into the Supreme Court’s reasoning. Although the justices acknowledged that campaign finance laws restricted the freedom of speech, the *Buckley* decision distinguished between limits on campaign contributions (permissible) and limits on campaign spending (impermissible).

With respect to contributions, the justices noted that a donation expressed symbolic support for a particular candidate. At most, the Court reasoned, “the size of the contribution provides a very rough index of the intensity of the contributor’s support for the candidate.” This meant prohibiting large contributions “entails only a marginal restriction upon the contributor’s ability to engage in free communication.” Such limits were justified, the Court concluded, because the government has a legitimate interest in preventing corruption and the appearance of impropriety associated with large financial contributions.

The limits on campaign spending, however, were an entirely different matter. The Supreme Court held such limits placed “substantial and direct restrictions on the ability of candidates, citizens, and associations to engage in protected political expression, restrictions that the First Amendment cannot tolerate.” Moreover, the government’s interest in alleviating the corrupting influence of large campaign donations was served by contribution limits, not by the cap on overall campaign spending.

The Court’s decision in *Buckley* created a curious scheme: Congress could limit contributions to candidates, but not the total amount spent by a campaign. Those who sought to influence the political process soon devised legal ways to circumvent the limits on individual contributions. One easy way to get around the limits on “hard money” (contributions to candidates) was to give “soft money” (contributions for activities such as voter awareness campaigns) to political parties. The law also allowed third parties—citizens groups, unions, or corporations—to spend their own money on “issue ads.” These ads were legal so long as they did not instruct voters to “vote for,” “elect,” or “vote against” a particular candidate.

In an attempt to close some of these loopholes, Senators Russell Feingold (D-Wisc.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) introduced the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) of 2002. Among its more important provisions, the BCRA (often referred to as McCain-Feingold) prohibited national political parties from raising or spending “soft money” (even if the money is spent on issue discussion or on state and local campaigns). The BCRA also restricted the broadcasting of issue advocacy ads, which it called “electioneering communication,” that name a candidate for federal office within 30 days of a primary or 60 days of a general election. After a fierce battle, Congress adopted the BCRA and President George W. Bush signed it into law, despite what he called his “reservations about the constitutionality of the broad ban on issue advertising.”

Undaunted by their defeat in Congress, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and other opponents of the BCRA shifted the battle to the federal courts. But the

Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of most of the BCRA in *McConnell v. Federal Elections Commission*, a 5-4 decision announced on December 10, 2003. The narrow margin became important, especially when Sandra Day O’Connor, one of the five justices voting to uphold the BCRA and the author of the majority opinion, announced her retirement. Her replacement, Justice Samuel Alito, and the new chief justice, John Roberts, were less sympathetic to campaign finance laws, with predictable results.

Over the first six terms of the Roberts Court, the justices have struck down on First Amendment grounds all of the campaign finance laws that came before them. The most consequential of these decisions, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), involved a 90-minute documentary produced by Citizens United, a conservative political group critical of Hillary Clinton’s 2007–2008 presidential campaign. Since the movie did not expressly advocate Senator Clinton’s election or defeat, Citizens United claimed it should be allowed to promote *Hillary: The Movie*, which had been released in January 2008 to coincide with Democratic primary elections and party caucuses. The Federal Election Commission disagreed and the ensuing lawsuit provided the Roberts Court with an opportunity to reconsider the constitutionality of the BCRA.

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United* is long (roughly 180 pages) and complicated (a defining quality of campaign finance law). There is, however, a



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The Roberts Court has struck down every campaign finance law before it on First Amendment grounds.

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single sentence in Justice Anthony Kennedy's majority opinion that captures the essence of the holding: "We now conclude that independent expenditures, including those made by corporations, do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption."

This innocent declaration is important because it shakes the foundation of campaign finance law. Under *Buckley*, the Supreme Court held that contributions to candidates could be limited because of the potential for corruption or the appearance of impropriety. In *Citizens United*, the Court distinguished between contributions to candidates and contributions to independent groups. Unlike direct contributions to a candidate, *Citizens United* held contributions to an independent group cannot be restricted because they lacked the ability to corrupt.

The decision in *Citizens United* did not do away with the restrictions on large donations given directly to political parties or candidates. The decision did, however, do away with the BCRA's limitations on "independent spending." This meant corporations, labor unions, and wealthy individuals were free to speak, as long as they did not coordinate their spending with candidates or campaigns. Political action committees (PACs) have existed since the 1940s, but absent the limits on contributions to independent groups, a new generation of candidate-specific super PACs quickly emerged.

The power of these independent political organizations is evident in the ongoing campaign to gain the 2012 Republican presidential nomination. Under the law, an individual sympathetic to Mitt Romney can only contribute \$2,500 to his campaign per election (the primary and general election are counted separately). There are, at the same time, no limits on how much the same individual can give to "Restore Our Future," the super PAC that supports Romney's candidacy. This is permissible, according to the logic of *Citizens United*, for two reasons: (1) "Restore Our Future" is not controlled by the Romney campaign, and (2)



CHRISTOPHER HALLORAN / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

"Restore Our Future," the super PAC supporting Mitt Romney, has funded attack ads against Romney's opponents.

candidate Romney would not be beholden to those who contribute to independent organizations.

Recent events cast doubt on both assumptions. While super PACs are legally independent, they function as an extension of the campaign because they are staffed by friends of the candidate. Consider "Restore Our Future." According to the *Washington Post*, Carl Forti, political director of Romney's ill-fated 2008 presidential campaign, runs the super PAC. Charles Spies, general counsel to the 2008 campaign, and Larry McCarthy, a prominent member of the 2008 media team, ably assist him. The chief fundraiser, Steve Roche, was part of the official 2012 Romney campaign team until last summer, when he switched to the super PAC. Further adding to the appearance of coordination, the *New York Times* recently reported that the Romney campaign and "Restore Our Future" both receive strategic advice from the same Virginia-based consulting firm.

When Newt Gingrich surged in the polls in the weeks before the Iowa caucuses, "Restore Our Future" responded with a blistering ad campaign asserting Gingrich had "more baggage than the airlines," claiming he had been fined for ethics violations while serving in

Congress and denouncing some of his policy positions. Gingrich took umbrage, and he angrily demanded that Romney repudiate the ads. Romney politely demurred, invoking campaign finance laws that barred his campaign from giving instructions to the super PAC supporting his candidacy. “I would love to be able to coordinate, to manage what the PAC says and to run its ads and to tell them what to do and what not to do,” Romney explained. “I’m not allowed to do that, as you know.”

There is a palpable irony in this reply. Ever the shrewd businessman, Romney effectively outsourced his negative advertising in Iowa to “Restore Our Future.” This spared his campaign the need to fund a major media buy and allowed Romney to deny responsibility for the ads. This deniability is important because negative ads cut both ways. They damage the candidate being attacked, but they can harm the attacker, too. According to Federal Election Commission member Ellen Weintraub, the super PAC acts as a sort of “evil twin” to Romney’s campaign committee. When Gingrich complained about being “Romney-boated” (a



GREGORY JOHNSTON / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Newt Gingrich supporter Sheldon Adelson was able to give 2,000 times more to a super PAC than he could give directly to the candidate.

reference to the famous Swift-boat attack ads against John Kerry in 2004), Romney was able to point the finger of blame at “Restore Our Future.”

This is not meant to besmirch the Romney campaign as the other Republican candidates have their own “independent” super PACs, each staffed by former advisors or longtime campaign aides. Newt Gingrich is backed by “Winning Our Future,” Ron Paul has “Santa Rita,” and Rick Santorum had the “Red White and Blue Fund.” (Even the candidates who dropped out early had their own super PACs. Rick Perry was supported by “Make Us Great Again,” John Huntsman by “Our Destiny,” Michele Bachmann by “No Compromise,” Herman Cain by the “999 Fund,” and Tim Pawlenty by “Freedom First.”)

President Obama, in his 2010 State of the Union address, roundly criticized the *Citizens United* decision and called for new safeguards to limit large contributions. “I don’t think American elections should be bankrolled by America’s most powerful interests,” the President declared. “They should be decided by the American

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President Obama’s campaign has begun soliciting supporters to donate to the super PAC supporting him.

people.” Renouncing gifts from “secret billionaires” and monied interests would, however, have placed the President’s re-election campaign at a considerable competitive disadvantage. Surrendering the principle, the Obama campaign reversed course in February and encouraged supporters to contribute to “Priorities USA Action,” a super PAC launched by Bill Burton and Sean Sweeney, two former White House aides. Republicans quickly denounced the campaign’s decision as a “brazenly cynical move.” Jim Messina, Obama’s campaign manager, replied, “We can’t allow for two sets of rules in this election whereby the Republican nominee is the beneficiary of unlimited spending and Democrats unilaterally disarm.”

The other dubious assumption in *Citizens United* is the assertion that a contribution to a super PAC supporting a candidate is different than a contribution made directly to the candidate. Consider the \$5 million check that casino mogul Sheldon Adelson wrote to “Winning Our Future,” the super PAC supporting Gingrich. By law, Adelson could only give \$2,500 to Gingrich’s primary campaign for fear that he might gain undue influence over the candidate. Because of *Citizens United*, Adelson was able to give 2,000 times that amount to “Winning Our Future,” money that was used for the “King of Bain/When Mitt Romney Came to Town” advertising blitz attacking Romney’s record as a self-proclaimed job creator before the South Carolina primary. (After Gingrich won the South Carolina primary, Adelson’s wife, Miriam, pledged another \$5 million to the super PAC. In a profile appearing in the March issue of *Forbes* magazine, Adelson revealed he might be willing to contribute as much as \$100 million to “Winning Our Future” to support Gingrich’s candidacy.)

The negative ads sponsored by “Winning Our Future” benefited all Republican candidates not named Romney. Clearly, however, the Adelsons were primarily interested in promoting Gingrich’s candidacy. Unable by law to funnel millions directly into their friend’s campaign, they gave their money to a PAC that actively supports Gingrich’s presidential ambitions. Their largess

(hardly a secret) will surely impress their favored candidate and this means it risks the appearance of impropriety or outright corruption that the Supreme Court acknowledged in *Buckley*. Even the possibility of being the beneficiary or the target of an advertising barrage funded by a super PAC likely has the potential to influence candidates.

The battle for the Republican presidential nomination is merely a prelude to the 2012 general elections. Thanks to the *Citizens United* decision, there are effectively no limits on large contributions routed through candidate-specific super PACs. With the election looming, super PACs are already sprouting up to support candidates for governor, for Congress, and for state offices. If the past year is any guide, a torrent of large donations will soon flood into American politics. Because they are not bound by the old contribution limits, these super PACs have the ability to outspend the candidate’s official campaigns. Past experience also suggests that much of the money spent by these shadow campaigns will be invested in brutal attack ads that end with the same disclaimer: “Not authorized by any candidate or candidate’s committee.” This influx of cash and negativity, according to *Citizens United*, is part of the high price the electorate must pay for free campaign speech. ■

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Creating Buzz: Investing in Faculty to Build Academic Visibility and Respect

By Gary L. Kreps

This is a happy story of redemption and cultural transformation that should warm your hearts. Within a relatively short time, a sleepy department of communication was dramatically transformed from an underappreciated ugly duckling into a successful, if not beautiful, swan. To mix fairy tale metaphors, no unique magical potion kept the department sleepy—just issues that many of your departments likely face—and no magic wands were waved to wake it up. Instead, the transformation process, which involved new ideas, new resources, and active collaborations, was carefully and incrementally implemented. But there is a secret formula: Investments in faculty innovation will lead to advances in program development—and to scholars who are fully engaged, whether they are new to the department or veterans. Let me tell you how it happened at George Mason University.

Ten years ago, the Department of Communication at George Mason was not very well known within the discipline. Its major assets were a prime location just outside the Washington Beltway; well-developed undergraduate programs; successful debate and forensics teams; and a few senior faculty members who had served in leadership positions in regional and national communication associations. But the department was not recognized as a major contributor to communication scholarship. It lacked a strong positive external identity and did not have an active graduate education or research presence.

The department's internal reputation was even more lackluster, despite being one of the highest-enrolled programs on campus. Frankly, the Department of Communication was not well respected. Perceived as a cash cow for the university—it generated a lot of credit hours for a relatively low cost—the department was associated most closely with public speaking training and media production, not with pushing the boundaries of knowledge. Its faculty taught heavy loads of large undergraduate courses, received minimal support for research, outreach, or professional development, and resented their “low man on the totem pole” status within the university.

Several factors contributed to the department's diminished status: limited university financial support, a poorly defined mission, and overdependence on part-time adjunct faculty members. Part-time faculty members outnumbered full-time faculty by more than threefold. While the department recruited talented adjunct faculty from the vibrant D.C. area, these part-time faculty neither contributed to the intellectual life of the department nor added significantly to the department's reputation. Many part-timers taught at several area institutions, came to campus only to teach their courses, and did not feel a particularly strong allegiance to the department or the university. It was a major burden to continually recruit, train, and supervise them.

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The department's second-tier reputation took its toll, diminishing initiative, limiting expectations, and weighing heavily on the faculty's self-image. Faculty showed minimal interest in pursuing opportunities for innovation and engagement, while struggling to keep up with student demand amidst limited resources and support. Something needed to be done to re-energize the program.

Time for a Change

George Mason University is a young school that grew rapidly to become the largest university in Virginia. The administration established an innovative strategy for building academic excellence by recruiting well-known senior scholars to build the quality and reputation of targeted programs. This strategy was successful in building world-class academic programs in fields such as economics, psychology, public policy, computational sciences, conflict resolution, and history. The Department of Communication had never received that kind of attention. But in 2003, a report by an external review panel of communication administrators from other leading universities described the program's tremendous potential for growth and recommended building research capacity, graduate programs, and connections with local federal government agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health. As a result, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences began exploring opportunities for the department to become a leader in health communication research and to collaborate with local federal health agencies. He funded a small research conference about health communication research that brought leading experts to the campus. Eventually, he decided it was time to invest in the department, which led to my appointment as chair.

Investing in Faculty

Resources were allocated from vacant faculty slots and external donations to bring me to Mason, as well as to hire two additional senior tenured faculty members for the department. The three of us brought active and engaged research programs, extensive professional

experience, and leading expertise in communication inquiry in applied areas such as health communication, strategic communication, media and society, political communication, public diplomacy, and science communication. One of the senior hires had extensive experience administering graduate communication programs and was instrumental in guiding development of an innovative new Ph.D. program. Another brought two prominent research centers, the Center for Media and Public Affairs and the Statistical Assessment Center, which increased the department's external visibility while establishing a model for external funding and partnerships. The department's profile was beginning to change.

The department hired a number of excellent new research-focused faculty members (at both senior and junior ranks) over the next few years to replace retiring faculty and expand the reach of the department. The new faculty members connected to continuing faculty through research, curricular, and outreach partnerships. All faculty members were encouraged to be innovative and entrepreneurial scholars. The number of full-time faculty in the department expanded from 22 to 35, while the number of adjunct faculty members was cut in half.



George Mason University's graduate communication students receive valuable opportunities to network with professionals in the entertainment, government, and nonprofit sectors. Pictured above are Chair Gary Kreps (right) and students attending the 2011 Capitol Hill Showcase for the PRISM Awards, sponsored by the Entertainment Industries Council. The awards celebrate the entertainment industry's dedication to the accurate depiction of mental health and substance abuse issues.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

The department's research and graduate programs dramatically expanded and began to focus on health and strategic communication, while maintaining its historic emphasis on excellent undergraduate programs and outstanding extracurricular activities. The small M.A. program was carefully expanded to around 70 students and the Ph.D. program now enrolls around 30 students, with a planned balance between full-time (traditional) graduate students and part-time (professional) graduate students who represent major D.C.-area organizations and federal agencies. Many full-time graduate students now teach the basic courses that were once taught by adjuncts. The department introduced intensive training and support to graduate teaching assistants to maintain educational quality. There is a strong culture of research collaboration between graduate students and faculty, with students encouraged to present and publish their scholarship.

The new faculty hires helped to change the culture of the department, bringing tremendous intellectual resources, connections, and external sources of funding. One prominent new faculty member established the innovative and internationally acclaimed Center for Climate Change Communication at Mason. I introduced the Center for Health and Risk Communication. The department now has four well-funded and cutting-edge research centers that address important social issues. These centers connect the department to many external partners, including major federal agencies (the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Science Foundation, the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Agency for International Development, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, the Voice of America), leading non-profit organizations (C-SPAN, the American Red Cross, the American Cancer Society, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Kaiser Family Foundation, the National Recreation and Parks Association, the Entertainment Industries Council), major corporations (Merck and Company, Eli Lilly and Company, Pfizer Corporation, Abbott Labs, the

Coca Cola Corporation, the Weather Channel, CNN, the Gannett Company, the *Washington Post*, United Press International), and international organizations (the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Breast Health Global Initiative).

Our research centers involve many faculty and graduate students on research teams that bring in significant external funding. This has provided the department with several million dollars in new external funding per year, generating important new research and outreach activities, publications, and needed discretionary funds to support department activities, and making the department a major source of external revenue for the university.

Another new faculty member used her extensive experience working with the armed forces to establish exciting new collaborations between the department and the U.S. military. We are one of very few academic programs approved to accept a select cadre of outstanding military officers who are fully funded to enroll in our M.A. program. We offer recurring in-service training programs for senior military officers concerning media relations, intercultural communication, public affairs, and social influence. We also established an innovative partnership with D.C.-area military medical centers to conduct collaborative health communication research with military doctors, providing rich research opportunities for faculty and graduate students.

Several of our faculty members are well-known public scholars who are interviewed and quoted often by the media, increasing public recognition for the department. We have established active partnerships with local and national media organizations, helping to enhance department media coverage and increasing other forms of support (such as donations, collaborations, and internships). We teach our students how to communicate effectively with public audiences and provide them with opportunities to publish their work with major media partners, such

as the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and United Press International.

A faculty member who came to Mason after a long history as a leading public affairs executive was instrumental in establishing a distinguished external advisory board, the “Insight Committee,” that informs the department about ways to build programs and address important societal concerns. The committee has championed important programs for the department to increase public awareness and response to HIV/AIDS, welcome military veterans back to campus, and increase career development opportunities for our students. The committee members also helped the department establish a vibrant internship program, placing our students with more than 100 different organizations.

International collaborations have been established with the University of Milan (Italy), the University of Lugano (Switzerland), and Renmin University (China) to promote student and faculty exchanges, and collaborative research programs. We host vibrant international education programs for our students in Italy, England, and Israel. Visiting international scholars have been welcomed to work with the department, teach classes, and participate in research projects. Large-scale research collaborations have been established with partners in China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, India, Germany, Australia, and other countries, promoting a global focus to our communication research and educational activities.

Instituting a Philosophy for Departmental Growth

A broad philosophy for promoting “excellence, innovation, and social relevance” established within the department to guide growth and development has been instrumental in building internal and external recognition and respect for the department. This philosophy encourages department members to strive for the highest standards in research and educational endeavors. They are encouraged to take risks, break from the status quo, and adopt new research and

educational methods. The philosophy also encourages development of fully engaged scholars who are directly connected to society, address important social issues, build meaningful external partnerships, and apply communication knowledge to address complex problems and improve life for those who need help. My personal mantra has been to “work hard, have a lot of fun, and make a difference” with my scholarship. This focus has been warmly embraced by our faculty and students. A strong spirit of respect and cooperation encourages departmental citizens to support one another and work together to achieve individual and collective goals.

When I see colleagues from other communication programs at conferences, they ask me what is going on at Mason. They tell me there is a lot of positive buzz about our programs and faculty. This buzz is the result of increases in department innovation, publication, grants, and outreach activities. Our faculty and students recognize our growing accomplishments and are proud of the department. Our status within the university has improved dramatically, too. We are now recognized as one of the best and most innovative programs on campus. We are getting increased administrative support and respect. I encourage you to invest in your faculty, encourage innovation and social relevance, and build active cooperative partnerships within your program, across campus, and with the larger community. Nothing breeds success like a little success. ■

Gary L. Kreps, Ph.D., is a University Distinguished Professor and chair of the Department of Communication at George Mason University where he also directs the Center for Health and Risk Communication. His research focuses on health communication and promotion, information dissemination, cancer prevention and control, organizational communication, information technologies, multicultural relations, and risk/crisis management. His published work includes more than 350 books, articles, and monographs concerning the applications of communication knowledge in society.

Enrollment in U.S. Graduate Programs: Supply and Market Demand

By Nathan E. Bell

In the current languid job market, a graduate degree can be the key to employment. Over the past few decades, master's degrees and doctoral degrees increasingly have become the entry-level degrees for many jobs. Employers have come to value and seek out the advanced training and skills that graduate-degree hires bring to the job, and students have recognized the potential of graduate education to open doors to more prestigious employment opportunities.

About 9 percent of all individuals 25 years of age and older in the United States have a master's degree or a doctorate, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics suggest that the number of new jobs requiring an advanced degree will increase substantially over the next several years. Recent reports from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce also have empirically demonstrated that individuals with graduate degrees have higher median lifetime earnings and lower levels of unemployment, even in difficult economic times. The importance and impact of graduate education is clear.

Recognizing the vital role of graduate education in the United States, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) Board began a national survey effort in 1986 to gather detailed data on an annual basis about participation in graduate education, collecting the data by field of study, degree level, and student demographics. The information collected in this survey is essential for

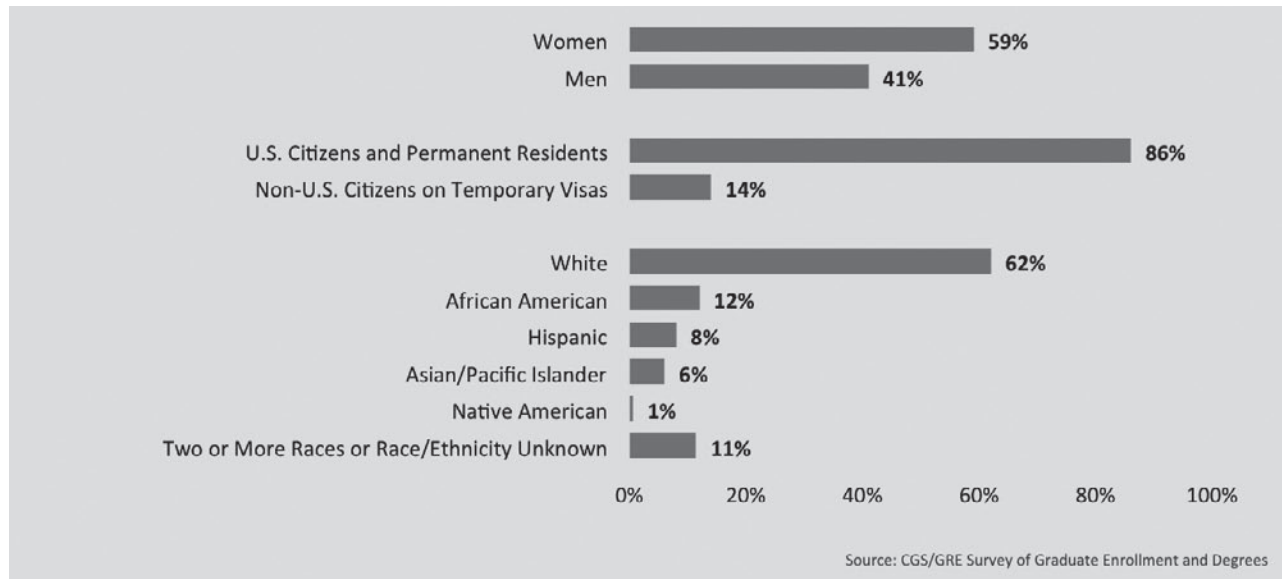
understanding the graduate education enterprise and for examining issues of supply and demand.

The CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees is designed to provide information about applications for admission to graduate school, graduate student enrollment, and graduate degrees and certificates conferred. The survey is the only national source of data on applications and enrollment by field of study across *all* fields of graduate education. In addition, it is the only national survey to collect data on enrollment in graduate education by degree level (master's versus doctoral). Although the survey is not a complete census of all institutions of higher education in the United States, the 655 colleges and universities responding to the 2010 survey awarded three-quarters of all master's degrees granted in the United States that year, along with 9 out of 10 doctorates.

Overall Graduate Enrollment in Fall 2010

The institutions responding to the 2010 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees reported that more than 445,000 students enrolled for the first time in a graduate program in fall 2010 and that total enrollment (including first-time enrollees and continuing students) reached a record of nearly 1.75 million students. The "typical" graduate student in fall 2010 was a female U.S. citizen or permanent resident, enrolled full-time in a master's program at a public institution. Overall, about 86 percent of all graduate students in fall 2010 were U.S. citizens or permanent residents, 59 percent were women,

Overall U.S. Graduate Enrollment, Fall 2010



57 percent were enrolled full-time, 75 percent were enrolled at the master’s level, and 61 percent attended a public institution.

Among U.S. citizens and permanent residents enrolled in U.S. graduate programs, more than one-quarter (27 percent) were racial/ethnic minorities. Among this group, African Americans comprised the largest share (12 percent), followed by Hispanics (8 percent), Asian/Pacific Islanders (6 percent), Native Americans (1 percent), and individuals of two or more races (1 percent). About 62 percent of all graduate students were white, and the race/ethnicity of the remaining 10 percent was unknown.

Graduate students in fall 2010 were most likely to be enrolled in programs in education and business fields. Overall, 23 percent of enrollees were pursuing graduate degrees in education and 18 percent were studying business. Health sciences (11 percent) also accounted for a large share of total enrollment in fall 2010. Among first-time enrollees in fall 2010, graduate students were also very likely to be pursuing a degree in education or business. One out of five first-time graduate students (20 percent) was enrolled in education and 17 percent were in business. Health sciences also accounted for 11 percent of first-time graduate students in fall 2010.

Trends in Graduate Enrollment, Fall 2000 to Fall 2010

The fall 2010 enrollment figures reflect several changes that have occurred gradually over the past few decades. One has been the increased participation of women. Women first accounted for the majority of master’s graduates in the mid 1980s, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics. Since then, the rate of increase for women in graduate enrollment has continued to outpace that of men. Over the past decade, graduate enrollment increased by about 4 percent annually on average for women, compared with an average annual increase of about 3 percent for men, based on the findings of the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees. As a result, women now account for 61 percent of all enrollees at the master’s level and 51 percent of all doctoral students. This shifting demographic led for the first time to women earning the majority of the doctorates awarded in academic year 2008–09, an achievement that was repeated in 2009–10.

Another driver of change in graduate enrollment has been a shift in the participation of international students in U.S. graduate programs. For decades, the United States has been the destination of choice for international students seeking to pursue master’s

degrees and doctorates abroad, in large part due to the high quality of U.S. graduate programs. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the numbers of international students coming to U.S. graduate schools soared, increasing by more than 150 percent between 1980 and 2000, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education. While the majority of these international students pursued graduate degrees in science, engineering, and business fields, large numbers could be found in other fields of study, such as economics, architecture, and communication studies.

After 9/11, the numbers of international students at U.S. graduate schools initially decreased, partially because of heightened visa restrictions. This decline raised concerns in the graduate education community about the continued participation of international students in U.S. graduate programs, but after a few years of faltering figures, international graduate enrollment has once again increased. Between fall 2009 and fall 2010, international graduate enrollment increased by 3 percent, outpacing the 1 percent gain that occurred for U.S. citizens and permanent residents, according to data from the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees. Over the 10-year period between fall 2000 and fall 2010, international graduate enrollment increased by about 3 percent annually on average, matching the 3 percent average annual gain for U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

A third driver of change in graduate enrollment has been a relatively steady, albeit slow, increase in the participation of racial/ethnic minorities in U.S. graduate education. Findings from the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees show that growth in graduate enrollment has been stronger for racial/ethnic minorities than for white students over the past decade. Over the 10-year period between fall 2000 and fall 2010, total graduate enrollment increased by about 8 percent annually on average for African Americans, 7 percent for Hispanics, 5 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 4 percent for Native Americans, compared with an average annual increase of about 2 percent for whites.

Despite stronger gains in graduate enrollment over the past decade for African Americans, Hispanics, and

Native Americans than for white students, members of these minority groups remain vastly underrepresented in graduate education compared with their share of the U.S. population, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. For example, Hispanics account for about 7 percent of all U.S. citizen or permanent resident graduate students, but about 15 percent of the total population of the United States and 19 percent of the U.S. population ages 20 to 29. It will take many, many years of above average growth in graduate enrollment for the share of Hispanics in graduate education to come close to their share of the U.S. population.

The above-average increase in minority participation in graduate education over the past decade is a positive development, but the statistics mask steep declines in first-time graduate enrollment for African Americans and Native Americans that occurred between fall 2009 and fall 2010. These declines of 8 percent for African Americans and 20 percent for Native Americans were mostly the result of decreases in first-time graduate enrollment in education, business, and public administration. Graduate students in these fields tend to be self-funded (through loans, earnings, family contributions, or savings) or employer-funded, so the declines may be a reflection of the weak economy and anemic job market. Nevertheless, they are cause for concern. The results of the 2011 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees, to be released in fall 2012, will reveal whether or not the first-time graduate enrollment figures for these populations stabilized in fall 2011.

Enrollment in Communication and Journalism

In addition to collecting aggregate data on overall first-time and total graduate enrollment, the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees also collects enrollment data for 51 individual fields of study. In the survey, data for communication studies are collected and reported with data for journalism. The institutions responding to the 2010 survey reported nearly 20,000 enrollees in communication and journalism graduate programs in fall 2010. About one-third of these students were first-time enrollees.

Women and minorities account for substantial percentages of total graduate enrollment in

communication and journalism. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of all graduate enrollees in communication and journalism in fall 2010 were women. The majority of all communication and journalism enrollees were domestic students; among those graduate students whose citizenship was known, 86 percent were U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and 14 percent were non-U.S. citizens on temporary visas. Among the U.S. citizens and permanent residents enrolled in communication and journalism graduate programs in fall 2010, 67 percent were white, 10 percent were African American, 7 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent Native American. The remaining 11 percent were either of two or more races or their race/ethnicity was unknown. Overall, graduate students in communication and journalism are slightly more likely than the national average to be women, are about as likely as the national average to be temporary residents, and are slightly less likely to be members of U.S. citizen and permanent resident racial/ethnic minority groups.

and permanent residents, compared with a gain of about 1 percent annually on average for temporary residents.

Over its 25-plus-year history, the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees has documented the overall increase in graduate enrollment in the United States, as well as particularly strong gains in graduate enrollment for women, underrepresented minorities, and international students. Whether in response to workforce demands, disciplinary norms, personal aspirations, or a combination thereof, students overall—as well as those in communication and journalism—have recognized the importance of earning a graduate degree. Some recent media articles have questioned the value of graduate education and have featured anecdotal information about unemployed and underemployed graduate degree recipients, but the empirical data tell a very different story. Graduate enrollment continues to increase, the demographic diversity of graduate education is growing, and

Recent media articles have questioned the value of graduate education and have featured anecdotal information about unemployed and underemployed graduate degree recipients, but the empirical data tell a very different story.

Growth in graduate enrollment in the field of communication and journalism has kept pace with the overall growth in graduate enrollment over the past decade. Total graduate enrollment in communication and journalism increased by about 3 percent annually on average between fall 2000 and fall 2010, the same rate of increase seen for overall graduate enrollment. Growth in total graduate enrollment in communication and journalism was slightly stronger for women than for men over the past decade, and was stronger for racial/ethnic minorities than for white students, mirroring the trends seen for overall graduate enrollment. In contrast to the aggregate trends, total graduate enrollment in communication and journalism increased faster for U.S. citizens and permanent residents than for temporary residents between fall 2000 and fall 2010, increasing by about 3 percent annually on average for U.S. citizens

over the long term, the market rewards graduate degree recipients with higher earnings and lower unemployment, even in tough economic times. ■

Nathan E. Bell, M.P.P., is the director of research and policy analysis at the Council of Graduate Schools. He is the principal researcher for the annual CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees and the co-director of CGS's project on Completion and Attrition in STEM Master's Programs. He is the author or co-author of a number of publications about higher education and employment, including Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2000 to 2010, The Role and Status of the Master's Degree in STEM, and The Path Forward: The Future of Graduate Education in the United States.

The ‘What’ and ‘Why’ of Learned Societies

By Steve Wheatley

Visitors to the National Communication Association’s website can find a very helpful history of the association. The text crisply chronicles NCA’s 98 years from its founding in 1914 as the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking. The pattern we see—secession from a larger group, growth, change, and re-focus—suggests the complexity of maintaining a stable organization in relation to a dynamic field of study. But that is a challenge common to the many scholarly associations that have made American higher education so vibrant.

The National Communication Association is one bright star in a galaxy of scholarly associations in American academia. The U.S. system of higher education is globally distinctive in that it is decentralized, combines public and private funding, and has great institutional variety, with huge state universities and small liberal arts colleges. Some foreign observers have doubted whether this is a system at all. How could this kaleidoscope find any cohesion and common purpose?

A large part of the answer to that question is the collective role of the “modern” learned societies that emerged in late 19th and early 20th century to provide the nervous system for the new, more muscular body of higher education taking shape during the same period. These associations helped set standards for research, organize job markets, stimulate scholarly communication, and bring cohesion and collective purpose to a system with institutional sprawl.

In addition to their commitment to academic excellence, almost all of these new model societies

share three defining qualities. They are voluntary organizations (no one is required to join and most service is uncompensated) made up of an inclusive membership (unlike traditional academies of science that admit only selected members), and are governed democratically by elected boards and presidents.

In the 21st century, American learned societies continue to be critical actors in the organization of knowledge. But like all of higher education, they are subject to economic, technological, and regulatory challenges. The basic operations of scholarly associations—meetings and conventions and print publications and journals—are under stress. Learned societies represent a vision of the academic system that is pluralistic in form, but united in the ideal that, because knowledge is dynamic, research and teaching create a powerful synergy. The increasing stratification of the American academy, politicians’ success in redefining education as mere workforce preparation, and the increasing reliance on contingent faculty all work against that vision.

The Learned Society Enterprise

There is no reliable census of the American learned societies. My organization, the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), has 71 member associations drawn from the humanities and interpretive social sciences. These include sizeable societies, such as NCA and the American Historical Association, that represent disciplines; interdisciplinary societies focused on world regions or temporal periods such as the Association for Asian Studies and the Medieval Academy of America; and some small and more particular societies such as the Society for Theatre Research and the Society for

The 'What' and 'Why' of Learned Societies

Environmental History. Outside of ACLS, there are many other societies dedicated to the study of a single figure or theme. The individual membership of ACLS societies ranges from 500 in the American Dialect Society to 30,000 in the Modern Language Association. About one-half of ACLS member societies have at least one paid staff member, while some employ as many as 50. Many operate with only volunteers, including the executive director.

The variety of the society universe is exactly the point, for the full range of scholarly research interests could not be mapped by a limited set of organizations. Learned societies are not necessarily in competition with each other, for a scholar may be a member of several societies, joining each for different purposes.

A Brief History

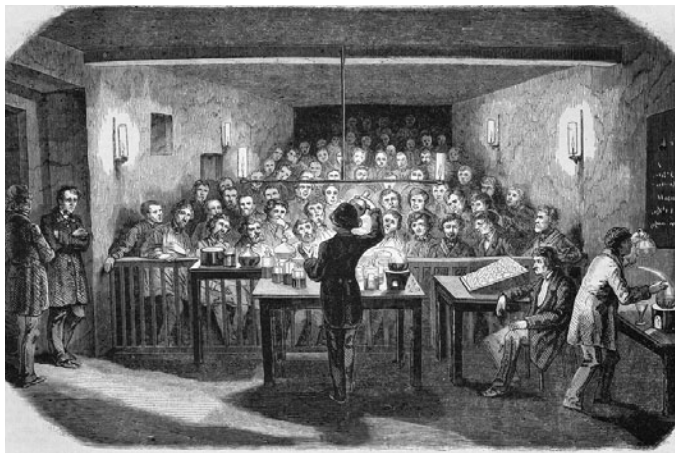
The national academies and royal societies of Europe established the example of individual intellectuals gathered outside the college and university while dedicated to sharing, disseminating, and expanding knowledge. But these bodies, deriving their corporate form and patronage from a relatively powerful state, could not easily be transported to 18th-century America. Instead, local groups of like-minded physicians, lawyers, naturalists, and experimenting autodidacts met regularly to share their enthusiasms. The best-known example of this

form is the Philadelphia “junto” convened in a tavern by Benjamin Franklin. This led to the founding in 1743 of the American Philosophical Society, which today is the oldest continuing learned society in the United States. The Philosophical Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, founded in Boston in 1780, were only the most prominent of what became in the early 19th century a luxuriant growth of local academies, institutes, lyceums, societies, athenaeums, and associations in which wide segments of the middle and upper classes participated.

But as the research university developed in the late 19th century, the older form of learned society—where amateur and expert shared authority over broad intellectual territories such as “social science,” the “natural sciences” or “arts and sciences”—could not accommodate the expansion of knowledge or the ambitions and style of young academics eager to specialize. The emergence of the new model of an academic learned society represented a generational shift. At the first meeting of the American Economic Association in 1891, the young sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross, returning to the United States after studying at German universities, was delighted to find that the membership was principally made up not of the established “graybeards,” but of men under the age of 35.

The new model for a learned society formed a natural partnership with the new model for a university by reinforcing the very idea of “research.” Nascent societies were concerned with setting national standards for the emerging disciplines of study. “If there is a single crucial point in the process of academic professionalization,” writes historian Roger Geiger, “it would be of a national association with its attendant central journal.” The first editor of the *American Historical Review* put it succinctly in 1902: It is not the primary mission of the journal “to evoke originality or kindle the fires of genius.” Its most important job, rather, is “to regularize, to criticize, to restrain vagaries, to set a standard of workmanship and compel men to conform to it.” The phenomena of learned societies are thus deeply enmeshed in the history of American higher education. As the higher education enterprise grew in the United

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The learned societies that emerged in the latter part of the 19th century helped to set standards for research and stimulate scholarly communication, thus providing a nervous system for the new body of higher education that was taking shape.

States, and especially as doctoral and professional education spread beyond a few elite institutions, the learned societies were a critical means of establishing standards and creating truly national professional disciplines. Learned societies also provided portals to membership in the academy. As émigré scholars fleeing Nazism sought refuge in the United States, learned societies provided new professional homes and colleagues. When women and minority scholars sought to take their place in the academic vanguard, learned societies were one vehicle for advancing change.

The Role of Governance

The principle of open, inclusive membership is the premise of the governance of learned societies. In most associations, an elected board or council sets overall policy and has ultimate fiduciary responsibility. A set of committees, either appointed or elected, carries out plans and programs and represents particular groups within the society's wider membership. This organizational layer can become quite elaborate to accommodate the shifting nature of a society's research and professional interests. As one director observed, learned societies must constantly practice "the hermeneutics of hospitality" if they are to maintain and increase their membership.

Successful governance depends upon the relationship of the elected board and president with the chief staff officer, usually the executive director, who is most often appointed by the board. In larger societies, this director is usually employed full-time and has a professional background in the society's field of

association's capacities. Professional administrative expertise is ever more necessary for learned societies, for like most nonprofit organizations, they must comply with a growing set of regulations as state and federal governments increase oversight and reporting requirements.

Financial Operations

Most scholarly associations in the humanities and social sciences finance their operations from three revenue streams: dues from membership, receipts from the national meetings, and income from publications. As almost all learned societies are certified by the Internal Revenue Service as tax-exempt organizations, many actively solicit and receive donations and grants, but important as these revenues are, they only supplement core income. Some societies have modest endowments or reserve funds, but most subsist fairly close to the margin of their revenues and are easily bathed in red ink by untoward events. Two consecutive years of poorly attended meetings create deep, ongoing deficits. Litigation is another threat: As one long time executive director put it, almost every learned society is just one lawsuit away from insolvency.

Current Challenges

The environment of American scholarly associations is changing in ways that challenge society leadership to adapt and innovate. Each leg of the revenue tripod rests on shifting ground. A number of external factors condition attendance at scholarly meetings: the affordability of air fares, constraints in university support for research and professional development, and

Learned societies represent a vision of the academic system that is pluralistic in form, but united in the ideal that because knowledge is dynamic, research and teaching create a powerful synergy.

study or professional administration, or both. This team of leaders should present an important set of complementary competences. The elected president brings scholarly authority and a fresh perspective to the task, but has a limited term. The chief staff officer understands both the limits and possibilities of the

political or labor controversies attached to a particular meeting venue. The digital disruption of established publishing affects scholarly societies even as digital methodologies promise new gains in research and teaching. Will the ready availability of online journals distributed through college and university libraries

The 'What' and 'Why' of Learned Societies

reduce a scholar's incentive to join a learned society? For how long can hard-pressed libraries subscribe to both print and electronic editions of scholarly journals?

Research suggests that the question of membership poses the most intriguing challenge. In 2001, ACLS undertook a survey of individuals who had been members of several of our societies for five or more years. What, we asked, were the motivations for continuing membership? The highest ranked answer, reassuringly, was that people value their membership in scholarly societies not primarily for the goods and services they receive (e.g., journals, newsletters, discounted meeting fees), but for the sense of solidarity with the subject of their field and the ideal of its study. The invitation to join a scholarly association is, in the words of the leadership of one of our societies, "a call to citizenship." Learned societies have been social networks since before the term was in vogue. Individuals voluntarily joined with a group to learn more about their shared interests. But what if today's new models of social networking displace the sense of solidarity a learned society has supplied? Several of the ACLS societies are actively developing new means of providing digital connection, discovery, and collaborative work spaces for precisely that reason.

Just as many U.S. universities see internationalization as a source of future growth, American learned societies benefit from the increased integration of global scholarship. While societies focused on area studies have long had many overseas members, many other associations are attracting more members and meeting participants from abroad. The "brand" of the American learned society has considerable power around the world.

Learned Societies Working Together

Every fall, the ACLS Conference of Administrative Officers (CAO), composed of the executive directors of our member societies, meets in a different city to discuss the very important issues of society management and operation. Some members of the CAO refer to this set of practical issues as "tradecraft," a term for the techniques of spies that allow them to

carry out their objectives undetected. The term is apt, for that is what the management of learned societies aims for: It is an important element of knowledge infrastructure, but like all good infrastructure—transportation, buildings, communications—one hopes that it is serviceable and usable, while not conspicuous to the user. Each of our 71 member societies is distinctive in its structure and academic focus, but when compared with other sorts of nonprofit organizations, our societies are more alike than different. ACLS, we hope, provides a space for the sharing of experience and expertise that can help strengthen each society in its distinctiveness.

ACLS also focuses on the role of learned societies' presidents. For the past several years, we have convened an annual seminar for newly elected society presidents and their partners in leadership, the societies' administrative officers. Led by a researcher in nonprofit management, this seminar provides a daylong opportunity for the leadership teams to consider the operational and strategic situation of their society and to share their concerns with colleagues from other societies.

American scholarly associations have both stimulated and adapted to changes in their academic and social climates. But the helix of change and adaptation spins around a straight line of mission: to advance research, improve teaching, and bring to the public the results of scholarship. As the climate surrounding higher education turns chillier, it will be ever more important that our learned societies continue to pursue their mission with both new tools and lasting ideals. ■

Steve Wheatley is vice president of the American Council of Learned Societies. Before joining the organization 25 years ago as director of the American Studies Program, he taught history at the University of Chicago. Wheatley's scholarly research concerns the role of foundation philanthropy in American higher education. He has been a consultant to the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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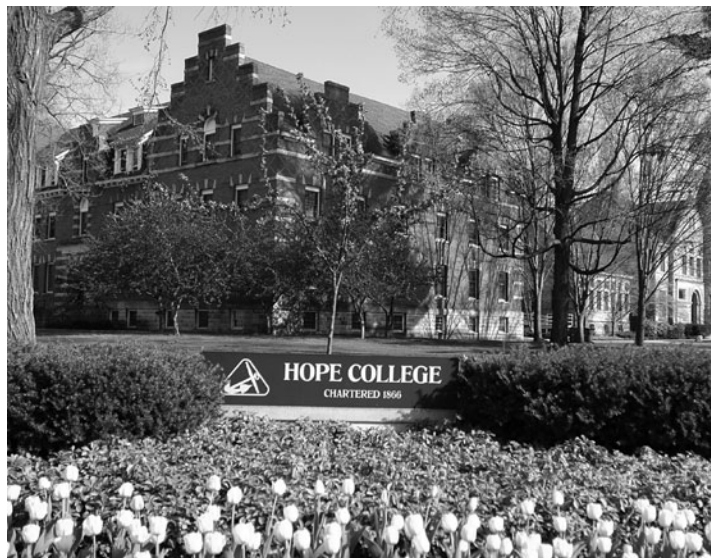


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- 28 PhD students and 70 MA students
- 1,000+ undergraduate majors in 5 concentrations
- \$4,000,000 in current grants and contracts
- Opportunities for research exist with the department's four active research centers:
- Center for Health and Risk Communication
- Center for Climate Change Communication
- Center for Media and the Public Interest
- STATS: Statistical Assessment Service