WANTED: AN EXPLORATION OF JOURNALISM SKILLS ACQUIRED THROUGH
STUDENT MEDIA EXPERIENCES

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Collegiate newsrooms serve two functions: to provide news and information to their campuses and to provide hands-on career preparation for student journalists. Student media professionals face having to do the latter in a way that keeps up with changing demands on entry-level employees, influenced by evolving technology and role consolidation within professional media. This study provides perspective from recent graduates with student media experience on the skills they felt most confident in upon graduating, where they gained those skills, and how they feel their student media experiences prepared them for the workplace. Using Everett Rogers’ theory of innovation diffusion to frame the issue, results show that student media professionals must recognize their roles as the change agent in shaping and pushing the opportunities to develop digital skills expected of entry-level journalists.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Wanted: Entry-level reporter at any newspaper

The ideal candidate will: Be able to develop sources on a beat. Be adept at interviewing, including on stage during live events or on camera. Show ability to use public documents and databases to report stories. Demonstrate strong writing in news and feature stories for up to six stories a week on deadline. Use blogging and other social media (especially Twitter) to grow an audience. Have strong ethics and an understanding of communications law. Assign or shoot photographs and video with stories. Page design using layout software a plus.

This compilation of skills listed in the first five job listings for “reporter” on JournalismJobs.com (2012) paints a picture of journalism at a crossroads that has many, especially those leading news organizations, scratching their heads at what will come next. Those job listings include reporting, developing sources, using databases, blogging and other social media, an understanding of ethics and communication law, the ability to shoot photos and edit videos, and the use of content management systems, among others.

The web has created a “new ecosystem” for creating and distributing content to mass audiences, changing the reality for traditional news outlets that relied on being the experts in their field and providing a unique, nearly single service to an audience (Shirky, 2008, p. 60). The ecosystem relies on and encourages a “mass amateurization of publishing” and a switch from the traditional journalist’s news judgment — “Why publish this?” — to the question today — “Why not?” (Shirky, 2008, p. 64-65). Writes Shirky: “The mass amateurization of publishing undoes the limitations inherent in having a small number of traditional press outlets” (2008, p. 65).

Newspaper managers eager to establish a place in the ecosystem environment seem to turn recruiting for their rare open positions into a catch-all: We want you to do be able to do it all, ads seem to indicate, but we’re not sure just what your job actually will be.
The expectation of expertise within broad skill sets such as those referenced across reporting job advertisements also has triggered a shift in student media, which are frantically attempting to reshape not just what such programs teach journalism students about using new or emerging technologies but how they will go about doing so (Wenger, 2005). At least 10 nationally recognized student media programs, many of which operate outside of academic departments, have opted into what they call “digital-first” strategies, many reducing the number of their print editions if not eliminating them altogether (Buttry, 2012). Enhancing digital media skills also has the spotlight in collegiate classrooms, according to results from the 2011-12 Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Enrollments. The annual survey of nearly 500 degree-granting institutions indicates that 80 percent of journalism and mass communication programs have modified curriculum over the past two years in response to a need for specific skills: social media, web design and web development (80% of J&MC programs …, 2012). Journalism conferences and workshops held by professional associations have begun to offer more digital-first training, including using specific technological skills and how to incorporate said skills into the story-production process. A major question facing entry-level journalists entering the field now is this: Am I more valuable as a Jack-of-all-trades journalist or as specialist with a specific skillset? The same question applies to those preparing students for the field: Exactly what are we preparing them for?

Campus newsrooms face some of the same problems as their professional colleagues: Available resources including time, funding, space and equipment are not growing despite industry demands for graduates with expertise in technology skill sets and the motivation to thrive in an uncertain market for entry-level job candidates (Vlad, Becker & Kazragis, 2011; Neidorf, 2008; Russial, 2009; Adams, 2008). Every change made in the classroom or student
newsroom must remain centered on providing the most realistic training for future journalists while providing an environment that nurtures critical thinking and problem-solving (Powers, 2012; George, 2011). This has emerged as a discussion among student media departments, as well as their colleagues in academic departments that must provide documentation regarding learning outcomes of the student media experience to comply with assessment or accreditation procedures. In some cases, this documentation is tied directly to funding and other resources as justification for student media existence (Landis, 2012).

To complicate matters, college journalism and communication programs across the country are experiencing record enrollments at the same time a fog surrounds American newspaper jobs. Across the country, 221,077 students were enrolled in journalism and mass communication programs in fall 2010, an increase of 2.7 percent from a year earlier (Vlad, Becker & Kazragis, 2011). By deduction, the number of journalism graduates with academic and sometimes experience-based credentials to enter the field also is increasing, forcing academia and collegiate news organizations to study the changing field and adapt their programs to aid these graduates in a competitive market. Perhaps Reese and Cohen state it best this way, even 12 years ago: “The eclecticism of the discipline of journalism is in danger of becoming schizophrenic” (2000, p. 214).

While quantitative data exists regarding employment and enrollment rates of journalism students and alumni, little information exists on the experiences those students and alumni face while searching for a job that uses skills acquired while in school. Existing literature focuses on employers and professors as key participants (Pierce and Miller, 2006), using students and alumni as case studies but forgoing important factors that drive their success: feelings of self-motivation, expertise, critical thinking and adaptability. Neidorf’s 2008 work interviewing
journalism graduates perhaps provides the most recent glimpse into factors that could affect a former student’s success in finding work after graduation. He found that when students tapped into social networks — many fueled through internship and student media (experiential learning settings) — to find and get jobs, they had higher success in finding a job. Current research also tends to focus on classroom experiences, which do not link directly to hands-on work in a student media news organization (Simon and Sapp, 2006). In doing so, current literature provides the beginning and end of the student journalism practitioner’s story, but not the middle. To students entering the journalism field, the crucial connection of education to practice can be the most important part of their story.

As a college newspaper adviser, my responsibility is to provide students the opportunity to develop job-related communication skills through developmental, experiential learning. Journalism educators including myself must evaluate their programs frequently to ensure the experiences students gain while employed in college translates to the job market they plan to enter. Equally important is that “customers for journalism education, students themselves, do not all take jobs as news workers” (George, 2001, p. 261). She argues colleges should place more emphasis on the social value of positions journalism graduates secure. Twelve years later, this remains important as the job market for journalism students improves.

Studies have called for more attention to redefinition of occupational roles in newsrooms as “significant” (Garrison, 2001, p. 234). Preparation for those roles is more significant; defining the roles and skills therein for entry-level positions is the first step. As more newsrooms cut positions, competition for those that remain will be high (Adams, 2008, p. 81). At the same time, journalism schools are graduating large numbers of students, and those graduates are shaping how the industry is doing its work. Many student media newsrooms are modeled after other
newsrooms, peer or professional, so much that mimicking process can dictate content rather than framing creativity and the survival instinct these students will need in the future. The survival of the news industry relies on their creativity, energy and enthusiasm. Classroom teaching and student media experiences help prepare them. But if journalism educators equip graduates to rely on traditional journalism skills, they must also teach them to think outside of them. How to teach students to think outside of traditional journalism remains a question, as well as deciphering whether to teach students to teach students to acquire many skills with a specialty in one.

Scope of Research

This qualitative study provides context for and first-person perspectives on the experiential learning that takes place at college newspapers through the experiences of their alumni as they search for and work in entry-level jobs. This study explores 20 graduates’ experiences in learning journalism skills, what they consider strengths in their skill sets upon leaving college and the student media experience, and the skills each is using in his or her current work environment.

While a comprehensive data set showing the number of students involved with student media does not exist, we can deduce that many of those enrolled in journalism programs also got involved in some way with their college’s student media organizations. It is worth noting that not all student media programs require employees or volunteers to major in journalism or mass communication, so students in other majors also may work for student media organizations. The perspectives found in this study could provide recommendations for potentially useful changes in student newsroom production practices as well as challenge assumptions those with authority in those newsrooms hold regarding skills students need upon graduation. After all,
newsroom needs change so frequently to keep up with technology, leaders could be off base in assumptions or using aged scholarly research to back decisions related to resources such as human capital, finances, training and standards of production.

Because a study of this nature does not appear to have been conducted with graduates from solely Texas institutions, it has the potential to provide significant data from which institutions can draw conclusions regarding skills acquisition among its student journalists. The study demonstrates how resources including time, money, facilities and equipment could be diverted to better provide training on specific skills related to current jobs in the field from the perspective of those experiencing those needs now. The study also indicates a growing need for students to develop and practice skills outside of those determined “essential” on their own time and using their own resources, providing valuable opportunity for further research.

Moreover, the conclusions and implications of this study provide opportunities to tie the learning that takes place in student media environments to in the classroom. Experiential learning experiences long have had a place in the collegiate environment; internships and experimentation in many disciplines are encouraged (Southard, 1988; Hu, 2012; Carpenter, 2009).

Journalism academic programs across the country are attempting to respond to industry needs, although how to balance resources to do so is of much debate. In a time when the news industry clearly demonstrates it expects a larger, digitally based skill set of its employees amid role consolidation — and recent graduates from journalism programs are competing with more experienced journalists for those jobs — a major focus has been how much to change curriculum, which can be a tedious process. Student media programs housed at universities and colleges, many of which operate independently of academic curriculum, can be more nimble in adapting to change. Many well-known student media programs have revamped, rewritten and re-
trained student employees to think digitally first, in part in response to the immediate need to prepare students hands-on for the types of work they hope to find immediately after graduation. Among them are the *Red & Black* at the University of Georgia; the *Daily Emerald* at the University of Oregon; and my own student news operation, *The Shorthorn*, at the University of Texas at Arlington. Neidorf found “It’s important to have the education, the credentials, the experience (through internships and school newspaper work), and the work samples to demonstrate the capacity to do the work. But the newsroom job market is highly competitive, and participants sensed they needed something more to rise above the crowd” (2008, p. 64).”

As the push to better tie experiential learning to specific learning outcomes becomes stronger on many campuses, it becomes essential for such journalistic endeavors to find meaningful data to show, rather than tell, how the student media experience directly benefits students during their collegiate careers and post-graduation. This study adds to that body of work. As Stephen Reese stated in a panel discussion, “The tugs are on the field from one side from the professional community needing trained practitioners, and on the other side from an academic, neo-administrative style lead to symptoms of disconnect and fragmentation (Cohen, 2001, p. 6). Perhaps Adams states it more simply: “How to adequately prepare the next generation of journalists for the 21st century converged newsroom has the heads of some academics spinning” (2008, p. 81).

Successful alumni, in turn, likely will feel strong connections to their media programs and to their universities. This study can help demonstrate a meaningful tie between experiences in student media and success post graduation.
Research Questions

Based on the existing literature and gaps in considering the journalism graduate entering a changing journalism job market, this study will provide perspectives on the following:

RQ1: Where do student journalists view skills acquisition taking place?

RQ2: What skills do participants perceive as their top skills going into a changing media market?

RQ3: How do participants feel student media positioned them for the workplace?
CHAPTER 2
RELATED LITERATURE

News Production

In 2011, more than 100 editors from print and online news outlets participated in an American Press Institute/American Society of Newspaper Editors survey regarding the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for their industry. The results show a frustrated group committed to old-school fundamentalism working in a new-school, technology-driven world (Grist Cunningham, 2011). Such an institutional dilemma is complicated in attempting to manage the work of employees whose work-related roles have been consolidated. “If you want to organize the work of even dozens of individuals, you have to manage them,” and take on the costs of predicting management, writes Shirky (2008, p. 19).

That’s hardly news to communication scholars. The journalism industry has wrestled with its own form of puberty for some time, thrashing about as an angsty teen whose voice — content — and body — delivery — is changing. Devices such as tablets and smartphones have fragmented audiences (Briggs, 2010) who used to, editors like to think, sit around the breakfast table and read the Sunday Times. Now they scroll headlines from news aggregators while sitting in the fast-food lane.

What the API/ASNE survey and others (Fahmy, 2008; Pierce and Miller, 2007) reveal, however, is a growing level of concern for how news organizations will produce news, as well as what they will produce. Say two editor-respondents:

• It’s time for newsrooms to focus on finding ways to do fewer things well, instead of doing everything poorly. (Grist Cunningham, 2011).

• With cuts in staff, 24/7 is an impossible task that brings in few returns. My challenge is casting off that which consumes essential time for benefits that have less weight. …
I want quality over quantity. Trying to force everyone to be a Jill of all trades diminishes quality. (Grist Cunningham, 2011).

The API/ASNE study is one of numerous industry reports and academic endeavors published in the past five years that show the journalism industry is attempting to find a common ground from which to work.

Journalism: Profession or Craft?

Enormous change — industrial, technological or philosophical — instigates the need to evaluate the professionalism that guides production within the social sciences (Coats, 1978). The journalism world is no different. Take, for example, Pulitzer’s and Hearst’s efforts in the early 1900s to clean up questionable newsgathering practices and to respond to calls for governmental regulation of their free press by establishing professional standards by which journalism should be judged. In 1923, the American Society of Newspaper Editors adopted its *Canons of Journalism* (ASNE, 2001) in the effort to correct issues plaguing the industry.

It is safe to say that external motivators have instigated journalism leaders’ attention to providing guidance on issues including ethical practices and the expectation of specific skill sets among journalists (Briggs, 2010; Buttry, 2012). But the exponential rate at which news audiences have adopted evolving technology, including mobile platforms such as smartphones or tablets and social media use that blurs the line between personal and professional, is causing guidelines to be provided on a case-by-case basis via popular industry media, rather than catch-all rules intended to govern without the ability to enforce (*SPJ Code of Ethics; NPPA Code of Ethics*). Journalism appears to be an industry rooted in fundamentals, but itself is trying to reform its professional practices, not limited to distribution of its product, in response to innovation.
But Coats also points out that “the emergence of collective self-conscious in any group is seldom easy to document,” leaving terms such as “profession” and “professional” a source of confusion among its use in the literature (1978, p. 233; Deuze, 1999, p. 376). Much of the literature regarding professionalization of a field points to two defining characteristics: unique access to a highly specific body of knowledge and that professionals must be forced to uphold and advance standards of service (Moore, 1970; Meyer, 2004; Rossland, 2007).

Numerous professional associations and organizations related to journalism have adopted codes of ethics or other professional norms to help guide the decisions made by members (SPJ Code of Ethics; Hohmann, 2011; NPPA Code of Ethics). While organizations including the Society of Professional Journalists or National Press Photographers Association provide guidelines that should shape journalistic work, they fail to provide enforcement of such rules — lending the field more to a definition of craft than profession. By comparison, professions such as law or medicine require a rigorous licensing and enforcement process (Rossland, 2007). In fact, Rossland states, “the emphasis on professionalization as process is most relevant for journalism because there are several elements which make it difficult, if not impossible, for journalism to become a full profession in the traditional sense, as for instance the designation of profession is used for legal and medical practitioners” (2007, p. 138). In addition, the literature shows journalists have long struggled whether to professionalize the field, as Osiel states, because of reasons “of law, organization, and conviction” (1986, p. 165).

Whether one considers journalism a craft or a profession is important to consider in the discussion of how technology, some in varying stages of diffusion, affects the needs and expectations of an industry that itself plays a role in innovation/information diffusion. The Internet is not the first technology to disrupt the news industry (Meyer, 2004; Fidler, 1997;
Briggs, 2010). The Internet has, however, signaled a shift toward smaller, niche audiences (Meyer, 2004; Briggs, 2010).

In the last half of the 1990s, the news media embraced online technologies and began to take advantage of its capabilities in a broad range of ways: gathering information from sources via social media, identifying trends using computer-assisted reporting, creating visually appealing information graphics, consolidating roles of journalists specific to producing and distributing the news, among others (Russial, 1994; Garrison, 2001; Tremayne, Weiss and Alves, 2007). While much popular literature, via think tanks like Poynter Institute and blogs available on multiple organizations’ websites, emphasizes and sometimes bemoans the need to grow one’s journalistic skills in the digital realm, the academic literature referenced above shows technology’s impact on journalism has been a slow, steady creep with the deft impact of role-consolidation within the newsroom. Ten years after he said them, Meyer’s words ring strikingly true today: “The new emphasis on filtering, refining, decorating and packaging information requires new ways of applying our old skills and discovery of some entirely new ones” (2004, p. 230).

Evolution of Newsrooms Based on Needs

Based on the job listings on multiple journalism websites, roles have been consolidated in newsrooms across the country. Where in years before, individuals in larger newsrooms were tasked with specific jobs — newsroom librarian or researcher, photographer, reporter, and designer — both a tumbling economy and innovations such as mobile technology allow for tasks and work routines to be bundled. That is a change from the monumental technological disruption to news distribution, which took place more than 100 years ago. Telephone service in the 1890s
revolutionized reporting and spurred an onslaught of newspapers, writes Briggs (2010), in part
because one operator could now do the work of numerous people. Convergence of tasks means
that you have fewer people doing more things, and that requires both training and motivation
(Perrow, 1986). Add to that the scope of work that can be done by noninstitutional groups, and
newsrooms face a “profound challenge to the status quo” (Shirky, 2008, p. 48). For news
organizations, going digital is not as simple as transferring content to the web. “This
transformation requires them to reinvent themselves — how they think of themselves, how they
operate, how they relate to the public, how they make money — and fast” (Jarvis, 2011, p. 125).
It’s important to understand that adoption of an innovation is a process, not a single act. In an
industry in which information diffusion is the key, it seems the industry would be have cultural
norms and the mentality to diffuse technology in way that is similar to its own goals; that is, it
would adopt and diffuse technology at a rate faster than Rogers’ traditional model. In fact,
research shows the industry has followed the model (Garrison, 2001; Maier, 2001).

In addition to the ability to produce content across multiple platforms, technology has
allowed news organizations to rethink the production of those platforms and the roles of their
staff (Russial, 2009). National and regional newspaper chains, including the E.W. Scripps
Company and Gannett Company, have changed their copy desk and design desk teams to
“universal operations” to consolidate the production of newsprint editions for an entire chain of
newspapers, regardless of their locations. The topic remains a topic of discussion on industry
blogs and in trade publications, leading student media professionals and journalism educators
wondering what, if any, changes they need to make to keep up with industry needs (and teaching
their students how to anticipate needs beyond those current). A copy editor can expect to take on
tasks in addition to editing, for example; cross-sets of related skills are a requirement in such
operations, as well as in smaller newsrooms.

Advice from professionals indicates the need for students to not only have basic
journalism skills but advanced technological skills specific to current needs (Wenger, 2005; Hu,
2012; Briggs, 2010; Buttry, 2011). But academic studies show that employers sometimes say two
different things; the desire for new, web-oriented skills doesn’t outweigh the value employers
place on the “old standards” (Pierce and Miller, 2006, p. 59).

Assessing the skills of journalism graduates is not a new research area. In 1990, the
American Society of Newspaper Editors Committee on Education for Journalism showed editors
surveyed were critical of the skills journalists had upon leaving school; only four percent ranked
the quality of training of their new hires as high when asked about their news-gathering skills,
writing abilities, spelling and grammar, ability to use computers and knowledge of geography,
law and ethics (Giles, 1990).

Fast-forward to the early 2000s, when the newspaper industry began demanding not only
basic journalism skills of its employees but specialties. So flush were some operations to hire
entire desks of specialized reporters, photographers, copy editors and designers that specific skill
sets were emphasized in hiring over basic journalism skills. A quantitative survey of business
editors across the United States found, in 2004, that business editors were more than willing to
pay a job candidate more if he or she could demonstrate a strong grasp of reading and
comprehending financial documents. But it also found that 80 percent of respondents said
journalism students were unprepared to do basic journalism jobs and called for specialized
courses to better prepare graduating journalists (Pardue, 2004).
Now, recent published writing on the topic tends to focus on popular issues framed around individuals’ anecdotal evidence, rather than scholarly research. Most scholarly research seems to have taken place during newsrooms’ early adoption phase of using new media as a platform, from 2004 to 2010. This might be linked to how technological innovations have diffused among print media.

Rogers theorized that technological innovations travel through a series of stages before being widely adopted: first awareness, then use by early adopters, then opinion makers, then opinion followers, then laggards or late adopters (Rogers, 1995).

Applying innovation diffusion theory, which shows audiences of any technology adapt to new technologies in phases over time, to news production shows how the print media’s needs among specific skill sets have evolved over time. Early adoption of innovations provided and exacerbated by opportunities to engage audiences online has given way to the second wave of news consumers, those who no longer experiment with mobile or other platforms and expect news providers to have or beat their own level of expertise with a given platform.

While Rogers assigns a limited role to innovation diffusion in the sense of informing the public about technologies, we must consider innovation diffusion differently when we change the media’s role from spreading knowledge of a particular technology to actually using and consuming the technology. Specific media — broadcast agencies, strategic communicators, newspapers and websites — all find themselves somewhere along this continuum of innovation diffusion, thus staffing their newsrooms to serve their needs. In some cases, we must consider the proliferate Internet altered all sense of normal workflows within newsrooms and, in the last 10 years, has forced the use of digital tools upon shrinking news staffs, which among them have their own continuum of technology users.
Along that continuum are change agents, key people involved with diffusion of technology (Rogers, 1995); their job is to be highly informed about innovations and assist those who want to make changes. In American newsrooms, it appears that, based on job listings in key arenas, early adoption of new technologies is an expectation for new hires. Media system dependency theory tells us that media will affect a person the more that person depends on media to meet his or her needs. This, when considered with media system dependency theory applied to the generation exiting college, shows an adaptability to using multiple media and technology for multiple uses. For those coming out of college into entry-level positions, an assessment of both journalism and technology skills is important in addressing whether journalism alumni draw a connection between their use of technology for personal and professional uses.

Jack-of-All-Trades or Master of One?

Size has been a variable when assessing whether a journalist has a need to develop a specialty, or expertise, in a specific area. As large newspapers grew larger in the 1980s and 1990s, before the proliferation of Internet access and use, newspaper staffs were large enough to accommodate time and training for specialty skills — in-depth project individuals (those who worked on one story for a year), designers who handled only newsprint graphics, and so on (Russial and Santana, 2011; Russial, 1994; Briggs, 2010). But the capabilities to reach audiences using the Internet burst that bubble. In addition, at a weekly or small-circulation daily, a staffer’s job likely includes a wider range of needs: reporting, writing, editing, photography, video and layout (Lowrey and Becker, 2001; Grist Cunningham, 2011; Russial, 1994).

According to newspaperlayoffs.com, a website that tracks newspaper buyouts and layoffs through self-reporting, more than 1,850 journalists lost their jobs in 2012 (Smith, 2012). While
this study does not dive into the reasoning behind such cuts, the results of such dramatic shifts in employment opportunities impact those remaining in the field as well as those hoping to enter the field as graduates. The role-consolidation that takes place in newsrooms after such cuts has increased the number of tasks for a person to complete, the skills needed to perform those tasks, and a need for adaptability in a fickle market.

The current shift in personnel needs and cultural change in news organizations is well documented. In 2012, the *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans was among many news organizations that reduced or ceased publication, hundreds of copy editors and designers across the country have lost positions as media companies merge production desks, and the fragmentation of audiences has forced those left in those newsrooms with increased responsibilities (Hodierne, 2009) but not expertise, per se, in those areas.

As early as 1995, research showed difference in the expectations on graduating journalism students and the actual skill sets they used in the field. Auman’s study of skill sets specific to copy editing and production of a newspaper indicate that despite editors’ stating they want broad skill sets to keep up with technology — at the time pagination systems — the fact remained that fundamentals of editing remained the most valued and exercised among the group of practitioners (1995). With technology and distribution points changing for end users, or readers, arguments are front and center in newsrooms now, as editors consider whether any hiring done should be for a generalist – one who can “do it all” — or a specialist trained in a specific skill set. In her search for answers, Carpenter’s quantitative assessment of online job ads found that news organizations want employees with broad backgrounds, not trained in just one area (2009). She elaborates that a sole focus on skills may not prepare graduates for careers in journalism.
But the literature neither supports specialization of journalistic skill sets, which is an assumption many make when considering the skills needed to operate within technological innovations, nor generalization — the proverbial journalist Jill of all trades. In fact, the body of literature raises more questions than answers.

Garrison found that the nature of the search for information using interactive technologies had changed over the course of his six-year study. “Reporters and editors became more involved in the research process themselves. When user-friendly web browsers and database interfaces were introduced in newsrooms, the evolution accelerated” (2001, p. 228). Take, for example, this fact: In 1995, fewer than one in four reporters conducted online research. By 1999, the proportion had grown incrementally to two in three reporters doing their own research via the web (Garrison, 2000; Garrison, 2001). Other literature supports this idea of role convergence. Russial and Santana found in 2011 that U.S. newspapers seem to want cross-platform skills from their staffs, but not each individual staff member (2011). In fact, they call on those who argue for journalists’ needing to know more of everything to also take responsibility for ensuring that work be done well, not just completed. “One size does not appear to fit all,” Russial and Santana conclude (2011, p. 20).

Popular literature produced by journalism associations such as the Society of Professional Journalists, Investigative Reporters and Editors and the American Copy Editing Society and websites for think tanks like the Poynter Institute attempt to create lists of essential skill sets for today’s journalist. These include topics like video editing, live-Tweeting events, crowd-sourcing reports, source development, understanding web analytics and search engine optimization, and more. Deuze argues for critical thinking and adaptability to top such lists, which tend to focus on the tools and not the reasons to use them. “Writing online journalism is
not so much writing a text, it is thinking ahead about all possible formats to be used in a story to allow for the medium’s key characteristic — convergence — to be functionally and successfully used for the benefit of the user” (1999, p. 380). His comments seem to indicate a need for the basic knowledge of the myriad multimedia formats the web provides but places the emphasis on planning, not producing, content. That is, perhaps the specialty skills need not come from individual staffers but from editors who can, in turn, aid staff members in producing quality work.

Garrison reiterates such a point when he describes the act of finding information as “an art, if not a science, in itself (2000, p. 89).” But such has been the case that separated journalists from the populations they’ve served for some time. The Internet has proven the great equalizer, forcing journalists to learn and prove their power or skills that help them maintain their status as “journalist” in an age when new media such as blogs continue to test who can be protected by that definition.

Still, specialization is needed in several roles specific to producing the print newspaper. Lowrey and Becker found a correlation between the degrees of skill a journalism or mass communication graduate possessed with presentation technologies and that person’s success in finding a job (2001). That newsroom employers tend to favor job candidates with job-specific skills supports the idea of specializing in a particular set of skills (Lowrey and Becker, 2001). A review of job listings for reporter openings shows a majority of employers want it all: advanced reporting skills, deftness with social media use and branding, the ability to produce visual and audio work, and more — with a smile.

Aumente says editors have told him they want to hire journalists who have multimedia skills and experience (2007, p. 87). But in a world in which the readers can select from fine
dining (niche publications that cater to a specific topic) or a buffet (traditionally mass audience-minded newspaper organizations), what type of menu do editors hope to cook up … and who will train the chefs? At the same time specialization is needed, says Jarvis, the flip side is that “there is less loyalty from employees to employers as well. We’ll see more people trying to make it on their own because they want to and they can — or because they have no choice when shrinking companies lay them off” (2011, p. 56).

Innovation Diffusion

Rogers’ amply tested theory of innovation and information diffusion is a standard among social scientists eager to test and predict adoption rates for various practical applications. By 2002, more than 5,000 academic studies existed confirming its use across disciplines (Rogers, 2004). Rogers defines diffusion as “the process through which an innovation, defined as an idea perceived as new, spreads via certain communication channels over time among the members of a social system” (2004, p.13).

More specifically, this process draws on five unique stakeholders for an innovation to be considered fully diffused. Those stakeholders, in the order they fit into the process, are: the media, serving to make the population aware of a particular message or innovation; early adopters, usually innovators; opinion leaders, who learn from the early adopters and attempt the innovation; opinion followers take the baton; followed by laggards, or late adopters (Rogers, 1995). For this study’s purposes, innovation refers to a communication technology, platform or storytelling device like social media.

Young people often are seen in newsrooms as the early adopters of technology and other innovations that can be used in a journalistic setting (Buttry, 2012; Huffstetler, 2012). Fidler
describes early adopters as the people “who enjoy being first on the block with a new gadget, perceive immediate uses for something new, and are willing to take risks. They usually have a high degree of tolerance for initial limitations and inconveniences, provided that the innovation imparts some measure of status, respect or attention from their peers or cohorts” (Fidler, 1997, p. 14). Change agents within the diffusion of innovation and information are also important (Maier, 2000, p. 99; Rogers, 1995; Tremayne, Weiss and Alves, 2007, p. 828). For news organizations, this role is twofold; they act as change agents that spur the diffusion of information, but within their own realm of using innovations must find change agents to spur use of technology and other innovations for the purpose of getting to the people they exist to serve. Shirky writes that the “pattern of coevolution of technology and society is true of communications tools. For us, radio and TV have always existed. The invention of a tool doesn’t create change; it has to have been around long enough that most of society is using it. The tool has to be so pervasive as to be invisible, and that is where profound change happens” (Shirky, 2008, p. 105).

While Shirky is discussing innovation diffusion in terms of social change, his points are valid for social change within newsrooms as well. In newsrooms, whose employees tend to be skeptical by nature, new tools such as social media start at huge disadvantage because of lack of awareness, fear of impact on the quality of the product, or the fleeting nature of the tool (Huffstetler, 2012; Buttry, 2012). Take, for example, email use among newsroom professionals. Garrison’s 2001 study of email use as a communication with sources supports that newsrooms were late adopters in that diffusion model (p. 61); 83.2 percent of respondents were age 49 or younger; and 66.5 percent of respondents considered themselves intermediate computer users. At the time, more than half (64.9 percent) had access to broadband or high-speed Internet access. Just 6.5 percent of respondents said they used email to conduct interviews (Garrison, 2001, p. 61).
That’s hard to fathom 12 years later; most job listings no longer state computer skills as a requirement because the assumption is that the applicant is an expert, and time or widespread use by sources dictates that many interviews be conducted by email.

Diffusion theory suggests that in deciding whether to adopt an innovation, most people depend mainly on subjective evaluations from others like themselves (Singer, 2004, p. 12). Within a newsroom, professional or collegiate, seeing a peer’s success with an innovation or technology often can inspire one to use said technology in a similar way (Huffstetler, 2012; Buttry, 2012). In an interview, Sarah Huffstetler, a 36-year veteran in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram newsroom, insists that journalism is not dying but dramatically changing, and that it’s up to the change agents in the newsroom to help their older peers succeed with the technology. Huffstetler, an associate managing editor in production, admitted being resistant to using some tools, such as Twitter or tools to produce video, until she saw peers be successful in small steps (2012). For example, a large television screen in the middle of the newsroom displays up-to-the-minute Tweets from Star-Telegram staff. Reporters noticed one writer was the only person using the tool, getting the attention on screen and building an audience that responded in real-time with him. He was the change agent that instigated others to see the value of the tool; now, Huffstetler and her staff are avid users of Twitter. “Now, there’s a sense of competition,” she said (2012). This underscores the importance of the change agent within the newsroom, as well as the newsroom as a change agent in the community — if “new” journalists see their peers use technology in a way that diffuses information, they, in turn, will gain and use that experience. Singer states: “Convergence works best as a one-to-one process — that the relationships necessary for people with different backgrounds and skills not only to work together but to trust
one another can develop only through intrapersonal communication” (2004, p. 13) and hands-on experiences.

Technology Diffusion in Journalistic Settings

Innovation diffusion has been used as a theoretical backdrop in numerous journalism and news production studies (Garrison, 2000; Tremayne, Weiss, and Alves, 2007; Garrison, 2001; Russial, 2009; Russial, 1994; Van Hout and Jacobs, 2008), perhaps because of its ability to make sense of how journalists themselves adopt technology that aids them in reaching their audiences.

As early as 2000, Garrison found individuals at larger news publications represented the early adopters of using Internet and web resources for newsgathering (2004, p. 89), concluding computers, albeit in the early stages of diffusion, had become valuable newsgathering tools to access government information. That rate of use is now hard to imagine; journalists report wholesale use of Internet resources as a primary newsgathering method in popular literature, indicating full diffusion of the technique. This leads the researcher to question the rate at which information distributors adopt technology to perform their professional duties. How to use computers and web resources is among top queries at the Poynter Institute, and tip sheets abound (Dube, 2011). Most existing literature is quick to point out the common perception that at a smaller publication, a staffer is expected to produce more, which may limit the amount of depth or time allowed for adopting new technology (Garrison 2000; Garrison, 2001; Garrison, 2004).

Chang studied adoption of computers by Taiwanese newspapers and determined that three perceived innovation attributes — advantage over an old idea, compatibility with existing values and needs, and complexity in use and understanding — explained the rates of adoption (1998). If these values are not met, the rate of adoption among these news organizations was
slowed considerably. Based on this idea, it will be critical to explore whether the nature of journalists to scrutinize and assess information as a function of their jobs affects their ability to adopt new technology/innovations.

Garrison explains “there are risks in use, and some adopters are reluctant to place themselves in vulnerable positions on deadline or at other times when completion of work is the highest priority” (2001, p. 233.) A tangible example of such a fear is accuracy; Meyer found in his study of the types and frequency of errors in 2002-2003 that three of five stories contained at least one error (2004, p. 89). The problem, he identified, is “finding the right balance between speed and accuracy, between being comprehensive and being merely interesting” (Meyer, 2004, p. 89). Such is the issue when considering, ten years later, the speed at which news organizations project — rather than process — information to readers.

The Internet has provided a platform for other disruptive technologies and follows the S-shaped curve Rogers predicts is not new to journalists; the fax machine, cellphone, and advanced print technology also were innovations that influenced news media (Briggs, 2010). But Levitt sums up disruptive technology best in the perennial classic Marketing Myopia. He argues that innovation adoption is a process within a process of thinking. He compares news media to the railroad industry; had railroad executives considered themselves in the transportation business, and not just the railroad business, they could have better prepared themselves to make use of the changing technology available to customers (i.e., planes and interstates) (Levitt, 2004). Other research shows that diffusion within the newsroom hinges on in-house training and other internal support mechanisms designed to develop a critical mass of computer users (Maier, 2000, p. 106).

The bottom line is that digital media is constantly changing, as applications such as email, social media tools, analytics and interactive elements morph how journalists perform their
jobs. It is important to recognize that Rogers’ theory of innovation diffusion sets us up to understand how a particular innovation might follow the S-curve model of diffusion. But we must take care to recognize the differences in newsrooms across the country – circulation size, staff size, staff motivation, news organization priorities, and more – and how those variables affect their abilities to participate with particular innovations (Russial, 2009; Tremayne, Weiss, and Alves, 2007; Garrison, 2001; Maier, 2000, p. 97). For example, a newsroom might be an early adopter of computer-assisted reporting techniques but a laggard in using social media to crowd-source stories in breaking-news situations.

News organizations often did not understand the significant changes the Internet brought with its inception. “For people with a professional outlook, it’s hard to understand how something that isn’t professionally produced could affect them — not only is the Internet not a newspaper, it isn’t a business or even an institution” (Shirky, 2008, p. 56). While Shirky alludes to narcissistic bias (threats could come only from other professional media outlets), newspapers are a prime example of how late adopters can lose out; early adopters can and do make use of tools and services and become unwanted competition (like Craigslist or Facebook). How this translates to skills is the need for early adopters in all roles in the newsroom who can translate personal use to professional use in the more traditional sense.

But media may not have a choice, writes Fidler (1997). Fidler coined the term “mediamorphosis,” meaning that the adoption of new media technologies guide the stages in the transformation of mainstream media and emerging media. He points out six principles of mediamorphosis, among them survival: “All forms of communication media, as well as media enterprises, are compelled to adapt and evolve for survival in a changing environment. Their only other option is to die” (Fidler, 2007, p. 29).
Experiential Learning

When people learn how to drive, they accumulate information in phases: They study a text either online or in a classroom, then are provided some sort of simulation or exam to prove they’ve learned the material, and then practice driving with an instructor behind the wheel of a real, live car. There’s a big difference in the type of person the public likely wants to be on the road with; someone who has read about driving is a much different driver than someone who actually has driven.

Undergraduates in journalism programs have a number of places in which they can acquire skills: the classroom, in student-produced media including broadcast and print options, via conferences and workshops, through independent learning, internships, and so on.

Information processing theory tells us that “a key assertion of information-processing theory is that our cognitive resources are limited — we can’t pay attention to everything. We can only learn a small fraction of the information that we encounter” (Baran & Davis, 2012, p. 279). Applying that thought academically and experientially, we can deduce that journalism students are able to obtain a large amount of information regarding professional skills during their academic careers, but may not be able to truly acquire either because of the volume of information presented. What that means to individual students depends on a number of factors.

Rakow frames the current debate among educators regarding what to teach as one that encourages teaching skills for the profession as well as a need for teaching professionalism, which tend to coincide or conflict depending on which of these functions the outlets for learning assume (Cohen, 2001). Instead of taking a professionalism-versus-theory framing of the discussion, the issue remains that all potential outlets in which students can learn should teach them skills that train them to “perform concrete tasks for employers” while balancing principles
of professionalism (Cohen, 2001, p. 12). Cohen points out that as an academic professional teaching area, the undergraduate journalism experience focuses teaching entry-level skills “rather than the advanced domains of knowledge and skills required in professions such as medicine, law or architecture” (Reese & Cohen, 2000, p. 14). While schools of thought and academic practice have shifted in the last decade toward more holistic, theory-based curriculum in numerous U.S. undergraduate programs, the need for hands-on experience to practice said theory and skills has not abated. Enter student media, which can provide the hands-on education.

Claussen (2006) asserts that print journalism students increasingly seem uninterested in learning from experiences in student media, internships and other seemingly hands-on learning environments, putting a burden on such programs to provide a meaningful experience for those who choose to participate in student media. In 2000, Reese and Cohen advocated for such cohesion among the student experience, calling for education reform, discussion and practice of critical thinking through active and experiential learning, media literacy and service (2000, p. 225). The bottom line, says Glenn Frankel, director of the journalism school at the University of Texas at Austin, is that administrators at universities and colleges shifting to provide a meaningful experience for a changing industry face a “moving target … no one knows how this will turn out” (Hu, 2012, p. 10).

This study intends to provide perspective on a critical question in evaluating whether student news media provide a service of value to their key audience: journalism students.

How much learning can take place when attempting to balance both learning skills and practicing is a question facing educators whose face-to-face time with students is limited to a traditional three-hour, in-person course. In many fields of study, educators are encouraged to find ways to provide experiential learning as a way to develop student skills for changing work
environments. Writes Southard in her 1988 paper urging educators to create meaningful experiences in the classroom that mimic projects and field experience, “Studying the theory and gaining hands-on application of the theory (experiential learning within the classroom) only partially prepares students to assume their roles as technical communicators in business, industry, and government. Because students complete all these projects as students within the academic setting, even when they prepare these documents for clients outside the university, they do not acquire experience functioning in the corporate environment” (p. 157). She’s describing this for the STEM-field audience but the call to action is applicable to any industry, including journalism.

For example, Adams (2008) found graduates from journalism programs had varying understanding of convergence and couldn’t clearly define it, indicating an inconsistency in how professors discuss and teach the topic, as well as a discrepancy in skills strengths acquired. Further, Adams found nearly two-thirds of respondents hadn’t been required to take a course in convergence issues (2008, p. 85). If multimedia training is a necessity as role-consolidation becomes the norm in the field of journalism, as demonstrated in previous chapters, the opportunity for academic and student media professionals is to provide hands-on experiences to develop such skills.

Student media experiences vary; some student newspaper content is tied directly to academic assignments, while other student newspapers operate completely separate from administrative oversight. The spectrum of operation and oversight is wide. Both provide a hands-on experience in the production of newspapers and exposure to likeminded people, real-world interactions with sources, and exposure to deadlines and consequences.
Experiential Learning in Student Newsrooms

Applying Rogers’ theory of information diffusion, which shows that influence dictates the rate at which an innovation or piece of information — in our case, learning — infiltrates an audience (Rogers, 1995), we can deduce that the student newsroom provides a rich opportunity for learning specific skills. Much of that is related to exposure to said skills or technology. In fact, Garrison states, “there needs to be enough users to make the innovation appealing and useful to other potential users” (2001, p. 223). Learning in the classroom setting, some hands-on and some not, is not the same as the student media experience in which adoption of technology and specific skill sets breeds a desire among the student group to grow its skill set. The ability to reach critical mass for the adoption of a technique or skill set might be more readily achieved in the higher-stakes student media environment.

In her 1999 essay, Helen Ubinas — then a city reporter at The Hartford Courant since 1994 — recounts how she got into journalism after being told to major in anything but journalism. She mentions her classes and what she learned — the basics — but extolled for the majority of the essay how her hands-on experience at “both at the school paper and in my internships that was so valuable” (Ubinas, 1999, p. 17).

Says Jason DeRusha, a broadcast reporter and weekend anchor in Minnesota: “Schools don’t know how to teach this (social media reporting).” They’re busy as it is teaching the fundamentals. “But now, how to write for hyper-conversational social media? That’s a different animal” (Hu, 2012, p. 11).

A number of academic programs have incorporated experiential learning to enhance the basics. Such project-oriented experiences have included working with city newspapers to produce in-depth stories, providing course credit for internships, and creating mechanisms for
students to work in teams. One such project based on the Freedom of Information Act was the subject of a case study in 2005. According to the authors: “While most scholars agree that community-based teaching and research projects should not be seen as a panacea for all deeply rooted social problems, they generally agree that such projects fulfill a number of educational and social objectives. Those include active and collaborative learning, interpersonal perspective-taking, respect for diversity, critical thought, and reflection, intellectual activities intended to awaken and enhance critical consciousness” (Simon & Sapp, 2006, p. 133). The study showed the FOI project changed student attitudes, resonating as an experience they would not forget: “Experience in things like rejection in getting information helped shape experience/memory and focus” (Simon & Sapp, 2006, p. 143).

There is a tendency for a person’s background to affect how he or she sees the world (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p. 78). Applied to student journalists entering the professional realm, particularly as new media turns from pervasive to the norm, means the new graduating journalism students should be savvy in ways older, more traditionally trained journalists are not, based purely on their personal experiences with new media. But Maier found “though entry-level reporters today often possess computer skills, apparently they lack the experience and insight needed to turn complex data into news stories” (Maier, 2000, p. 105-106). Maier goes on to state, based on his computer-assisted reporting survey: “Consistent with diffusion principles, the findings underscore the importance of information flow and peer example in technology transfer” (2000, p. 106). The student media experience focuses on peer-to-peer learning. It creates a network of peers in practice that allow late adopters to see successful implementation of those early adopters in the student media environment. “According to diffusion theory, new ideas at this stage of adoption take hold through interpersonal networks,” writes Maier (2000, p. 106).
This is important to remember as student journalists learn to transfer their personal use of technology in the professional sense in the newsroom.

Singer’s findings show something similar: that interpersonal communication channels are of primary importance in the diffusion of convergence among the four newsrooms she interviewed. This is a critical point when considering the opportunities the student media environment provides in hands-on and interpersonal skills development and diffusion of skills (Singer, 2004, p. 16).

Challenges to Journalism Education

Traditional journalists often follow a line of training and education that leads to expertise that mimics that of other professional domains, like medicine, science or law. In this traditional line of knowledge acquisition, knowledge and skills are acquired in a classroom, practiced in a sort of “apprenticeship” and then brought to a professional setting (Ericsson & Towne, 2010). In the cases of many journalists, the journalism classroom is where cognitive skills — mechanics of journalistic writing, basics of interviewing and photography, and law and ethics, among others — are learned. In these settings, students may practice those skills, but not always at the level of consistency that will push students to the imperative associative level of skills acquisition because of limited in-class time and other time constraints for the most basic of courses.

Enrollment surveys indicate that despite increases in the number of students studying such courses, the universities educating the hundreds of thousands of journalism and mass communication students face issues including decreasing budget (from 36.7 percent of respondents) and the need for new faculty and courses (13.8 percent of respondents), and emerging technology (8.0 percent of respondents) (Vlad, Becker & Kazragis, 2011).
Perhaps most revealing is the authors’ conclusion that “certainly the biggest long-term challenge facing these administrators is adaptation of their curricula to the evolving labor market and to the needs of society generally” (Vlad, Becker & Kazragis, 2011, p. 312).

Enter student media, or a professional internship, as a crucial part of a student journalist’s journey to obtaining expertise. Student media typically provides ample opportunity for practical applications of cognitive skills in a partially supervised setting. Expertise theory tells us such repeated application of “knowledge and rules efficiently in professional contexts” aids in building a key component of expertise: intuition (Ericsson & Towne, 2010). In a journalist’s case, practicing skills and intuition allows for the reporter to not have to focus on basic steps of conducting an interview (such as questioning how one conducts an interview or responding to a reluctant source), instead allowing for deeper thinking and reasoning abilities while conducting the actual interview. Student media and internships provide a valuable step between the classroom and professional expertise at a pace that can change as needed and respond to industry needs. However, Ericsson and Towne point out that a huge challenge in expertise theory is how identifying and measuring skill sets that are more general can be beneficial toward developing “superior expert performance” in work settings (2010, p. 412).

An additional critical function of student media is to help students identify meaning to the occupation. “If journalism culture is constituted through practice,” Niblock writes, “journalists themselves are well placed to explain how they negotiate their shifting practices and contexts and the impact they have on journalism values” (2007, p. 23).

Much research related to student media summarizes a student journalist’s experiences while he or she is practicing journalism within the student media realm (Filak, 2012; Filak & Reinardy, 2011). In addition, reference materials often are dated or focus on specific skill sets,
not how they fit into a larger context (Kanigel, 2012). Kanigel points this out in her own forward: “Student newspapers are training grounds for journalists, yes, but they are also boot camps for life. Your campus newsroom may end up the most valuable classroom you have during your college years,” (Kanigel, 2012, p. xiii). Few scholars have approached student media in the U.S., which could limit perspective on the direct links between professional work and student experiences.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to provide a current snapshot of how recent graduates from Texas higher education institutions perceive and use the skills they have learned in the college newspaper environment.

Texas was selected for a number of reasons. Home to 163 colleges, 108 of which are public and 55 of which are private, in metropolitan and rural communities, Texas offers a variety of types of institutions from which to draw participants. Of those colleges, 68 are members of the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association, the leading body for student media within the state. To be a member, an institution must have at least one form of student media (newspaper, website, broadcast, and others).

Using a qualitative questionnaire (See Appendix A for the questionnaire) and in-depth interviews allowed for depth in responses from alumni who graduated from Texas universities with some experience working for their student newspapers or other student media. This study focuses on the recent graduates’ personal experiences in skills acquisition and use, thus requiring a targeted approach that focuses on fewer individuals rather than responses that could be generalized to a larger population. The open-ended questionnaire was distributed by email and allowed for anonymous responses. Participants could identify themselves if they chose to participate in a follow-up interview. Participants for in-depth interviews were selected based on the themes that arose as data collection took place. Because the target participants for this study potentially were scattered throughout the United States, using a qualitative questionnaire and recorded phone or Skype interviews allowed more open and candid participation.
Participants were recruited using a snowball approach. The Texas Intercollegiate Press Association, the largest press association within the state of Texas with a membership of 68 two-year and four-year collegiate institutions, agreed to distribute requests for student information to advisers of member schools. The researcher also sent individual requests for student names and email addresses to the advisers of the 68 student newspapers with membership in the association. Follow-up requests were made weekly in March and April. Advisers had the option to send the link to the survey to their former students. The researcher acknowledges that method could lead to self-selection by the advisers to those students who are most successful or would most praise their experience in student media. A recruitment request to advisers also was made during face-to-face contact with advisers during the April 2013 TIPA convention.

Participants are defined as graduates who earned a bachelor’s or associate’s degree from a Texas college or university from January 2012 to December 2012 and who had worked at least one semester with a student media organization. The time frame allows the responses to reflect the most recent experiences such alumni face in seeking a job and using skills acquired via student media. The study examined participants who applied or practiced skills in college and who have potential to be practicing their skills in the field. Recipients of associate degrees were included based on anecdotal knowledge of community newspapers that look to their area’s community colleges to staff their newsrooms.

Using an electronic questionnaire distributed in this method carried several benefits and drawbacks. Participants could complete it at their convenience, allowing for time to think critically about their answers and provide meaningful answers. The questionnaire asked for respondents to consider consenting to an in-depth interview, which was used to further analyze their individual answers. Because the research intent is to provide a snapshot of real-world
experiences, this method proved more useful than focusing on graduates from a single institution. In addition, the physical locations of each respondent were considered; because potential participants could be scattered in newsrooms across the country, individual in-person interviews would have been difficult to conduct. The researcher did not have travel funds to accommodate the widespread participant group; however, telephone interviews were substituted for the selected in-person interviews. Interview subjects were selected based on themes that emerged during data collection; if a consenting interview participant seemed to fit a theme that applied to the group’s responses, that participant was contacted. Three in-depth interviews were conducted.

Limitations of these methods exist. A questionnaire sent via email does not allow participants to respond spontaneously to probing questions, nor does it allow for immediate follow-up questions from the researcher. In-depth interviews could be valuable, particularly when interviews are face-to-face, in providing nonverbal cues to accompany responses. However, because the research intent is to gather the experiences from graduates from multiple institutions, in-depth interviews would limit sample size to those of convenience, such as those only that can be performed near the researcher. Conducting phone interviews allowed the researcher to reach interviewees outside her immediate area.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Employees at twelve of the 68 universities and colleges contacted responded to the request for graduates’ names and contact information, a response rate of 17.6 percent. Advisers provided contact information for 89 alumni who graduated within the calendar year 2012. Of those students, 20 completed the questionnaire (a 22.4 percent response rate; respondents are described in Appendix B) and nine offered to be interviewed. An equal number of respondents were from four-year public (n=9) and four-year private schools (n=9), and two respondents indicated they graduated from a two-year public institution (Represented institutions are listed in Appendix C). Ten different Texas institutions are represented in the results. Of the 20 respondents, 14 indicated they had majored in journalism or a communication field, with one of those respondents indicating a broadcast major. Others majored in accounting, business administration, psychology, film, English communication arts, or sociology. Of the 20 respondents, 11 indicated they had found a job in journalism (reporter, editorial assistant, copy editor, developer/interaction designer, reporter/designer) after graduation. Data for this study was collected from February 2013 to April 2013, defining the range of time participants have had to find work after graduation before participating with this study between two and a half months and about 10 months. Two of those 11 are working in broadcast. Others indicated they are attending graduate school (five); one indicated working in market research; one indicated working at a fast-food restaurant; one indicated working in human resources; and one indicated working as a receptionist. Seventeen of the 20 indicated they are satisfied or very satisfied with their current jobs.
What follows are summarized responses to each of the questions participants could choose to respond to.

Upon Graduation, What Journalism Skills Were You Most Confident You Had? Why?

Respondents described writing, research, and editing as the journalism skills they had the most confidence in upon graduating. Several mentioned organizational and management skills among those skills, while few referenced more technical skills, such as photography and design, which both usually require knowledge of specific software, like Adobe Photoshop or InDesign. Of note is that only two respondents brought up reporting specifically when describing skills they were confident in upon graduation, while many stated writing and research as skills. Writing and research often are seen are part of the reporting process. Two of the students who referenced specific skills related to copy editing and web development are working in those specific roles now.

While the variety of skills referenced isn’t unusual with a group such as this, it should be noted that only a handful respondents said they felt confident in specific skills editors associate with the Internet: social media, multimedia reporting and data and online interaction.

Respondents attributed their confidence to opportunities to practice the skills mentioned. Wrote respondents:

- I was confident I had these skills because I had been exhibiting them for the past three years. (P4G4)
- My extensive experience in student media led to a lot of internships in reporting, so I was given a lot of opportunities to improve my skills in professional settings. (Pr4G6)
- Working in journalism helped me be more confident in reaching out to people for an interview, so personal connections became easier to do. (P4G15)
- I spent the last two years of college in straight online production and development. (P4G19)
• I was most confident in my design and copy-editing skills because of the training I received at my student publication paired with some courses and training at state conferences. (P4G14)

When You Graduated, Which Skills Did You Highlight to Potential Employers?

Respondents indicated, overwhelmingly, that they highlighted a variety of skills to employers, rather than a set of skills related to a specific role within a newsroom. For example, those who said they felt strongest in writing, researching and editing told employers about skills in design and photography as well. Specific descriptions included the terms versatility and diversity, as well as experience working under a deadline:

• I stressed my ability to do what I mentioned in the previous question and tailored my online portfolio to include my strongest writing, photography and design. I have a natural ability to connect with others, so I highlighted that as well. (Pr4G12)

• My knowledge of InDesign, editing layouts, managing writers, finding stories, and writing stories. (Pr4G17)

Additionally, respondents highlighted interpersonal skills to employers: collaboration with people, communication among a team, managing projects (examples included such as developing a complete story package from start to finish), and delegating tasks. Such references were common among respondents who indicated they had served in a leadership capacity in their student media environment.

When technology such as software or specific platforms, e.g., mobile, was referenced, responses were specific and narrow. Skills mentioned included use of Adobe products InDesign and Photoshop from students who did not state they had confidence in those skills upon graduation. Absent from nearly all responses was the use of social media as either a reporting tool or a content distribution platform. In addition, specific web skills were notably absent; five respondents briefly referenced the concept of multiplatform reporting, and only one used that
specific term. This respondent indicated his current job is in web development for a professional newspaper.

Describe How You Demonstrated Those Skills to Potential Employers

Table 1

How Respondents Demonstrated Their Skills to Potential Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On my resume</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through work samples</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During my interview</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through a test</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the job</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this question is a quantitative question intended to provide context for the following several questions, the three participants who were interviewed credited their experience in student media with giving them something concrete to include on their resumes, including leadership/management experience as editors of their college newspapers. The experience, they said, helped them describe specific situations in which they demonstrated sound journalistic judgment and skills. It also helped them develop work samples that were timely and relevant, which they also used to demonstrate their skill set to potential employers. One interviewee (P4G2) said he experienced a number of “firsts” during his time as a college journalist for his student newspaper, such as covering his first news story even though he was from a sports background, following a story’s development from start to finish, and covering his
first big game. He highlighted those to employers using all three methods — on his resume, during his interview and through his work samples.

Describe Your Approach to Looking for a Job After Graduation

Respondents overwhelmingly relied on Internet searches and connections made through working in student media to search for a job in journalism after graduation. Of note, though, is the time they gave themselves to search for a job both before and after graduation. Several indicated they began searching for jobs after graduation, which could have delayed their knowledge of what types of positions were available and the skills needed in time to acquire them before graduation.

Of note was the passive nature of several responses. Few respondents indicated an aggressive approach to finding role-specific positions such as a designer or web developer, others took a less aggressive approach or put their hopes into one position:

- I had already made a connection with [newspaper’s name has been omitted] after an internship I had during high school. During the last month before graduation, I asked about any openings. Since there were none at the time, I decided to pursue a master’s degree. [This respondent (P2G7) did not look for work elsewhere.]

- I emailed all of the people I met through conferences and reminded them I was graduating and looking for a job. [This respondent (Pr4G8) used email as a primary means of communication.]

Another (P4G14) widened his search from a specialty area to a more generalized position: “At first I focused solely on design and copy editing positions, combined positions, but after a while I started to look into other things I may not necessarily be strong in but have strong clips for, like reporting. I was semi-aggressive at the beginning, and then really aggressive when I felt like I wasn’t applying enough.”
Overall, the job-search process seemed to originate with web-based searches and e-mail correspondence, as well as rely on networking through professors and advisers to connect graduates with potential employers. Respondents, on the whole, did not seem to have a strategy or plan for their job searches.

Please Describe Your Experience in Looking for a Job After Graduation

Responses to this question fell into two camps; it appears the graduates experienced ease or frustration while searching for a job. This appears to have to do with the manner and attitude with which the graduate approached the job search.

Among those with a positive experience, two themes emerged: Graduates either immersed themselves in the job search or used their connections from previous experiential arenas (such as internships or student media) to establish ties to potential employers. Both appear to have worked in their favor.

- I secured a position before graduation, but it took months of careful research and interviews before a position was offered. (Pr4G1)
- I applied to nearly 30 companies in the first week following my graduation. I got two responses, and they were from people I networked with and who knew me through a connection, and those to responses led to interviews and job offers. (Pr4G13)

Frustration with both the length of a job search and the available positions surfaced as issues among participants. In addition, there appears to be an expectation that jobs would come to the graduates, rather than vice-versa.

- In the two months before graduation, I was disappointed that employers at the [newspaper’s name has been omitted] weren’t adamant about finding me a position. I had all the skills it required to be a reporter. I may have been a little impatient also, but I thought I’d have a job set after graduation. (P2G7)
- It was difficult looking for a job. I wasn’t prepared for the delay of response or the types of questions employers would be asking. I felt stranded in an ocean without a life raft to hold on to. (P4G14)
• Almost everyone emailed me back, but the majority said they weren’t hiring. (Pr4G8)
• Have been looking for four months but haven’t gotten even an interview. (P4G11)

Results show a clear difference in the experiences graduates had in their job searches based on attitude and approach to the search. Those who applied themselves to a strategy or used networking indicated a more positive response than those who put their eggs in one basket or loosely approached the job search.

Where Did You Acquire Skills that Helped You Get a Job After Graduation?

Respondents were asked a series of questions asking how much they felt specific opportunities to learn skills to help them get a job after graduation — their academic endeavors, the student newsroom experience, self-teaching, professional internships, networking through professors or through the student newsroom, and off-campus conferences and workshops — did so. The following are their responses; not all respondents answered all questions. The participants’ ratings are shown along the X axis in each graphic, with 0 being the least valuable and 5 being the most valuable.

The snapshot of results in Table 2 shows that graduates value the experiences they have while participating with student media, their classroom experiences and those gained through internships. By taking responses of 4 and 5 as having a positive impact on the graduates’ ability to get a job after college and any rating less than a 3 as not having a positive impact, we see that respondents overwhelmingly expressed that skills practiced in their student newspaper environment helped them get a job after graduation. Where a majority (18/19) indicated that, a minority (5/19) indicated skills acquired in the journalism classroom had as great an impact on helping the graduate secure a job. While this data should not be generalized and had varying response rates, the pictures painted demonstrate value in experiential, hands-on learning.
Table 2

*Please Rate the Following Based on How Much of the Following Helped You Get a Job After Graduation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills learned in classroom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills practiced at student newspaper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills I learned on my own</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills acquired during internship</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking through professors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking through student newspaper</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking on my own</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-campus conferences, workshops, etc.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale of 0-5: From did not help (0) to extremely helped (5)

Interviewees emphatically emphasized their desire to spend less time in the classroom and more in a working newsroom; this was a theme that ran through each interview. Each seemed to have an understanding of how the classroom experience and student media experience fit together to create multiple paths to learning and experimenting with material, each identified a disconnect between skills being emphasized in the classroom and those being used in the newsroom. One respondent (P4G4) said she could have done without attending classes at all; that
seemed to be an exaggeration of a less forcefully stated sentiment that carried through interviews and written responses.

Do You Feel Your Time in Student Media Prepared You for Your Current Job? Why or Why Not?

Nearly all respondents indicated their experiences working in student media prepared them for their current job, for a variety of reasons. While several indicated the student media workplace as a place to practice journalism-related skills, most frequent references to preparation for their current positions were related to simply working in a professional or office environment. Examples include working as a team toward a goal, immersion among professionals, and exposure to the functioning newsroom.

Student commentary underscored their thoughts:

• As an editor, I was in charge of a staff of photographers. This gave me tools and stories (for interviews) that helped get me my job. (Pr4G1)

• It was my first job in the Denton area, and they were impressed with my writing that they hired me right on spot. I don’t think I would have gotten the position if I didn’t have the clippings to back up my resume. (P2G3)

• Student Media is really the only thing that prepared me for where I am at now. I feel as if I almost could have skipped undergraduate courses completely. I also feel that my skill set is incredibly diverse and I owe it entirely to my time working with newspapers. (P4G4)

• Unlike any journalism class, I got to do hands-on work, manage people directly and see my hard work turn into a product. It was a huge learning experience in reporting, people skills, and keeping deadlines. (Pr4G6)

• My time in student media prepared me for my current job because I was able to practice journalistic skills in an educational environment where there were advisers who were constantly making suggestions to get better. (P2G7)

• Yes, I became confident in myself and my writing. (Pr4G8)

• More than anything I gained leadership experience that helped me receive a job prior to graduation. I understood how to work in a group and work environment before
entering my first job, something that set me apart from other candidates my age. This is something you can’t get from a classroom, even through group work. (Pr4G9)

- I was immersed among professionals because of the events I covered. I am an aspiring sports writer, and I covered many events at Baylor that were also covered by professionals. I talked with them, made friends, and tried to see what they did that made them successful. (Pr4G12)

- Absolutely yes. It taught me how to function in high stress situations and how to overcome technological mishaps. It also taught me how to address situations that are not always easy to talk about. (P4G15)

- Yes, because it provided a project outlet for learning and practicing elements of web design and basic development. (P4G19)

- Yes. My time in student media exposed me to parts of the newspaper/media that I didn’t know had existed before. If it wasn’t for my work in student media, I know that I wouldn’t be where I am today. (Pr4G9)

Overall, the ability to practice practical skills in a professional environment appears to have produced positive experiences for graduates, who apply those experiences to their current jobs in and out of journalism.

Many Student Media Programs Believe They Must Teach Students “How to Do It All” to Prepare Them for Jobs in Journalism. What are Your Thoughts on That?

Participants indicated both that their student media experience prepared them to be ready to “do it all,” meaning perform a variety of tasks or demonstrate skill in more than one role in the newsroom, and that having the ability to do so was beneficial in the current professional journalism environment. At the same time, answers seemed to have an undercurrent that questioned whether that was the right approach; where being able to do it all is good, it appears confidence and familiarity in a specific area of interest, such as reporting, design or web development were among things desired among participants. They said:

- As journalists today, we are required to have some knowledge on everything from writing to operating a camera. School is the place to pick up a gadget you’ve never touched, play, fail and succeed. Obviously, you can’t teach everything to students,
especially if they don’t want to learn, but I think it’s the responsibility of the program to put opportunity in students’ hands. Then, it’s up to the student to take that opportunity, utilize their resources and make it something more than even the professor could have made it. (P2G7)

- This might not be a completely accurate theory, but it certainly doesn’t hurt — especially since many employers seem to be very attracted to the “Jack-of-all-trades,” well-rounded types of candidates. I think it really depends on which sector of the job market you’re looking to enter. (P4G4)

- Everyone should have at least one area of expertise but be competent in as many areas as possible. I’ve set probably unrealistic goals of trying to not just be a jack of all trades but master each of the areas of my skill set. (Pr4G12)

- At a larger publication, the ability to focus on one specialty is more likely than it is at a smaller publication. I don’t think I would have been offered a position if I didn’t know how to shoot my own photos, design, copy edit, use social media and report. During my interview with the [newspaper’s name has been omitted], the managing editor was more impressed by the thought that I could basically put together an entire issue with little help from others because of my stretch of skills, and I use most of my skills. I think it’s important for journalists to have a wide array of skills to work with even if it’s in small quantities. Small publications tend to have more time to help develop those skills further, so one strong focus and a set of intermediary skills is helpful. (P4G14)

- I heard a lot about ‘convergence’ over my four years in college and that word could not have more accurately described journalism today, or actually work in general. You have to be prepared to pick up a still camera, video camera or write an article no matter the story. I never knew what type of media I would work in, and it has proven valuable that I know the interworking of different aspects of media instead of just one trade. (Pr4G9)

One respondent (P4G19) seemed to summarize the heft of responses: “I believe that student media programs should provide an entryway into every aspect of journalism and let students decide a specialty from there.”

Responses indicate a desire to have student media provide options to practice as many skills as a student would want. An underlying theme seems to be a student’s motivation to do the work in different areas; if a student has an option to, for example, learn how to shoot video while reporting as a base job, it’s incumbent on the student to do so to gain that skill. Interviewees indicated frustration with fellow students who did not approach student media work as
enthusiastically as they did; they felt a clear victory of sorts over their peers who did not take part in student media at all. Motivation remained a theme in each of those interviews. Respondents appear to share the idea that being well-rounded in today’s market is important.

Another School of Thought is that Student Media Programs Should Allow Students to Develop Specialties

While respondents seemed to long for the option to develop a specialty, they tend to strongly support developing a broad set of skills while in student media. The responses to this and the previous question tend to mimic the issues prevalent among professional, practicing media professionals: Developing a specific skill or skills relevant to a specific role allows for depth, but employers indicate they prefer a broader skill set. Say respondents:

- It’s good to specialize — to be an expert in one area is always valued. However, multiple skills are desired in the workforce. (P4G20)

- Students should learn one primary skill. This would be their primary skill and focus, but I firmly believe, in my experience so far, that a set of intermediary skills is essential for success in future graduates. (P4G14)

- I would use more of my personal time to specialize in an area of interest but would rather be taught in various fields so I feel more competitive to others in my field. (Pr4G13)

- I never thought I would say it, but I am all about convergence now. I think developing one key skill is important, but there needs to be focus on everything. You can’t be mediocre at each focus, but you also can’t be great at each focus. Having a focus in addition to knowing a little about each skill seems obvious. (Pr4G9)

- This is not a good idea. Employers are looking for journalists who have at least some knowledge in everything. Reporters are now at times responsible for taking their own photos. News is going out faster and if one person can get the job done and get it done fast, then that’s who they’ll hire. (P2G7)

- Students should be able to do everything. Many media jobs are converging and many reports have to get the photo, write the story and conduct a news report themselves. Having a variety of skills in the journalism field makes you more valuable to an employer. (P2G3)
Respondents also indicated that having a specialty is valuable, although whose responsibility it is to motivate and help develop that specialty was not indicated in responses. Responses also indicated a bit of an oxymoron: Focusing on everything means focusing on nothing.

If You Feel You Have an Expertise in any Journalistic Skill, Please Describe How You Obtained It

Responses to this question revealed two issues: that respondents either felt confident in a specialty and found a means to practice this while still in college, or that they saw having expertise as having broad experience in varying areas within the field of journalism.

Those who indicated they developed an expertise also indicated they practice it today; for example, a respondent (P4G16) who feels strongly about his expertise in copy editing said he obtained the skill set by working on his student newspaper in that area for several semesters, as well as obtaining internships in which he practiced copy editing. He is working as a copy editor in his first job after college. Another example is a respondent who worked to specialize in political reporting (Pr4G6). She says her student newspaper experience allowed her to create a political editor position in her newsroom. In that position, she gained experience, which included hosting a mayoral debate, that she uses to “to maintain a political blog, which has grown from a college project to a full website with a second editor and five writers.” Other areas of expertise declared by respondents include research, reporting, design or web development. In nearly every case, the respondent described some level of self-teaching that supplemented the work being done in student media, as well as the drive to spend “personal time” developing an area of expertise within journalism. In one case, a respondent (P4G14) who said he had expertise in design is actually working as a reporter in his first job out of college.
Among those who did not single out a skill set within journalism, respondents appear to view the acquisition of a variety of skills in journalism as expertise in itself. These recent graduates view their work in journalism as an expertise different from their peers in other industries, not as a comparison among those also in the field. It also could be a remnant of the approach taken by his or her student media program; as we know, a person’s background shapes his or her perspective. In one case, a respondent (P4G2) said he simply had not developed an expertise yet. When asked to elaborate, the respondent said he hadn’t yet had a chance; his current job calls on him to use nearly all the skills he developed in college – reporting, writing, editing, photography and layout – because he is on a staff of three at his newspaper, a weekly covering a rural area in Texas. Any expertise or professional development he would like to obtain must be done on his own time. He said he doesn’t have that time because he has taken on three roles – reporter, photographer and designer – that used to be separate in his newsroom.

Yet another respondent (P4G15) said this: “I’m experienced at all and master of none. I chose to broaden my skills to achieve experience that can be honed later. Communication is the one that applies to all fields I am interested in and that is one that I do best.” That seems to be the theme among those without a declared expertise specifically tied to news production: student media provided an outlet to practice skills needed in nearly any profession, such as writing, editing, critical thinking, and such transferrable skills as a package seem to make up an expertise for the participants.

How Do You Feel Student Media Could Have Better Prepared You for Your Current Job?

Graduates overwhelmingly credit student media with providing a rich environment for personal and professional growth. Two areas in which respondents agree student media could
have better prepared them for their current jobs are in providing a stronger network of professionals and encouraging students to step outside of their comfort zones, whether in content production or in getting external experience through internships:

- Student media helped me in that, as I said before, it was a small workplace and a small step into the ‘real world.’ I think something that should of provided more focus is that advisors don’t realize students need to network and work in college outside of student media to have a job after graduation. I worked for student media for three years and had an internship during two of those years. Advisors didn’t always understand that I couldn’t always put student media 100% first. But the reality is the college newspaper and news station weren’t going to offer me full-time jobs after college so I had to go after it in other ways. Of course they provided recommendations and helped in the job search but I don’t think there is anything more valuable then working first hand for a potential employer (an internship in my case). (Pr4G9)

- My two-year community college said nothing about internships. It wasn’t until the summer before my last semester that I got an internship. These are important and employers want graduates to have more than one. (P2G7)

- I wish I had been made to step out of my comfort zone. Since working at my current job, I’ve covered a number of personal “firsts” — first murder, first crime scene, first student death, first interview with family members of someone who recently died, etc. (P4G2)

- I wish I experimented more with other areas of the newspaper, such as design or photography. If I didn’t like it, it would have only been a semester. (P4G16)

- Student media has an ability to “go out on a limb” and try new things, unlike most professional publications. While looking at what the professionals are doing or how they’ve covering or what they’re building for a specific story, I believe a student media org has a responsibility to ask, ‘Because of what we ARE, what could we be doing and how could we be covering this in ways that they aren’t?’ (P4G19)

Upon further discussion during interviews with participants, it became clear that students sometimes became dependent on student media to tell them what to learn and how to do it. At the same time, respondents indicated, student media needs to challenge upper-level students to experiment once they get past learning the basics. That sometimes means encouraging them to get out of the office and into the professional world earlier than the student or adviser would like, according to interviews. One interviewee (Pr4G6) said that once she had take in all of the
established experiences available in her student media environment, she was able to develop a position unique to her interests and continue to challenge herself while growing her skills. The encouragement of her adviser as well as his finding the resources for her to do so enhanced her experience and made her more marketable, she said.

How Do You Feel Student Media Could Have Better Prepared You for the Job Search Experience?

Networking with media professionals is a critical need in the job search experience and that student media is positioned to provide that for its student journalists. Some respondents indicated their media programs provided such opportunities through workshops and tours of area media outlets, although many indicated more in terms of quantity and quality would have been beneficial. With that in mind, several respondents indicated the job search was not discussed in their environment. The focus, instead, was on producing the product and building skills. Say respondents:

- Maybe by setting up speaker events or networking events with media professionals in the area. These types of events have been very helpful for me, during my graduate level studies. My Student Media department didn't do anything at all towards helping me with a job search. (P4G4)

- They could have done a better job connecting me to internships while in college, but I'm not sure that's the role of student media. I think a more realistic approach would be to develop a strong connection with the career center on campus and have events for staff geared at preparing you for writing tests and journalism-specific job interviews. (Pr4G6)

- I honestly was blessed/lucky/however you define fortunate to earn my job. I had a professor reach out to me and direct me to somebody, which doesn't always happen. I really didn't know where to look for a job, and while we are expected to be responsible adults and figure out things on our own, we really weren't shown much of the job search process in college. A journalism-specific class or lecture series or something could have helped that. (Pr4G12)

- I think student media should help students start building professional websites and networking sites from the first day they become staff. Direct them where they can get
their domain name and help them sign up and develop a website to showcase their skills. I waited to the last minute to do this, and it something all students should be developing now. (P4G14)

- The student media org that I was a part of had a very strong professional focus. However, few of the professionals that were brought in for workshops were web-oriented. (P4G19)

These graduates see student media as responsible for providing deeper skills training for all areas, not just fundamentals like research, writing and editing, as well as step-by-step instruction for starting their careers. This could be because of the evolving nature of journalistic endeavors or a fear instigated by the discussion regarding the changing industry.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Participating with student media had a significant impact on the collegiate and professional experiences of the 20 graduates who participated in this study. In the questionnaire responses and interviews, participants were both supportive and critical of their college media experience while crediting the experience with aiding them in finding jobs in journalism or providing transferrable skills that they use in other fields. It must be noted that the positivity reflected in responses could be attributed to the idea that graduates who had a meaningful experience, positive or negative, were more likely to respond to a questionnaire. It also should be noted that a number of email addresses provided by advisers were to university accounts for the former students, who may have abandoned use of those addresses after graduation. Both could have impacted the type and number of responses given.

RQ1: Where Do Student Journalists View Skills Acquisition Taking Place?

College media advisers sometimes hear from students that what they learn in their coursework and practices in the newsroom don’t connect in a meaningful way for the student. For example, students at The Shorthorn, where I advise the student newspaper, frequently complain that their coursework and their work experience in our digital newsroom is not on the same page — that they are hearing two messages about expectations about the same journalism industry. With that in mind, this study sought to gather student perspectives on this topic from graduates from multiple institutions with different types of relationships among their academic and student media programs. Just where do students feel they acquire skills? Participants responded to a series of questions asking how much they felt specific opportunities to learn skills
to help them get a job after graduation did so. These opportunities included their academic endeavors, the student newsroom experience, self-teaching, professional internships, networking through professors or through the student newsroom, and off-campus conferences and workshops. Respondents expressed that opportunities to practice skills in hands-on environments such as student newsrooms or internships had more value to them post-graduation than more traditional learning experiences, such as journalism classes and off-campus workshops. Students also feel they aren’t getting all they need from either environment to grow their skill sets to meet their individual goals; respondents credited self-instruction or self-training among those learning opportunities that had a positive influence on their ability to find a job after college. Motivated students often will devote personal time to pursuing a skill; that is no surprise. Taken as a whole, respondents show they appreciate the variety of learning experiences they have, but place a clear value on any experiences that provide a hands-on work environment. This creates an opportunity for collaboration among currently separated academic programs and student media environments. If students value the hands-on experience more than the classroom experience, it could be an indication that curriculum should continue to evolve to involve more of such projects. It also could indicate an opportunity for collaboration among academic departments and student media organizations to address the gap that appears to reside between them. Several respondents indicated they could have done without their classes in favor of their newsroom experiences. Interviews indicate some of that value on the student media experience could come from working with like-minded peers toward the creation and publication of a product. Information diffusion theory tells us change agents are key to the adoption of information or technology; the student newsroom may provide that catalyst for skill adoption in a way that classrooms are unable to. For example, students who work in student media likely are doing so
as a commitment of their own time and motivation, whereas a required course will attract any person who needs that course to graduate, regardless of his or her motivation. Student media can more consciously provide resources for those who want to go further with independent study. Whether student perceptions that classes “aren’t necessary” is exaggeration or a deeply held belief, it’s a perception that exists and can be corrected with conscious collaboration such as co-sponsored hands-on workshops, class credit given for working on the student newspaper, or other opportunities. Awareness of this issue is critical for either area to acknowledge and address.

RQ2: What Skills Do Participants Perceive as Their Strengths Going into a Changing Media Market?

That graduates feel most confident in skills related to traditional journalism — writing, research and editing — isn’t much of a surprise. These basic tenets of journalism are the foundation upon which any storytelling resides and are practiced most often in any setting. But notable was the lack of “reporting” as a recognized skill among graduates. Reporting, by its definition, is the act of giving a spoken or written account of something that one has observed, heard, done, or investigated. Rather, respondents described parts of that whole — research, writing and editing, themselves more passive skills associated within the realm of reporting. It could be that respondents don’t see themselves as prepared reporters. It should be a concern that the majority of graduates did not indicate this as a top-viewed skill upon graduation, particularly taken with the fact several currently working primarily as reporters are those who indicated feeling stronger in other skill areas. Also of note is the lack of reference to skills closely associated with the Internet. Of the skills referenced in the introduction — things like blogging as a reporting tool, using social media, posting stories to the website — only three said they felt
confident in social media or multimedia reporting, but not both. When even a cursory review of
current journalism listings shows a need for web-based skill sets, responses from these current
graduates should indicate a need to enhance and embrace digital-based skills in the student media
environment.

At the same time, some indicated that they highlighted multiplatform reporting
experiences to potential employers. This could indicate a few things: That the graduates
participating in this study didn’t develop the multiplatform journalism skills expected of entry-
level journalists; that their student newsrooms did not create opportunities to practice such skills
on a regular enough basis for the student to feel confident in them; or that the graduate sees
“reporting” as including across multiple platforms, rendering the need to point out the digital
skills unnecessary. Interviews with several participants indicate the latter, which could impact a
job candidate’s ability to get his or her foot in the door if the skills highlighted to employers
don’t use the key words that employers use.

Also, while students identified their perceived strengths as specific, task-oriented
journalism skills (reporting, photography, page design, research, web development), several said
they highlighted cognitive skills often developed by experience to potential employers:
communication, collaboration, cultural awareness, and integrity. These skills often are found in
team-based environments in which people are working toward a common goal. In the student
newsroom, that is production of student media. The ability of student media to create an
environment that rewards and emphasizes critical thinking, teamwork and adaptability as well as
the chance to practice both task-oriented and collaboration-oriented skills has value to students
going into the field, according to interviewees and participants. As roles continue to be
consolidated in professional newsrooms, student media should consider adapting their operations
to mirrors their professional peers in legacy and new media.

This group of graduates seemed to struggle to understand the difference between a broad
skill set and an expertise in a specific area. By definition, expertise refers to expert-level skill or
knowledge in a particular field. Graduates seemed to interpret expertise in two ways: either
having developed a specialty within the journalism field or having developed a broad set of skills
within journalism as a field. Either way, the responses indicated that the feeling or perception of
having an expertise is based on the ability to and amount of practice a student had, whether that
was with a particular skill set, such as web development, or the broader skills associated with
journalism. The researcher acknowledges that the question could have been worded to use the
phrase “specialty,” as used in follow-up questions; the question was designed to find out how the
word “expertise” is interpreted among recent graduates. Students who indicated an expertise
such as copy editing or web development are working in those task-specific roles within their
current work environments. Some who indicated an expertise in design or page layout are using
those skills, but not as directly; their employment situations include using that skill in addition to
others.

Graduates indicated they demonstrated their skills and/or expertise in a number of ways:

- Fourteen of 20 indicated they demonstrated the skills on the job, and six of 20
  indicated they’d been administered a test as part of the hiring process. Those
  responses indicate that employers expect to see on-site performance of skills prior to
  hiring.

- Seventeen of 20 indicated they demonstrated their acquired skills and strengths
  through traditional means: Both on their resumes and during an interview, whether it
  was by phone, in-person or otherwise. This indicates that employers still wish to see
  evidence of work experience, whether described on a resume or through descriptions
  of experiences in an interview. Each interview participant in this study said that being
  able to express both their successes and failures in student media during an interview
  with their first employer out of college aided them in getting the job.
• Fifteen of 20 indicated they used work samples to demonstrate their skills to potential employers. Published work samples remain a staple of any application package to a newsroom, and the student media environment clearly provides a means to establish that presence.

RQ3: How Do Participants Feel Student Media Positioned Them for the Workplace?

While graduates agree that student media allowed them to practice basic journalistic skills in a team-oriented, task-specific environment, they also agreed student media could have done much more to prepare them for the workplace: providing more opportunities for digital-oriented work; providing more opportunities to get involved with multiple aspects of producing the newspaper or its website; and providing additional networking with professionals in varying areas of interest in the field.

Perhaps what stood out most is the burden students put on student media professionals to connect them to opportunities in the field. Responses to questions about how student media positioned graduates for the workplace were positive in describing the opportunities to learn how to work in an environment that relies on professionalism to get the job done. But graduates also indicated a passive attitude toward applying the same tenacity and persistence encouraged in the student media environment for producing the paper to finding and applying for jobs. Those with role-specific experience — such as political/business reporting, copy editing or web development — seemed to have a stronger strategy for finding jobs. Those with more broad experience seemed to have a less structured approach to finding a position, perhaps an indication that they didn’t feel as confident in applying for a specific position as advertised because of a deficiency in one area or another, despite having “some” experience in it.

The nature of several responses indicated a frustration that student media had not done enough to prepare students for the job search itself; while the job search was discussed in terms
of preparing a resume, selecting clips, and putting together an application within a newsroom, the lack of a systematic conversation about life after the student newspaper impacted the success of a search. This perception is reality among the group of participants; it indicated a heavy reliance on advisers to connect and help shape the job search. Whether advisers see this as a burden or part of their expansive role in providing a service to students, it’s a reality to consider. The current generation of traditionally college-aged students is in the millennial generation, often referred to as the “me” generation. The generation comes with a built-in reliance on others to dictate how and when to do specific things. This became clear when one interviewee suggested student media professionals should “force” students to start an online portfolio of work samples starting in their first semester with the student newspaper, including preparing a basic resume with the student. The adviser should then follow up with the student each semester to make sure the student updates his or her portfolio each semester. This suggestion underscores the potential reliance on an adviser to create a framework and environment in which the end result is not just producing a newspaper or website, but connecting the work to what comes after college for the millennial graduate. It might be the reality student media professionals face from here out. This is an area ripe for further research; how the upcoming generation applies itself to any work environment will impact anyone working, and how the upcoming generation applies itself specifically to journalism will clearly impact the quality and type of work distributed to audiences.

Responses to questions designed to find perspective on this question included also described needing structure and training for more web-oriented work samples and providing an opportunity to try as many different jobs as possible to give broad experience to the staffer. Participants seemed to have a hard time answering the question of whether students should be
trained to have a specialty area — such as reporting, copy editing, design or web development — or be trained as generalists. This isn’t surprising, given that the same question is going unanswered in professional news organizations. However, participants seemed satisfied getting the buffet treatment of skills in college; that is, offer as many different options as possible to allow the student to pick and choose the options that best suit his or her goals. Many student media professionals could cringe at such a statement — how would one structure a work environment in which a revenue-generating product must be completed each day. A suggestion would be to consider that not all graduates will attempt to find a job in journalism in a traditional newsroom environment. Numerous nonprofit news organizations, niche blogs and websites, and even traditional newsrooms are creating work opportunities that call for unique layering of skills and interests rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. It’s incumbent on student media professionals to find a way to produce the core product — the newspaper or website — while also producing graduates who are prepared for the work environments that await them. Doing so will require a new order of thinking, perhaps one that establishes levels of competency for students to achieve a basic set of journalism skills, then opportunities to “select their entrée,” or specialty. Participants in this study seemed to long for such an environment.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Without doubt, journalism educators face the daunting task of teaching college students to scale a mountain armed with enough supplies to keep them mobile without weighing them down when the landscape shifts. What those skills are and how students acquire them will remain an important discussion among those in journalism education.

This study reveals two issues that can affect whether journalism graduates with student media experience will summit the mountain by earning a job in journalism or a related field. Participants in this study did not feel confident about their digitally oriented journalism skills upon entering the workforce, which now expects candidates to obtain such skills prior to employment. Instead, their confidence is in traditional skill sets expected of journalists in legacy, or print, media. In addition, this study suggests a dependency on student media professionals to provide students with opportunities to develop skills beyond fundamentals, being a resource for deep dives into specific skill areas and putting external pressure on the student to motivate him or her to actually take the opportunities provided. Such a dependency places the student media adviser and the instructors in the role of “change agents” along Rogers’ information and innovation diffusion curve. Such an active role is one that student media advisers must acknowledge if they are to reach and engage the generation of students referred to as “the Millennial Generation.”

Findings reveal this group of 2012 graduates from 10 Texas institutions left college armed with academic credentials, a bit of newspaper production experience, and little to no confidence in its digital journalism skills. While graduates credit their acquisition of journalism and leadership skills to their student media experiences, the skills they feel most confident in
upon graduation were not directly tied to digital skills. In addition, while graduates felt they had an advantage over their peers who did not participate with student media while in college, they felt their student media experience could have done more to help prepare graduates for the process of finding a job.

That graduates did not express confidence in their digital skills challenges the assumption held by media professionals that, because traditionally college-aged students (18-25) are technologically savvy, new journalism graduates will translate personal use of innovations such as smartphones and tablets, social media and news consumption to the professional newsrooms that hire them. Employers also assume that these new employees will serve as what Rogers would call “change agents,” those who will instigate usage of technology in professional newsrooms once they are hired. But they have to get in the door, and the idea that they are not expressing confidence in skills related to digital applications could hinder that. In addition, journalism educators need more interaction with professionals to help show a need for curriculum changes. This study serves as a starting point for what could be companion longitudinal studies to explore perspectives from key participants that affect how student media can approach its role in preparing students for the current work environment. One study could take the approach of probing, on a larger scale, how journalism graduates perceive their skill sets upon graduation and what skills they actually use in entry-level positions. The companion study could provide quantifiable evidence of the skills employers desire in entry-level employees. Conducting such studies over a period of several years could demonstrate potential shifts in expectations for both employees and for student media preparing entry-level journalists.

An unintended discovery in this study was the sense of dependency that graduates have on their student media programs to develop their journalism skills and ready them for the job
search while they are still students. This group of participants appeared, for the most part, passive toward or resentful of the job search. In some cases, participants expressed an expectation that they would be given a job, rather than earn one. Participants also expressed a reliance on student media to provide opportunities to develop skills in any area of journalism they desire, with the emphasis on students needing to be motivated enough to participate with those opportunities. If Rogers’ innovation diffusion curve relies on a change agent as a key participant in the adoption and use of a technology — or a skill, as used in this study — it’s incumbent on student media to recognize its role as that change agent in a student’s skills development. This is particularly important as the Millennial Generation graduates with degrees and the student media experience into the workforce. This generation is characterized as the “look at me” generation, whether as a byproduct of highly involved, supportive parents or the technological age it grew up in (Pew Research Center, 2010). Dependency and inaction until being told to do something are hallmarks of the Millennial Generation, often defined as those born after 1980. This is of note when considering the role of student media, which is seeing this generation in its newsrooms before passing into the workforce. In previous generations of college students, change agents within student media could have been the student editors making publishing decisions. This study could tip off a shift in who the change agents are within student media; the dependency on advisers and the student media environment shown in this study poses a question about what the role of both should be to the student journalist. Future research could frame the role of student media within the generational context to answer that question.

The findings of the current study should be seen as a contribution to the body of research that exists related to the student media experience and to provide perspective on the skills in which students have the most confidence. The study identifies an opportunity for student media
advisers to consider preparing students for jobs in journalism but not in legacy newspapers. As mentioned in the literature review section of this study, thousands of journalists have been laid off from print news operations across the country. However, journalism startups such as the Texas Tribune, ProPublica and other niche publications offer opportunity to use the skills practiced in the student media environment. The findings indicate the value students place on the student media experience, and this provides a natural opportunity to rethink and reshape programs to provide the hands-on experience that can help graduates find media, not just newspaper, jobs.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE LANGUAGE
Questions were formatted electronically using Qualtrix software and sent by email to participants. They appeared in the following order, as approved by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board. The IRB-approved consent form appeared on the first screen participant encountered.

Did you major in journalism?
  • If not, what did you major and/or minor in?

Did you get a job in a journalism or a communication-related job? What is your current job? (allow for comment)
  • If not, what is your current job? (allow for comment)

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how satisfied you are with your current job.
1. Strongly dissatisfied.
2. Dissatisfied.
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
4. Satisfied.
5. Strongly satisfied.
Please explain your rate: (allow for comment)

Upon graduation, what journalism-related skills were you most confident you had? (allow for comment)
  • Why? (allow for comment)

Upon graduation, what journalism-related skills were you least confident you had? (allow for comment)
  • Why? (allow for comment)

When you graduated, which were the skills you highlighted to potential employers? (allow for comment)
  • Why? (allow for comment)

Describe how you demonstrated those skills to potential employers: (allow to check as many as apply)
1. On my resume
2. Through work samples
3. During my interview (phone, in-person or otherwise)
4. Through a test administered as part of the hiring process.
   • What type of test?
5. On the job
   • Any additional commentary? (allow for comment)
Please describe your approach to looking for a job post graduation: (allow for comment)

Please describe your experience in looking for a job post graduation? (allow for comment)

Please rank the following based on how each helped you get a job post graduation:
1) Didn’t help at all
2) Might have helped
3) Neutral
4) Helped a little
5) Definitely helped

Skills learned in my journalism classroom
Skills practiced at my student newspaper
Skills I learned on my own
Skills acquired during a professional internship
Networking through my professors
Networking through my student newspaper
Networking I did on my own
Off-campus conferences, workshops, etc.
Other (allow for comment)

What are the top three to five journalism skills you use in your current job? Describe how you use those skills. (allow for comment)

Do you feel your time in student media prepared you for your current job? Why or why not? (allow for comment)

Many student media programs believe they must teach students “how to do it all” to prepare them for the job market. What are your thoughts on that? (allow for comment)

Another school of thought is that student media programs should allow students to develop specialty skills in one area. What are your thoughts on that? (allow for comment)

If you feel you have an expertise in any journalistic skill, describe how you obtained it and how you currently use it. (allow for comment)

How do you personally feel student media could have better prepared you for your job? (allow for comment)

How do you personally feel student media could have better prepared you for the job search experience? (allow for comment)

Please provide any other commentary you would like the researcher to consider in this study. (allow for comment)
If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview, please provide your contact information.
APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS
Twenty graduates with student media experience responded to the open-ended questionnaire. Of those participants, three were interviewed by telephone. Codes for respondents within the body of this paper correspond to those listed below:

Pr4G1: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in accounting, Spanish and photography and is working as a market researcher.

P4G2: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism and is working as a reporter at a biweekly news publication.

P2G3: A graduate of a two-year public community college who majored in digital imaging technology and is working at a fast-food restaurant.

P4G4: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in business administration, minored in psychology and is now a full-time graduate student.

P4G5: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism and is working in human resources.

Pr4G6: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in journalism and is working as a freelance blogger and as public education teacher.

P2G7: A graduate of a two-year public college who majored in communication (journalism focus), minored in sociology and is working as an editorial assistant at a newspaper while attending graduate school.

Pr4G8: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in journalism, minored in women’s studies and is working as a television news producer.

Pr4G9: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in broadcast journalism and is working as a broadcast network coordinator.

Pr4G10: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in English/communication arts and is attending graduate school.

P4G11: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism and is working as a receptionist.

Pr4G12: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in journalism, minored in film and digital media, and is working as a copy editor at a large daily newspaper.

Pr4G13: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in journalism and is working in journalism (respondent did not indicate in which role).

P4G14: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism and is working as a reporter/designer at a mid-sized daily newspaper.
P4G15: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in English, minored in psychology, and is attending graduate school, where she works in the writing lab.

P4G16: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism and is working as a copy editor at a mid-sized daily newspaper.

Pr4G17: A graduate of a four-year private university who majored in English/communication arts and is attending law school.

P4G18: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism and is working as a reporter at a large daily newspaper.

P4G19: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism and communication technology and is working as a web developer at a large daily newspaper.

P4G20: A graduate of a four-year public university who majored in journalism is attending graduate school.
APPENDIX C

HIGHER-EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED
Four-year public universities
  • Stephen F. Austin University (Nacogdoches)
  • University of North Texas (Denton)
  • University of Texas-Dallas (Dallas)
  • University of Texas-San Antonio (San Antonio)
  • University of Texas-Arlington (Arlington)
  • Texas Women’s University (Denton)

Four-year private universities
  • Southern Methodist University (Dallas)
  • Texas Christian University (Fort Worth)
  • St. Mary’s University (San Antonio)

Two-year public colleges
  • Eastfield Community College (Mesquite)
APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS
Q4
Did you major in journalism? If not, what did you major and/or minor in?

Pr4G1: No; Accounting, Spanish, Photography
P4G2: Yes
P2G3: My degree from Eastfield was Digital Imaging Technology. However, working in student media did spark my interest on studying journalism.
P4G4: Major in Business Administration and minor is Psychology
P4G5: Journalism
Pr4G6: Yes.
P2G7: Communication-Journalism with a minor in Sociology
Pr4G8: Yes, News Curriculum major & Women's Studies minor
Pr4G9: Yes, Broadcast Journalism
Pr4G10: No, I majored in English-Communication Arts
P4G11: Yes
Pr4G12: Yes, minored in Film and Digital Media
Pr4G13: Yes
P4G14: Yes
P4G15: No. I earned a BA in English with minor in Psychology.
P4G16: Yes
Pr4G17: English-Communication Arts
P4G18: Yes
P4G19: Yes
P4G20: Yes
Q5
Did you get a job in journalism or a communication-related job? If so, what is your current job?
If...

Pr4G1: No; Market research
P4G2: Yes. I am a reporter at a bi-weekly publication.
P2G3: I currently work at Subway. However, prior to being hired at Subway, I worked for UNT's Office of Sustainability where I generated the online content.
P4G4: I am currently a Full-Time MBA student, with concentrations in Marketing and Strategy, at the University of Texas at Dallas
P4G5: No, I work in human resources
Pr4G6: I worked in journalism for almost a year, and then chose to take a break for two years to teach an an inner city school. I continue to freelance successfully.
P2G7: Yes, I have a part-time job as an editorial assistant at the San Antonio Express-News. I am also seeking a master's degree at Texas State University, where I teach as a graduate assistant. I teach Writing for Mass Media, a basic writing class.
Pr4G8: Yes, television news producer
Pr4G9: Yes- Broadcast Network Coordinator, Texas
Pr4G10: I am a full-time graduate student studying Global Marketing Communication and Advertising
P4G11: No. I am and have been a receptionist for 8 years.
Pr4G12: Yes, copy editor for department at Dallas Morning News
Pr4G13: Yes
P4G14: Yes, reporter/designer
P4G15: I am currently working as a graduate assistant at the Write Site at Texas Woman's University while earning my MA in English.
P4G16: Copy editor
Pr4G17: No; I am currently in law school.
P4G18: Yes
P4G19: Developer / Interaction Designer
P4G20: graduate student- UT Austin
Q11
Please rate how satisfied you are with your current job.

Pr4G1: 3
P4G2: 3
P2G3: 4
P4G4: 5
P4G5: 4
Pr4G6: 4
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 4
Pr4G9: 5
Pr4G10: 5
P4G11: 2
Pr4G12: 5
Pr4G13: 5
P4G14: 4
P4G15: 5
P4G16: 5
Pr4G17: 5
P4G18: 5
P4G19: 4
P4G20: 5
Upon graduation, what journalism skills were you most confident you had? Why?

Pr4G1: Researching, disseminating information, and converting data into relevant information for a third-party consumer
Pr4G2: Copy writing and editing
P4G3: Editing, writing a story, AP style, interview skills and layout/page design. I worked on the newspaper staff at Eastfield from 2010-2012 where I these skills.
P4G4: Managing a team, meeting deadlines, copy editing, page designing, news writing and writing very well in general. I was confident I had these skills because I had been exhibiting them for the past three years.
P4G5: Researching and writing
Pr4G6: Solid reporting skills. My extensive experience in student media led to a lot of internships in reporting, so I was given a lot of opportunities to improve my skills in professional settings.
P2G7: I attained skills in news and feature writing, photography, layout and design, editing, AP Style, managing a newspaper staff and starting a brand new journalism program.
Pr4G8: Online journalism after developing skills from student media
Pr4G9: Public Speaking
Pr4G10: Editing because I have a teaching assistant job editing student papers, as well as collaboration and idea pitching
Pr4G11: Writing and research skills and good organization skills
Pr4G12: Writing- I've been honing my writing since high school and had plenty of experience in college. Photography- I expanded my interest in photography since high school by taking class and shooting assignments for both my newspaper and class. Design- Something I feel I improved vastly in college but still have many ways to improve more.
Pr4G13: Reporting and Multimedia Reporting. They were hard but very rewarding courses.
P4G14: I was most confident in my design and copy-editing skills because of the training I received at my student publication paired with some courses and training at state conferences.
P4G15: Making connections. Working in journalism helped me be more confident in reaching out to people for an interview, so personal connections became easier to do. Writing about events and people allowed me connect to a larger audience.
P4G16: Copy editing because that was the area I focused on in college
Pr4G17: Writing for entertainment and features purposes, as well as knowing the InDesign program.
P4G18: Writing, Reporting, news judgement, social media. I worked.
P4G19: Working with data and online interaction. I spent the last two years of college in straight online production and development.
P4G20: Writing, interviewing and knowing what's important
Q14
When you graduated, which skills did you highlight to potential employers?

Pr4G1: Ability to analyze financial information, develop business strategies, coordinating with team members, delegating tasks to subordinates
P4G2: Copy writing, design and photography
P2G3: AP style, interview skills, layout/page design, story writing, editing,
P4G4: All of them. I highlight everything about my Student Media experiences.
P4G5: Writing skills, time management and problem solving.
Pr4G6: My ability to turn quality stories around quickly on multiple platforms.
P2G7: I highlight my diverse skill set. I am trained in news and feature writing, AP Style, photography, editing and managing a newspaper staff.
Pr4G8: The ability to produce, shoot, write stories with good news gathering capabilities.
Pr4G9: Writing, leadership through student media
Pr4G10: Communication, collaboration, editing, deadline-driven work experience
P4G11: Writing and research skills and good organization skills
Pr4G12: Versatility- I stressed by ability to do what I mentioned in the previous question and tailored my online portfolio to include my strongest writing, photography and design. I naturally have an ability to connect with others, so I highlighted that as well.
Pr4G13: Multimedia reporting abilities and social media skills
P4G14: I highlighted my ability to be a creative thinker in terms of design and development of stories into complete packages.
P4G15: I highlighted my stronger skills: Communication - identifying and managing different needs of people a groups; Interpersonal - Cultural awareness and appreciation of diversity; Intrapersonal - Integrity and functioning with a high level of ambiguity; Organizational - Research and successfully juggling multiple demands; Technical skills - Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, Blackboard, RedDot, etc.
P4G16: I highlighted my copy editing and headline-writing skills.
Pr4G17: My knowledge of InDesign, editing layouts, managing writers, finding stories and writing stories.
P4G18: Social media and web understanding.
P4G19: I focused almost solely on the development aspects: web and mobile applications, data projects, web redesigns, etc. I also included a minor focus on multimedia.
P4G20: Writing, layout and design, photography
Q15_1
Describe how you demonstrated those skills to potential employers- On my resume

Pr4G1: 1
P4G2: 
P2G3: 1
P4G4: 1
P4G5: 1
Pr4G6: 1
P2G7: 1
Pr4G8: 1
Pr4G9:
Pr4G10: 1
P4G11: 1
Pr4G12: 1
Pr4G13: 1
P4G14: 1
P4G15: 1
P4G16:
Pr4G17: 1
P4G18: 1
P4G19: 1
P4G20: 1
Q15_2
Describe how you demonstrated those skills to potential employers-Through work samples

Pr4G1: 1
P4G2: 1
P2G3: 1
P4G4: 1
P4G5: 1
Pr4G6: 1
P2G7: 1
Pr4G8: 1
Pr4G9: 1
Pr4G10: 1
P4G11: 1
Pr4G12: 1
Pr4G13: 1
P4G14: 1
P4G15: 1
P4G16: 1
Pr4G17: 1
P4G18: 1
P4G19: 1
P4G20: 1
Q15_P2G3:
Describe how you demonstrated those skills to potential employers—During my interview (phone, in-person or otherwise)

Pr4G1: 1
P4G2:
P2G3: 1
P4G4: 1
P4G5:
Pr4G6: 1
P2G7: 1
Pr4G8: 1
Pr4G9:
Pr4G10: 1
P4G11: 1
Pr4G12: 1
Pr4G13: 1
P4G14: 1
P4G15: 1
P4G16: 1
Pr4G17: 1
P4G18: 1
P4G19: 1
P4G20: 1
Q15_P2G3:
Describe how you demonstrated those skills to potential employers-During my interview (phone, in-person or otherwise)

Pr4G1: 1
P4G2:
P2G3: 1
P4G4: 1
P4G5:
Pr4G6: 1
P2G7: 1
Pr4G8: 1
Pr4G9:
Pr4G10: 1
P4G11: 1
Pr4G12: 1
Pr4G13: 1
P4G14: 1
P4G15: 1
P4G16: 1
Pr4G17: 1
P4G18: 1
P4G19: 1
P4G20: 1
Q15_5
Describe how you demonstrated those skills to potential employers-On the job

Pr4G1: 1
P4G2:
P2G3: 1
P4G4: 1
P4G5:
Pr4G6: 1
P2G7: 1
Pr4G8: 1
Pr4G9: 1
Pr4G10:
P4G11:
Pr4G12: 1
Pr4G13: 1
P4G14: 1
P4G15: 1
P4G16: 1
Pr4G17: 1
P4G18:
P4G19: 1
P4G20:
Q15_6
Describe how you demonstrated those skills to potential employers-Other

Pr4G1:
P4G2:
P2G3:
P4G4:
P4G5:
Pr4G6:
P2G7:
Pr4G8:
Pr4G9:
Pr4G10:
P4G11:
Pr4G12:
Pr4G13:
P4G14: 1
P4G15: 1
P4G16:
Pr4G17:
P4G18:
P4G19:
P4G20:
Q16
Please describe your approach to looking for a job after graduation.

Pr4G1: Creating connections with well-connected individuals in executive positions, submitting resumes to various firms
Pr4G2: I spent the summer before I graduated applying to listed positions on journalismjobs.com.
P2G3: After graduation, I searched for a part time job and was hired at JCPenney. I only kept it for three months because I was moving to Denton.
P4G4: I search for Marketing positions at my university's career website and on other online services, such as Glassdoor.
P4G5: Internet searches
Pr4G6: I began seeking a job even before graduation. I applied to places I'd interned previously, eventually landed a job as a blogger at HousingWire Magazine.
P2G7: I had already made a connection with San Antonio Express-News after an internship I had during school. During the last month before graduation, I asked about any openings. Since there were none at the time, I decided to pursue a master's degree. Later, I was offered two positions, but was only able to stay on as a part-time editorial assistant because I took a part-time position teaching at Texas State.
Pr4G8: I emailed all of the people I met through conferences and reminded them I was graduating and looking for a job.
Pr4G9: N/A- Received job offer through internship prior to graduation
Pr4G10: I attended conferences in my field for networking and applied for job/internships online
P4G11: Job search websites, word-of-word, and on my own
Pr4G12: I began searching online and asking professors for any potential job leads.
Pr4G13: Networking
P4G14: At first, I focused solely on design and copy editing positions, combined positions, but after awhile I started to look into other things I may not necessarily be strong in but have strong clips for, like reporting. I was semi-aggressive at the beginning, and then really aggressive when I felt like I wasn't applying enough.
P4G15: I was looking for a job that would be flexible with a schedule that changes seasonally as I pursue a master's degree, so that narrowed my focus for the moment.
P4G16: Using my connections to see what doors will open
Pr4G17: I didn't look for a job after graduation; I went straight into law school.
P4G18: Any communication job.
P4G19: I primarily researched jobs and targeted publications that were focused on web development within the journalistic sphere.
P4G20: I knew I wanted to pursue a graduate degree
Q17
Please describe your experience in looking for a job after graduation.

Pr4G1: I secured a position before graduation, but it took months of careful research and interviews before a position was offered
P4G2: I was lucky; I found a job soon after graduating from UNT.
P2G3: It took a lot of research, continuous searching and phone interviews
P4G4: Right now I am only looking for internships; however, all three of the internships that I have interviewed for this week are geared towards hiring full-time, after I graduate from the MBA program. I have had a very positive experience looking for internships/jobs, thus far.
P4G5: Have not found a job in media
Pr4G6: I was hired almost immediately after graduation by HousingWire Magazine, where I stayed until my husband got into Columbia Law School and we moved to New York City. When arriving in New York, I applied to a wide range of journalism positions, and was eventually offered two spots as a business reporter. Unfortunately I didn't have any interest in covering business, and so I decided to take a break from journalism and accept a teaching position I was offered after applying on a whim to direct an inner city debate team. It seemed like a once in a lifetime opportunity, and I plan to stay for two years before returning to the field of journalism.
P2G7: In the two months before graduation, I was disappointed that employers at San Antonio Express-News weren't adamant about finding me a position. I had all the skills it required to be a reporter. I may have been a little impatient also, but I thought I'd have a job set after graduation. Therefore, I applied for graduate school. Then, I was recruited to be a teaching assistant.
Pr4G8: Almost everyone emailed me back, but the majority said they weren't hiring.
Pr4G9: N/A- Received job offer through internship prior to graduation
Pr4G10: I could confidently market myself in part due to my journalism experience
P4G11: Have been looking for four months but haven't gotten even an interview.
Pr4G12: I was told by a professor to contact the editor of the Dallas Morning News. I referenced that professor, and the editor then referred me to the department with the job opening I eventually earned.
Pr4G13: I applied to nearly P2G3:0 companies in the first week following my graduation. I got 2 responses and they were from people I networked with and who knew me through a connection and those 2 responses led to interviews and job offers.
P4G14: It was difficult looking for a job. I wasn't prepared for the delay of response or the types of questions employers would be asking. I felt stranded in an ocean without a life raft to hold on to.
P4G15: My experience in the job search was phenomenal. I was offered three jobs before applying for them and graduating with my BA. The hardest decision was choosing which one to officially apply for. Job offers still continue to come in, and I find it hard not to go after the highest paying job and remain with the most practical while furthering my education beyond the BA.
P4G16: My internship led to a job offer
Pr4G17: I didn't look for a job after graduation; I went straight into law school.
P4G18: Great. Had doors open and didn't narrow my search.
P4G19:
P4G20: It was hard to find a part-time job at UT at first. There is a lot of competition here, but with patience I found the right situation.
Q18.1
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after graduation.

Skills learned in my journalism classroom

Pr4G1: 3
P4G2: 3
P2G3: 2
P4G4: 3
P4G5: 4
Pr4G6: 2
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 5
Pr4G9: 4
Pr4G10: 3
P4G11: 0
Pr4G12: 3
Pr4G13: 5
P4G14: 1
P4G15: 0
P4G16: 3
Pr4G17:
P4G18: 2
P4G19: 1
P4G20: 2
Q18.2
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after
graduate...Skills practiced at my student newspaper

Pr4G1: 4
P4G2: 4
P2G3: 5
P4G4: 5
P4G5: 4
Pr4G6: 5
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 5
Pr4G9: 5
Pr4G10: 5
P4G11: 0
Pr4G12: 5
Pr4G13: 5
P4G14: 5
P4G15: 4
P4G16: 5
Pr4G17:
P4G18: 5
P4G19: 5
P4G20: 5
Q18 P2G3:
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after graduating...

-Skills I learned on my own

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<td>P4G20</td>
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Q18_4
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after graduation:

-Skills acquired during a professional internship

Pr4G1: 5
P4G2: 5
P2G3: 2
P4G4: 0
P4G5: 3
Pr4G6: 5
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 2
Pr4G9: 5
Pr4G10: 4
P4G11: 0
Pr4G12: 4
Pr4G13: 5
P4G14: 5
P4G15: 5
P4G16: 5
Pr4G17: 5
P4G18: 3
P4G19: 1
P4G20: 3
Q18_5
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after graduation...

- Networking through my professors

Pr4G1: 0
P4G2: 4
P2G3: 1
P4G4: 2
P4G5: 2
Pr4G6: 4
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 5
Pr4G9: 1
Pr4G10: 3
P4G11: 0
Pr4G12: 5
Pr4G13: 5
P4G14: 3
P4G15: 5
P4G16: 3
Pr4G17:
P4G18: 1
P4G19: 2
P4G20: 4
Q18_6
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after graduating...

- Networking through my student newspaper

Pr4G1: 3
P4G2: 3
P2G3: 3
P4G4: 4
P4G5: 2
Pr4G6: 3
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 5
Pr4G9: 4
Pr4G10: 2
P4G11:
Pr4G12: 3
Pr4G13:
P4G14: 3
P4G15: 4
P4G16: 5
Pr4G17:
P4G18: 5
P4G19: 4
P4G20: 1
Q18_7
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after
graduation: Networking I did on my own

Pr4G1: 5
P4G2: 4
P2G3: 1
P4G4: 5
P4G5: 2
Pr4G6: 4
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 2
Pr4G9: 4
Pr4G10: 3
P4G11: 0
Pr4G12: 3
Pr4G13: 5
P4G14: 2
P4G15: 5
P4G16: 3
Pr4G17: 4
P4G18: 4
P4G19: 2
P4G20: 3
Q18_8
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after graduation:

- Off-campus conferences, workshops, etc.

Pr4G1: 4
P4G2: 2
P2G3: 2
P4G4: 1
P4G5: 2
Pr4G6: 2
P2G7: 5
Pr4G8: 5
Pr4G9: 3
Pr4G10: 4
P4G11:
Pr4G12: 2
Pr4G13:
P4G14: 5
P4G15: 5
P4G16: 3
Pr4G17:
P4G18: 5
P4G19: 2
P4G20: 1
Q18_Pr4G9:  
Please rate the following based on how much each of the following helped you get a job after graduation...

- Other

Pr4G1:  
P4G2: 0  
P2G3:  
P4G4:  
P4G5: 0  
Pr4G6:  
P2G7: 0  
Pr4G8: 2  
Pr4G9:  
Pr4G10: 2  
P4G11:  
Pr4G12:  
Pr4G13:  
P4G14:  
P4G15: 4  
P4G16:  
Pr4G17:  
P4G18:  
P4G19:  
P4G20:  

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Q1Pr4G9:
What are the top three to five journalism skills you use in your current job? Describe how you use t...

Pr4G1: Research, analyze, delegate, relay of information. As a market researcher, I have to wade through a great deal of information looking for what is relevant to my clients. Then I have to analyze and communicate that information in a way that is relevant to the needs/interests of my client.

P4G2: Writing - I write anywhere from 10-15 stories per week. Design - I am responsible for the copy, photographs and design of the paper's weekly schools page. Photography - While I was not hired for photography, I have quickly become the unofficial staff photographer because of past experience.

P2G3: For the Office of Sustainability position I wrote, conducted interviews, did research, ad design. At Subway, I don't really use them except maybe with speaking with customers.

P4G4: Writing: I love writing and everything I ever do will incorporate it somehow or another. Editing: I am always the "go-to guy" for proofreading other individual's work. Working with a team: I am part of multiple teams right now and a thoroughly enjoy it. I feel that my time in Student Media significantly helped me navigate team politics.

P4G5: editing, researching and

Pr4G6: The ability to research quickly: As a debate coach, it is essential that I be able to help my students find evidence quickly and effectively. Writing: I write every day, even if it's not for a newspaper. I'm frequently writing lesson plans, emailing students with instructions and typing out information packets for the students to use.

P2G7: As editorial assistant, I am required to write stories, answer the telephone, manage incoming emails for the newsroom, assist the editor, and create and print the budget.

Pr4G8: Writing, copy editing, management, assessing a story's news worthiness, contacting sources

Pr4G9: 1- Copyediting- help copy edit media publications, programs, etc. 2- Writing- write feature articles for Rangers program 3- Reporting- when writing articles, prepared to ask better interview questions, follow-up questions, research, etc.

Pr4G10: Editing/grammar- always important for accuracy and professionalism; deadline-mindfulness, very important for professionalism; Interviewing- knowing what questions to ask

P4G11: None

Pr4G12: Writing, photography and design. I have done all three of those at my current job. I've written stories and am now on a regular rotation for photo assignments. As a copy/design editor it's also my job to design pages each week.

Pr4G13: Reporting (Editing & AP Style), Social Media, Newswriting

P4G14: Interview/Reporting: Writing four to five stories a week; Design: Currently, I lay out a Mid-County issue focused on four small cities neighboring my city; Photography: Shooting photos of the stories I'm writing

P4G15: Being a multitasker while remaining focused on initial tasks aids in job function as I help people with writing skills in many different styles and genres. Being an effective communicator is essential in my current job because I meet people from many different countries and cultures. Being able to write or tell the same story from multiple perspectives helps when I am able to demonstrate how different write styles apply in different fields. Being technologically savvy helps as newer technologies are introduced and creativity can be demonstrated.
P4G16: I lay out pages, I write headlines (everything from local to wire content) and I edit/proofread stories.
P4G18: 1. Social media, used for finding stories and communicating with readers. 2. Reporting. 3.: Editing.
P4G19: The skills that I use in my job aren't specifically journalism oriented. Principals of clean web design, front end development with a focus on HTML, CSS + jQuery, map development with Google apps, Leaflet, CartoDB and JSON
P4G20: Writing, layout, photography (use in work and school)
Q20
Do you feel your time in student media prepared you for your current job? Why or why not?

Pr4G1: Yes. As an editor, I was in charge of a staff of photographers. This gave me tools and stories (for interviews) that helped get me my job.

P4G2: Yes. It gave me a working knowledge of how a typical newsroom operates.

P2G3: Yes, I do especially the Office of Sustainability. It was my first job in the Denton area and they were impressed with my writing that they hired me right on spot. I don't think I would have gotten the position if I didn't have the clippings to back up my resume.

P4G4: Student Media is really the only thing that prepared me for where I am at now. I feel as if I almost could have skipped undergraduate courses completely. I also feel that my skill set is incredibly diverse and I owe it entirely to my time working with newspapers.

P4G5: Yes, writing skills are always an advantage no matter the job.

Pr4G6: Yes. Unlike any journalism class, I got to do hands on work, manage people directly and see my hard work turn into a product. It was a huge learning experience in reporting, people skills and keeping deadlines.

P2G7: I definitely feel that my time in student media prepared me for my current job because I was able to practice journalistic skills in an educational environment where there were advisers who were constantly making suggestions to get better.

Pr4G8: Yes, I became confident in myself and my writing.

Pr4G9: Yes- More than anything I gained leadership experience that helped me receive a job prior to graduation. I understood how to work in a group and work environment before entering my first job, something that set me apart from other candidates my age. This is something you can't get from a classroom, even through group work.

Pr4G10: Yes- I know how to frame media to market it and make it relevant

P4G11: No

Pr4G12: Yes- I was immersed among professionals because of the events I covered. I am an aspiring sports writer, and I covered many events at Baylor that were also covered by professionals. I talked with them, made friends and tried to see what they did that made them successful.

Pr4G13: Yes. I edit a lot of stories, I have to work on a deadline, I have to write up breaking news stories accurately and ahead of the competition

P4G14: Yes, I'm able to take one story idea and formulate a well-developed story incorporating photos and design elements to create a comprehensive package to engage readers.

P4G15: Absolutely yes. It taught me how to function in high stress situations and how to overcome technological mishaps. It also taught me how to address situations that are not always easy to talk about.

P4G16: Yes. My time in student media exposed me to parts of the newspaper/media that I didn't know had existed before. If it wasn't for my work in student media, I know that I wouldn't be where I am today.

Pr4G17:

P4G18: Yes. Best place to get experience.

P4G19: Yes, because it provided a project outlet for learning and practicing elements of web design and basic development.

P4G20: YES! I was able to apply the skills I learned in the classroom and I know it put me above my peers.
Many student media programs believe they must teach students "how to do it all" to prepare them for...

Pr4G1: Definitely not necessary. It's good for students to have an understanding of many areas of media, but it's better to have a deep knowledge of a smaller, more relevant array of media/communications. Employers want to know that you can become an expert at whatever it is they want you to do. If you can demonstrate advanced knowledge of a specific area of journalism, they will be better prepared.

P4G2: I agree. The publication at which I work has an editorial staff of three people, including myself. I am responsible for writing, designing pages, photography, copy editing and social media.

P2G3: I think student media does prepare students to 'do it all.' At my community college newspaper, I wanted to learn all that I could, video, design, editing, writing and website, I wanted to be able to put on my resume that I had a little experience. I feel that I can walked into any job and carry out what they ask, even if it takes me a bit to relearn or research equipment, etc.

P4G4: This might not be a completely accurate theory, but it certainly doesn't hurt -- especially since many employers seem to be very attracted to the "jack-of-all-trades," well-rounded types of candidates. I think it really depends on which sector of the job market you're looking to enter.

P4G5: I do feel that I was given a good sample of all types of media programs.

Pr4G6: I think that's true to an extent. There shouldn't be so much covered that college students don't ever dive deep into their area of interest. While I think each student media member should have a working knowledge of all parts of the newspaper and website, I think students should be able to specialize in one or two areas of reporting or newspaper production.

P2G7: I absolutely think that is true. As journalists today, we are required to have some knowledge on everything from writing to operating a camera. School is the place to pick up a gadget you've never touched, play, fail and succeed. Obviously, you can't teach everything to students, especially if they don't want to learn, but I think it's the responsibility of the program to put opportunity in students' hands. Then, it's up to the student to take that opportunity, utilize their resources and make it something more than even the professor could have made it.

Pr4G8: You really need that because I think my ability to write text stories and my familiarity with online journalism helped me land my TV job.

Pr4G9: I feel prepared to do it all, no matter what type of journalism I chose to follow. I felt I was well rounded in student media, spending multiple semesters for both the newspaper and news station in a variety of roles. While I chose a different career path other than reporting itself, everything I learned has proven to be valuable in my workplace. I write more than anything, and this isn’t something I focused my effort on in college. Had I not been well-rounded I wouldn’t be prepared for that part of my job. I heard a lot about “convergence” over my four years in college and that word could not have more accurately described journalism today, or actually work in general. You have to be prepared to pick up a still camera, video camera or write an article no matter the story. I never knew what type of media I would work in, and it has proven valuable that I know the interworking of different aspects of media instead of just “one trade.”

Pr4G10: I think time is limited and depth of knowledge for each skill suffers. Advanced classes are needed to delve into specifics.

P4G11: Program did not do enough.
Pr4G12: I think everyone should have at least one area of expertise but be competent in as many areas as possible. I've set probably unrealistic goals of trying to not just be a jack of all trades but master each of the areas of my skillset.

Pr4G13: It's a good approach. Even if the company you work for has a budget to hire people who specialize in specific fields, being prepared makes you more desirable to an employer.

P4G14: At a larger publication, the ability to focus on one specialty is more likely than it is at a smaller publication. I don't think I would have been offered a position if I didn't know how to shoot my own photos, design, copy edit, use social media and report. During my interview with the Beaumont Enterprise, the managing editor was more impressed by the thought that I could basically put together an entire issue with little help from others because of my stretch of skills, and I use most of my skills. I think it's important for journalists to have a wide array of skills to work with even if it's in small quantities. Small publications tend to have more time to help develop those skills further, so one strong focus and a set of intermediary skills is helpful.

P4G15: I do not have experience in a media program, however I would think the answer to this question lies in the goals of the student. If a student is seeking an undergraduate degree with a larger goal of going into a more specialized master's or doctoral program then a survey of skills would be beneficial.

P4G16: I feel like the "do it all" approach applies to mostly reporters. It definitely does help to market yourself to possible employers, but not all positions require you to "do it all."

Pr4G17: I agree; I believe the journalism profession no longer requires just writing and editing papers. Students need to be knowledgeable in all types of media, such as web writing, graphics, editing pictures and sound, etc.

P4G18: Sure. You get out as much as you put in.

P4G19: I believe that student media programs should provide an entryway into every aspect of journalism and let students decide a specialty from there.

P4G20: I think that's accurate. People are downsizing and with out profession people are more valuable the more skills they have.
Another school of thought is that student media programs should allow students to develop specialty...

Pr4G1: This is preferable to the previous scenario. (See previous response for details)
P4G2: It depends. I can see that being the case at a large publication, where you may have one main responsibility. However, with newsrooms shrinking across the country, I think its more beneficial to have a basic skill set in multiple areas.
P2G3: I think students should be able to do everything. Many media jobs are converging and many reports have to get the photo, write the story and conduct a news report themselves. Having a variety of skills in the journalism field make you more valuable to an employer.
P4G4: For the most part, I agree with this sentiment; but, I think that everyone should be exposed to at least a little bit of each realm. Jobs are harder to come by for the one trick ponies out there, unless they've got REALLY good tricks.
P4G5: I believe that should be an option, but in today's job market it does help to have a variety of skills.
P4G6: See above answer.
P2G7: This is not a good idea. Employers are looking for journalists who have at least some knowledge in everything. Reporters are now at times responsible for taking their own photos. News is going out faster and if one person can get the job done and get it done fast, then that's who they'll hire.
P4G8: I think you should find what you like and really get to know it and then dab in other things too.
P4G9: I never thought I would say it but I am all about convergence now. I think developing one key skill is important, but there needs to be focus on everything. You can’t be mediocre at each focus, but you also can’t be great at each focus. Having a focus in addition to knowing a little about each skill seems obvious.
P4G10: I believe this is true- but also teach basic skills of one or two other areas to show relevance and interconnectedness with main skill taught
P4G11: I feel students should be well rounded and should be trained in all those areas.
P4G12: In my specific job market, print/online written journalism, there are still defined roles that people do for their job. Perhaps we're progressing to a more do-it-all approach, but right now, a highly skilled photographer can get paid solely to take photos, and writing and design is the same way.
P4G13: I think I would use more of my personal time to specialize in an area of interest but would rather be taught in various fields so I feel more competitive to others in my field
P4G14: I think students should learn one primary skill. This would be their primary skill and focus, but I firmly believe, in my experience so far, that a set of intermediary skills is essential for success in future graduates.
P4G15: Again, this answer lies in the goals of the student. If the student plans on focusing just being a reporter then focusing on those skills, and technology to do those skills well, would be the most beneficial. If the student plans to further his her education beyond the BA, then I think a survey of all skills is the better option.
P4G16:I think it does help for students to develop skills in one particular setting, but I think students shouldn't focus just on that. They should try one semester at something outside of their area just to see what it's like. For example, if someone wants to be a photographer, one semester
as a reporter could strengthen how that student writes cutlines, approaches photo assignments, etc.
Pr4G17: I think students should have a specialty, but also be well-rounded in all other journalism aspects as well.
P4G18: Specialization is good, but people need a good understanding of the fundamentals.
P4G19: See previous answer.
P4G20: I think it's good to specialize--to be an expert in one area is always valued. However, multiple skills are desired in the workforce.
Q23:
If you feel you have an expertise in any journalistic skill, please describe how you obtained it and...

Pr4G1: Photography, editing, managing people; I obtained these skills on my own and through my work at a student newspaper; I use lessons learned from acquiring these skills at work when I use a sharp eye for detail, I condense great swaths of information into key points, and I communicate those points to subordinates/clients.
P4G2: I do not feel I have an expertise yet.
P2G3: Design, photography, writing. I love all of these things. I have a passion for them. Being in student media I was able to develop and use them. I was able to learn and grow. I continue to write and do some design, mostly for my own personal benefit, but I was able to use them at my OoS position. I just obtained them from practice and jumping right in to see what I would love.
P4G4:
P4G5:
Pr4G6: I've always worked to specialize in political reporting, which I was able to do through my double major in political science and journalism. I also created the role of political editor at the student newspaper, which allowed me to do in depth reporting on city and state government, and even host a televised mayoral debate for the city of Dallas. Now, I use that skill to maintain a political blog (www.politically-inclined.com), which has grown from a college project to a full website with a second editor and five writers.
P2G7: My expertise is in reporting. I began writing in high school and found that I liked to write and was good at it, so I began developing that skill. I went through a great program at the community college level at San Antonio College, and continued using that skill at the university level. Today, I use that skill every day. If you can write a basic story, you've attained the first, most important skill a journalist should have. Today, I teach an undergraduate introduction to writing for the mass media class at Texas State where I teach students basic writing skills. I also write stories a few times a month for San Antonio Express News.
Pr4G8: I think I am good under pressure and having breaking news situations under my belt in my student media job really helped.
Pr4G9: Research- I learned all "creepy" ways to do research about any subject. Whether it is crime-related or sports-related I some how know ways to find out more. I obtained this skill through the classroom and hands on experience in the newsroom. While I don't use it in the same way I did in college, I still use the same databases. I use research found through social media almost daily.
Pr4G10: Editing is my primary takeaway skill. In graduate school, I edit for my TA job, and usually serve as an editor in group papers
P4G11: N/A
Pr4G12: I've been trying to improve my writing since junior high. I have continued to acquire a feel for how words and sentences are best structured. I read others and observe what makes them successful as well.
Pr4G13: I obtained writing, editing from my courses and working as a news editor for our campus paper. My video skills I learned during my time as reporter for the campus TV station
P4G14: My area of expertise would be in design and concept. I first took an interest in design at my community college and even a little before that. I started to dabble with advertisements and fliers, and when I went into journalism at my community college, my design skills began to
develop more. I learned basic skills there, but I really developed at my student publication through guidance of professionals, advisers and training conferences like TIPA. Student media is also where I learned to develop an engaging concept. Today, I use it to design a special weekly section, and on the side for other projects like fliers and business development.
P4G15: I'm experienced at all and master of none. I chose to broaden my skills to achieve experience that can be honed later. Communication is the one that applies to all fields I am interested in and that is one that I do best. I use it daily in meetings with clients, emails, and colleagues.
P4G16: I think I have an expertise in copy editing. I think I obtained it by working on my student newspaper in that area for several semesters, and I built up my experience. I also had three internships working in the copy-editing field.
Pr4G17: I believe my expertise is writing entertainment and features articles, and I obtained it by writing for my university newspaper for three years and holding an editor position for two. Working with my newspaper advisor and editor-in-chief helped me hone those skills.
P4G18: News judgment, finding stories and use it to decide what to write about.
P4G19: I have expertise relative to most academic-level journo students in front end development and web design. I mostly obtained it through academic focuses outside of journalism and through self-teaching. I use it for myriad different content and design projects.
P4G20: I've always been a writer, but working for the newspaper allowed me to use it a lot more. I have to write every day. It is very important. The way you write an email can make or break you.
Q24
How do you feel student media could have better prepared you for your current job?

Pr4G1: A stronger network of professionals/alumni would have been helpful
Pr4G2: I wish I had been made to step out of my comfort zone. Since working at my current job, I've covered a number of personal "firsts" -- first murder, first crime scene, first student death, first interview with family members of someone who recently died, etc.
P2G3: I felt pretty prepared though I think I can always use more work with editing stories, especially my own pieces.
P4G4: 
P4G5: I feel that student media was a good experience that I could apply to my current job and to any future jobs.
P4G6: I honestly don't think it could have done a better job. The student media company I was involved with was flexible enough to allow me to create new roles and projects, but had a strong support system to help me achieve my goals within them. For instance, I was able to think up the idea of a televised mayoral debate, but the student media company was able to help me carry it out and offer the necessary guidance to make it a success. I honestly believe my experience with student media company was more helpful than any of the classes I took in college.
P2G7: There is nothing that I would have changed about my student media experience. I do think undergraduate programs should emphasize internships after being on the student publication. My two-year community college said nothing about internships. It wasn't until the summer before my last semester that I got an internship. These are important and employers want graduates to have more than one.
P4G8: I think more conferences with professionals could have helped.
P4G9: I had a rare (lucky) case in that I had a job prior to graduation through my internship. But, I would say I was successful in my internship through my experience in student media. Student media helped me in that, as I said before, it was a small workplace and a small step into the "real world". I think something that should of provided more focus is that advisors don't realize students need to network and work in college outside of student media to have a job after graduation. I worked for student media for three years and had an internship during two of those years. Advisors didn't always understand that I couldn't always put student media 100% first. But the reality is the college newspaper and news station weren't going to offer me full-time jobs after college so I had to go after it in other ways. Of course they provided recommendations and helped in the job search but I don't think there is anything more valuable then working first hand for a potential employer (an internship in my case).
Pr4G10: Teaching Illustrator
Pr4G11: Do not have a job in my field.
Pr4G12: I felt the student media at Baylor could not have done a better job preparing me for my current job. If anything it caused me not to have a true college experience because I spent so much time, like P2G3:0-P2G3:5 hours a week, working for the last three years of college.
Pr4G13: More graphic design type work
Pr4G14: I think student media should be provide more sources of training and preparedness, even if it's just one person interested.
P4G15: They couldn't have done any better. I worked at campus newspaper in a college community that does not offer a communications program. It was a wonderfully rewarding
experience despite the challenges they have to overcome in training new journalists without classroom support.

P4G16: I wish I experimented more with other areas of the newspaper, such as design or photography. If I didn't like it, it would have only been a semester.

Pr4G17:

P4G18: It was a great experience. I could've expanded my experience more.

P4G19: Student media has an ability to "go out on a limb" and try new things, unlike most professional publications. While looking at what the professionals are doing or how they've covering or what they're building for a specific story, I believe a student media org has a responsibility to ask, "Because of what we ARE, what could we be doing and how could we be covering this in ways that they aren't?"

P4G20: n/a
Q25
How do you feel student media could have better prepared you for the job search experience?

Pr4G1: A stronger network of professionals/alumni would have been helpful
P4G2: It would have beneficial to have more networking opportunities with past staff members of the paper.
P2G3: I know what kind of jobs to look for based on my skill set, and even through school, I am figuring out what kind of job I want.
P4G4: Maybe by setting up speaker events or networking events with media professionals in the area. These types of events have been very helpful for me, during my graduate level studies. My Student Media department didn't do anything at all towards helping me with a job search, but I also wasn't looking for a job, so...
P4G5: I could have taken advantage of more internships.
P4G6: They could have done a better job connecting me to internships while in college, but I'm not sure that's the role of student media. I think a more realistic approach would be to develop a strong connection with the career center on campus and have events for staff geared at preparing you for writing tests and journalism-specific job interviews.
P2G7: Personally, my adviser had many connections around San Antonio and was constantly taking our class to meet people in different mediums. I think if more professors did this; took field trips or scheduled a staff meeting outside the newsroom with professionals, students would be informed of different companies around the city, rather than the main news outlet.
Pr4G8: I think they did a good job recommending me and helping me find a job.
Pr4G9: I focused my student media experience in sports journalism. While working for student media you represent, in a way, the smallest of the smallest, and the worst-of-the-worst. At least that is how coaches and players seem to view student journalists. While it seems terrible in college, you have experienced the worst of it in college and it only made me ask better questions, ask smarter questions and be a better reporter. Now I work on the opposite side of things in sports PR, so I know that journalists aren't the "bad guys" and have a job to do just like I do. This is a round about way to how student media prepared me for my current job, but aside from the textbook lessons, the experiences are what prepared me for my current job.
Pr4G10: More information on channels to market ourselves
P4G11: Don't know.
P4G12: I honestly was blessed/lucky/however you define fortunate to earn my job. I had a professor reach out to me and direct me to somebody, which doesn't always happen. I really didn't know where to look for a job, and while we are expected to be responsible adults and figure out things on our own, we really weren't shown much of the job search process in college. A journalism-specific class or lecture series or something could have helped that.
Pr4G13: Help with networking
P4G14: Websites. I think student media should help students start building professional websites and networking sites from the first day they become staff. Direct them where they can get their domain name and help them sign up and develop a website to showcase their skills. I waited to the last minute to do this, and it something all students should be developing now.
P4G15: Jobs came looking for me - you just can't ask for better there, either.
P4G16: I feel like more workshops about the actual job search itself could have helped (like where to look, what specifically employers are looking for, etc.)
Pr4G17:
P4G18: It was great.
P4G19: The student media org that I was a part of had a very strong professional focus. However, few of the professionals that were brought in for workshops were web-oriented.
P4G20: n/a
Q26
Please provide any additional commentary you would like the researcher to consider in this study.

Pr4G1:
P4G2: I benefited from my experience with student media. While some things could have been better, nothing is perfect. I left college better prepared because of my time with the paper.
P2G3: I really enjoyed being apart of my community college newspaper. It was a great experience, one I think all students aspiring journalists should take part in. Also, being on the staff inspired my current major here at UNT.
P4G4: The researcher should look into figuring out how to make these text boxes bigger, because they're pretty annoying in their current state. (This is a joke. I don't have any actual additional commentary, sorry.)
P4G5:
P4G6:
P2G7: Most of my extensive training on a student media publication was at the community college level at San Antonio College. The program there is an amazing program where we as students produced a weekly print newspaper. There I was able to gain news writing skills, managerial skills and layout and design skills. Students are able to make their way around the different skill sets that the program offers. The newspaper is credible and well read around campus and community. Because it was established, I was able to hit the ground running. My experience changed completely at Texas A&M-San Antonio, where the university and newspaper were brand new. I was the second editor there and had to establish a presence online, on campus and build credibility. I had a unique experience because not many students are able to say they began a student newspaper. I was able to develop networking skills, advocate skills and public relations tactics, all while trying to set the culture in the newsroom where students were not as prepared as I was.
P4G8:
P4G9: Student media provided me with experience I couldn't have gained anywhere else. I defintely never thought it would play such a key role, but to be honest I wouldn't have a job without it. I have people ask me all the time how I am where I am today, and it was through building my resume- which I did while in school. So many job openings say "Experience required", but how do you get experience if they all require experience? Student media.
P4G10:
P4G11:
P4G12: If there's anything I learned from my student media experience and those around me, it's that we really have to start working in college to work in the real world journalism field. The people I know who are looking for journalism jobs but only worked a year or so at the paper in college are struggling to find work now. The people I know who spent multiple years at the paper or interning or both are the ones who have the portfolio and experience to get into the field immediately. It's not like business, where a degree and maybe an internship somewhere is enough to get a foot in the door at a company. Maybe that was enough to get an entry level journalism job years ago. But today's journalism requires students to stand far out from the rest just to get a journalism job out of college. It might not be fair to have to choose between a social life and a job in college unlike friends going into fields with more available jobs, but I think that's the way it is.
Pr4G13:
P4G14: I learned a lot during my time in student media -- professionally and personally. I think student media needs to continue to push the envelope and think of new and different ways to help prepare students for the workforce.
P4G15: Not all people that worked at a student newspaper have had experience with formal journalism classes or programs. While it does not mean the student didn't receive journalism training and experience, it does mean that student's perspective may be different that one who did.
P4G16:
P4G17:
P4G18: Effectiveness of recruiting.
P4G19: This survey would encourage longer, more descriptive answers by using multi-line <textarea> elements instead of text <input>.
P4G20: I also had a great adviser and I think that is a very important factor. She guided me but let me make mistakes and learn from them at the same time. She let me work independently but was always there to answer questions if I had them. If it wasn't for her I may not have got as much out of working for the student newspaper.
APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT 1 INTERVIEW
Interview: Participant No. 1
Conducted 2:13 p.m. April 14

Researcher: I guess what I’d like to start with is you can tell me a little bit about what you did at the North Texas Daily. How many semesters did you work at the paper?
Participant: I started with as part of a class in fall of 2011, and basically worked for the paper ever since, except for the summers, gosh, no, worked there, too. Gosh, no it might have been 2010 – time flies.
R: It does!
P: I guess two and a half semesters (think he means years). I started off kind of as an intern, just writing for classes. Got hooked, and worked as a senior staff writer before becoming managing editor. Last year, spring of 2012, editor in chief.
R: What got you hooked? You said you were interning, doing a little bit of work for them. What got you hooked in?
P: Just a chance to, well, this is going to sound really funny, but a chance to see my name in the paper. You know, you go to class, you’re learning all this stuff, but really what gets you interested and really the whole purpose of writing is to get your name out and to get your stories out there. Student media gives you the chance to do it while you’re still learning and kind of gives you hands-on experience before you get pushed out the door and into the real world. It was just I enjoyed. I was in sports staff to begin with. And I liked being able to cover the teams and getting to ask the questions myself and covering the collegiate teams and their seasons.
R: You said something interesting – that hands-on experience that’s something that has come up a bit in people’s responses. I wondered if you would describe a little bit of the differences you saw between the classroom experience and in the student newsroom.
P: Well, you’re talking about I guess to start with like inverted pyramid. You get to see examples from other people’s writing and do mock stories and they give you a synopsis and say, “Hey, write a little brief on this,” but when you’re actually out there covering something, I guess it’s a little more clear. The concepts you learn in the classroom, you know, you can study it as much as you want but until you actually go out and implement it, I think that’s what really made me soak it in. It’s just things like that – being able to take the concepts you learn and you practice in class but to actually get to practice them yourself and see the end results – the article – and things like that, get feedback from your editors about, “Hey this worked, or this didn’t work, and this is what you need to do next time,” I think that’s kind of the difference I saw. You get to practice it and actually go and get the information yourself and write up the article.
R: One of the responses you gave is that you, in this last year of working – and tell me where you’re working.
P: I’m at the Terrell Tribune.
R: Wonderful. You mentioned you’ve had a number of personal firsts in your professional career.
P: Oh yah.
R: Did you have any of those types of “firsts” happen in your student media experiences? You said you covered your first crime scene in the professional realm, but what were some of the “firsts” that you experienced while you were at the Daily?
P: Getting to break little news. For instance, when I was a senior staffer we did a trip to Arkansas state to Jonesboro, Ark., to do a behind-the-scenes feature of the football team when it travels. We kind of at that point, when I was a senior staffer in – gosh – fall 2011 we had a pretty strong
staff. And I think we, and not to sound arrogant or anything, but I think we started competing a little with the Denton Record-Chronicle for some stories and getting news out there. We were able to get injury updates a couple times before them, and I guess getting to compete with other papers for information and trying to gather it, make sources, have your contacts and things like that. Getting to cover big events from start to finish. When I was managing editor last year in the spring, um a big topic was whether or not the university was going to approve the building of a new union. So we got to follow that process from beginning to end, when they started talking about it at the beginning of the semester to when they actually approved the plan later. So we got to see that process through and package stories on that throughout the semester. That was another first, getting to cover basically a story through a cycle. But a lot of the firsts came after I was at the paper, I guess. I think this happens to a lot of people. You kind of get pigeonholed, and it’s not the editors’ fault but I think some writers get in a comfort zone while they are still at the paper and they don’t branch out and cover … like the sports rarely came over to the news side to cover news stories and I think that’s why I have a lot of firsts in my professional career because I was mainly sports. I edited news stories but by the time I was on the news staff I wasn’t a reporter at that point, I was mainly the editor. I think that’s one thing that kind of kept me from experiencing a lot of the firsts then.

R: One of the questions we’re trying to find an answer to is should we be preparing students to be specialists or generalists. And I see you’re writing between 10 and 15 stories a week and shooting and doing it all.
P: And designing, and yah.
R: You mentioned feeling pigeonholed, or getting a sense of that, in the student newspaper environment. How do you think that helped or hurt you in this job, where you are doing everything?
P: Well, luckily later, when I was editor in chief, I kind of broke out of that. And I think it was my own fault. I don’t think my editors or anything else – the staff – pigeonholed me. I think writers do it to themselves. Get in their comfort zone. As editor in chief, I had more hands-on experience with photography and design and covering news stories. I think during the summer when the Colorado movie theater massacre happened, we localized it by calling the area movie theaters to see if they would have any security measures at their screenings of that movie and I think it got picked up by some local – you know Pegasus news – they posted our story on their website as well and it got some coverage in that aspect. I kind of broke out of the shell during the summer, and I think it was because I had more time to look at different areas. I think that got me ready for the professional career. If I hadn’t done that, I don’t think I would have been as prepared professionally because I am responsible for designing for my own education page each week, while helping out with sports photography and shooting my own photos for my stories. So, you know, as far as training young journalists to be specialists in one area or being the master of all, I think when you’re starting out in your career it helps to know more than just one area because you’re probably going to be asked to do a whole lot more nowadays, especially with staff being cut and everybody having to wear a lot of different hats.
R: How much training related to web or multimedia did you get while you were at the Daily.
P: Oh, I got a lot. I took an online journalism class and I think UNT has a bunch of good classes to coincide with web if you’re interested in it. We did a lot of multimedia work, posted a lot of videos, each editor posted their own stories to the website, posted breaking news during spring I was managing editor, I was the ipso facto weather alert person (laughs), so whenever there was a tornado alert or a severe weather alert, I would probably have to get on Twitter and Tweet out
the messages and ask for people’s photos if they want to share them with us and things like that. I turned a lot more that way as we progressed because I think a lot of the professors are emphasizing how web is a heavy player in the journalism field and getting your stories out on the web, so I think the Daily provided a lot of that because each editor was responsible for getting the content onto the website for their section.

R: Do you feel like your skills in things like producing or editing videos or you mentioned social media but as far as producing the content … how do you feel about your skills in that?

P: they’ve gotten better and when I was hired at the Tribune, they were up front and said, “Hey, we’re not expecting you to be a professional photographer, you’re mainly a writer but it would help if you know how to do this,” and I think, I feel like I’m not great at video editing yet. I practice; I mean we do zero videos at the Tribune right now. None of the other reporters – I’m the youngest one there by a good 15 years – so I’m trying, and I want to do videos, but I’ve got to get the equipment. They just don’t have the equipment where I’m at to do it. But I’m trying to get our Twitter account going again because basically it’s nonexistent except for whatever we post to Facebook, it automatically goes to Twitter. I think even the little experience some students have now might assist them at smaller papers like this, where you have your seasoned reporters who are set in the old ways and trying to adjust to modern technology and social media and changes like that, you know. Students like me and young journalists who have grown up with it have an advantage in that aspect. Because we’re used to it and kind of have the basics down and it’s hard – as long as we keep improving that it puts us in a position to improve our newspapers.

R: I’m wondering how much training – being at a smaller market paper now and trying to move the mindset more that way, more digital, how much training do you give yourself? I’m sure there’s not a lot of, with that big an age difference and lack of equipment and things like that … how much time do you spend working on your own skills outside of the office.

P: Well, I try to, and it hasn’t been like this lately because it’s been crazy busy and you know. We have a staff of three on editorial and so we put out a paper twice a week, so weekdays are pretty much filled with getting stories, photos, pages designed and then if I have time on the weekends I’ll read some articles on Poynter and things like that on social media and things like that. But as far as training, it’s whenever I have time, and that’s not that much at the moment. So I don’t know if that helps.

R: That’s one of the things we’re all experiencing, so it helps.

P: It’s hard when you get home at 12 at night and then want to get online and read about improving social media.

R: Not the best way to spend the night, then?

P: No, especially when you have to wake up at six the next day. I think – like you said – it’s trying to find the time when you have so many hats to wear and you have to find the time to give yourself that training.

R: One thing you mentioned on the questionnaire is that it would have been beneficial to have more networking opportunities with previous staff members. Can you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?

P: Well, I guess there’s some that come back to the office every now and then kind of drop in and say hi. But I never really… I keep hearing these big names like Tim McMan or Jeff Andrews and people like that – different reporters who used to work at the Daily. I think Matt Goodman at WFAA…and you hear about them and sometimes they would go to different classrooms but we never had them at Slash, which is the weekly critique/review of the week – what went wrong,
what went right – slash the news, basically. I didn’t do any of that during the summer, I didn’t really think about it. I wish I had. But I think it would have been beneficial to see what their experiences were like and see hey, they maybe had the same problems I’m having with my staff, or how did they approach motivating their staff members during testing week when you still have to put out stories, things like that. I just think it would have been beneficial to see their experiences and how they handled things and how it’s benefited them in their careers now – their experience at the paper.

R: It sounds like to make a connection between the paper and careers.

P: Yah. I think it also would help because you know who they are and they know who you area and just networking is how you basically sometimes get your first job and I know it helped mine because one of my friends who worked at the paper used to work with my managing editor at the Denton Record Chronicle and my boss Todd said yah, I gave your friend a call to see if you worked with him and he gave you a good reference so I mean I don’t think it was contingent on me getting the job but it certainly helped. So yah, it would have been been nice to put faces to the name and get feedback on what their experiences at the paper was like and how it was different then or if it’s the same as it was then.

R: This happens on our campus: Were you ever in classes with people who just did not want to work at the Daily or did not want to get involved with student media?

P: I did. And you know some, I tried to get them to “Hey, why don’t you get some clips at the paper, just write one or two stories a week.” Some just think ... they didn’t want to put the effort in or the time. And some I think wanted to, I guess they heard bad stories about that it’s really challenging. But you’ll get people like that. And there are some that want to do broadcast more than print. And I kept trying to tell them that knowing how to write a story is still going to help you in broadcast. You still have to know how to write your copy. But there were people like that and there were some who just really loved working at the paper. Kind of a mixed bag, personality, too.

R: You did so much when you were at the student paper. What are the top three skills you took away from working there?

P: knowing how to write a competent news article. That was the first one. Knowing how to budget my time each week, balancing hey I have to study for a test here but I also have two stories due on this day too, how I kind of work that in. So budgeting time, writing stories, and then, gosh, interacting with a news staff. Knowing how a newsroom operates – it’s definitely beneficial if you get that experience before you even get an internship, um, knowing kind of what to expect in a newsroom and that it’s always busy basically and people are juggling things at the same, knowing when to go talk to your boss and hey – door’s shut, don’t knock at this time. Just little things like that – knowing the ins and outs of how a newsroom operates really kind of helped me, especially now that I’m in the professional world. It kind of works a lot like the Daily, actually, and it’s kind of eerie.
APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT 2 INTERVIEW
R: One of the things I wanted to follow up with you on is what you did within student media. It sounds like you got a lot out of your student media experience. Wanted to talk to you a little about the jobs you held and the things you learned while you were doing them.

P: Ok.

R: How did you get involved with student media?

P: Well, I did my freshman year at the University of Texas at Dallas, and I started out college as a dance major. And I guess sort of halfway through my freshman year, my father’s persistent, “You’re not going to get a job,” nagging kind of stalked me and I decided I would explore different career paths and so in that I joined the prelaw society, I joined the pre-nursing society, and I started writing for the school newspaper because I thought that those three career paths, which were legal, nursing and journalism, which were really different, I realize, but I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. They were the most appealing to me, so I did all of those things and decided that I liked writing for the newspaper the best. And so I decided I wanted to do journalism and majoring in journalism and UTD didn’t have a journalism major so I transferred to SMU. And so even before I got to SMU because I knew I really liked doing student media and working with student media and to be totally frank with you it was an easy way to make a little bit of money – I was paying my own way through college – so any way I could find to make a few extra bucks it was something I was interested in doing. So before I even was accepted to SMU as a transfer student, I applied for a position on the daily campus because they were interviewing for fall positions in the spring. And so I did that and I got associate opinion editor, and that was really exciting for me because that’s the kind of thing I was doing at UTD with student commentary and interviewing people for their specific commentary. That really appealed to me, and so I started doing that. I really enjoyed AOE and the next semester became online editor and redesigned the website to make it more functional because the website we’d had before I became online editor was something that had been around several years and wasn’t particularly functional – I can’t describe it … the first attempt at having an online version of the print newspaper. So I worked with our faculty adviser to get that finished, and then the next semester became editor in chief. And so that was really exciting. That’s the build up of my student media career. But I only spent one semester as editor in chief before I created this role of politics editor and that’s I did the rest of the time I was in college.

R: How much longer were you in college after creating that position

P: two semesters

R: One thing I noticed throughout your responses is that the hands-on experience is something that drew you to the student media realm, but you didn’t say that explicitly. I just wondered what was the appeal and how did experience in the newsroom differ from what you were learning in the classroom?

P: So I think part of the reason I was so drawn to student media is because, especially at The Daily Campus, and especially with Jay Miller, who is still the adviser for student media, there was always this environment of there are no rules, if you want to do it you can. Um, which is how I decided to redesign the student website, redesign the student newspaper, do a mayoral debate, create the politics editor – so if there was a determined student who had a good idea, Jay was going to help you do it and make that happen. And none of my other professors were like that. So I got to do things in student media that I just like dreamt up on my own, and as long as I
had the wherewithal to carry them out, Jay was going to help me do that. And that was really appealing. And it gave me a lot of experiences I don’t think I would have had, even in a traditional student media environment or even in class in general because they gave us these very straightforward assignments that didn’t allow for a lot of creativity and were … there’s a reason for that, they want you to learn the basics of journalism, which is great, but within that framework there’s not a lot of room for creativity. So I felt that student media allowed me to have the creativity that I wanted to have with journalism and I loved majoring in journalism at SMU because they really focus on convergence and want you to do print and online and broadcast, and I think there’s definitely a place for that, but all these classes are separate – so even though you’re taking all of these classes, there’s no place to really put them all together unless you do student media. And so, that’s why decided to continue with student media and that sort of stayed with me three and a half years that I was in college.

R: Tell me more about the convergence and multimedia aspect as far as skills development goes. Did you get thrown in and we want to try this, OK go do it, or did you get very much training that was specific to the different goals you were trying to set. Where did you get the skills to do something like redesign the website?

P: So student media was good at letting me use the skills I already had. It didn’t necessarily teach me how to do it – that was mostly my classes. So at SMU you have to take a digital class, you have to take a video class and you have to take several print classes, and so they kind of taught me the basics. I think one of the things that was lacking at SMU was anything beyond beginning digital journalism; so as far as website coding, and HTML and how to put together a visual graphic, we didn’t learn any of that. One of the biggest issues SMU will have to overcome in the next couple of years. Because there are students from other journalism schools graduating with all this in-depth knowledge on how to create digital storytelling and while we learn the basics of that, like Wordpress and existing platforms, there’s no advanced skill there. That was something I had to figure out on my own, and Jay was really good with graphic design and so he helped me with that but in terms of like the coding that was necessary to redesign the website I just rented a book from the library on HTML coding and sat down and figured it out, which was kind of a bummer because there wasn’t anyone who could help me with that, but I figured it out and that was fine and that knowledge that I gained by forcing myself to figure out how to redesign this website was one of the reasons that I got internships that I held in college – because I knew how to do this coding that my peers didn’t know how to do. So in some sense student media forced me to learn how to do that, but it didn’t teach me how to do it.

R: That’s come up quite a bit having to spend time outside of class and outside of student media environment to be self-motivated. How much time did you spend outside … teaching yourself skills – you mentioned coding – were there other skills you had to teach yourself because they weren’t being taught or you were just curious?

P: The field of journalism I was most interested in was political journalism, and that was sort of unique to SMU because, and there’s nothing wrong with this, but the type of student SMU attracts is not the type of student who is particularly interested in public policy. So there is a fashion media minor but they don’t have a business media minor. They have business media class and a political journalism class but it’s very surface level and so in terms of political reporting, which is something I chose to pursue for the last two semesters I was there, I sort of had to teach myself how to use publicly available information and file public information requests for like high-level government information that went beyond Highland Park police records. And so that was something I had to teach myself and Jay was really helpful in that
regard, but it was more that if I wanted to report a story about national politics, then I was the one who had to figure out who I needed to call and what sources were most effective to report the story just because I didn’t have any political reporting classes or any kind of public affairs or public policy reporting classes. And so, I had to figure it out on my own. I think by nature of my interests being unique at SMU.

R: It sounds like it was the type of environment were that support system – you mentioned flexible but strong support – allowed people to do what they want to do.

P: And so I wanted to do political journalism, there were other students who wanted to do food journalism and other students who wanted to do music, others who wanted to do something as broad as education and so where there were no classes for that, there were professors and like, Jay, who really helped them figure that out. And so even though my interest in in politics was unique, there were plenty of other students who were equally as unique fields.

R: When you graduated you were hired by HousingWire, and you were there for how long?

P: I was there from end of Jan 2012 to end of Aug 12.

R: You moved to NYC. It sounds like you wanted to do something very specific. Were those opportunities scarce? It sounds like you tried to get a job in a number of different journalistic settings.

P: yes, so I applied everywhere. I as offered two jobs, one was as business reporting intern at the Huffington Post and then I was offered a reporting position at a small Wall Street area newsletter reporting on high-yield trading. Which, to be totally honest with you, I didn’t’ know anything about. But they liked my business background, reporting for HousingWire and the Texas Law Book they felt I could easily adapt to it, so I was offered those two things. I didn’t really want to work for the Huffington Post, and I didn’t really want to report on high-yield trading, so I decided to turn both of those down and I knew I wouldn’t be happy in them, and they both were looking for long-term commitments, they wanted me to sign a contract to be there at least a year. And I didn’t want to be stuck in something I knew I wasn’t going to enjoy. By total happenstance, I also applied for a speech and debate coach position in inner city Newark, and sort of randomly and because I coached debate at local high schools all through college for extra money. So I got that position and decided to take it because I wasn’t being offered any journalism positions that I was really passionate about. That’s what I did.

R: And you freelance, as well?

P: I do, I freelance as well. I write for … essentially a big blog. The Millennial Generation. I write about politics for them and I run my own blog, which is becoming moderately successful and I’ve done a bit of work for the DMN and I’m going to freelance a little for HousingWire over the summer. So I’m continuing to do journalism and I’m going to just freelance and take longer freelance positions over summer and winter breaks until I can do a master’s in some type of political science so that I can re-narrow my career path. I think I just took so many positions in business journalism that I sort of inadvertently limited myself to covering business journalism, which isn’t something I’m particularly passionate about. So I need to redirect that before I can really start to report on what I want to report on.

R: How did you, when you started freelancing – obviously this is the direction our industry is going, more freelance based staff rather than permanent full time, come into the building staff. I wondered how did your student media experience prepare you for the freelance world?

P: So I think student media was particularly helpful with that because it showed me sort of how to be an industrious reporter, so because of student media I now how o work on a deadline. And I think that a lot of students who don’t work for student media they like take freelance work and
are shocked at how fast the turnaround is because you have two weeks to do a story when it’s
due for class, but in student media, maybe you only have 24 hours. That’s been really helpful in
that I know how to turn things around really fast. With this leap toward more freelancing and
smaller newspaper staffs, a lot of people don’t realize that the first people to go when it comes to
layoffs at a newspaper are typically copy editors and so if you don’t consistently clean work,
they are just going to stop hiring you because there’s no one to clean up after you if you turn
something in that isn’t clean. After working for student media and cleaning up everyone else’s
work after being editor, it’s really easy to look at my own work and clean it up from like an
editor’s point of view before I send it in, which gets me a step up because they don’t have to
spend as much time fixing my copy or making my lead more direct or making sure everything is
in AP style. Because I can turn it in and it’s already like that. I don’t think just majoring in
journalism alone gives you the ability to look at your work from an editor’s point of view so I
think that was really helpful.

R: Student media professionals need to keep things up to speed with the industry. One thing that
my students frequently ask about is just building the freelance business – the taxes part of it, how
do you get that work? How did that come up in your experience at SMU?
P: I think we were really encouraged at SMU to build an online portfolio for ourselves and so
that has always been really helpful to me because I’ve had this comprehensive website that has a
downloadable website and all of my clips and all of my multimedia examples and sort of
showcases my work in a concise way that you can click through in five minutes, and so that’s
helped me a lot – get freelance work – because I have this website that will answer any and all
questions you have about my work history and so when I say, here’s a story I want to pitch and
here’s why I want to write it for you, if you need any more information about me, please view
my website – there’s very little back and forth that needs to go on because they can just look at
my website and look at everything I’ve done and answers any questions that they have, which
appeals to like, editors, who are fast and working on a deadline. So that was really helpful in
creating my freelance profile. But then a lot of other things weren’t covered at all, in terms of
how to put your name out there and all the freelance databases that exist and getting other
companies to advertise for you. I didn’t realize until I got my job at HousingWire that like (name
omitted) even existed as a freelance platform and that they would do freelance notifications for
you if you emailed their editors, like all of these things that I learned about from freelancing after
joining HW were because at HW, we used freelancers a lot, and I kind of figured out how they
got their jobs and that helped me figure out how to get mine after I left HW. But I realize a lot of
students don’t have that advantage after they graduate because they immediately go into
freelancing. So I think that schools and student media need to a better job allowing, giving
students better information on how to get their name out there effectively.

R: What is your perspective – what is the role of student media in forcing skills development on
students? The idea that it’s there, flexible, if you’re motivated, you could create what you want.
What’s the role of student media?
P: there are always only going to be a handful of students who will take advantage of everything
student media have to offer. Not every student is going to be like oh, I can create a new position
in student media, and not every student is going to be like, oh let’s set up this mayoral debate.
But there are those students at every school, like a handful of students who are really involve din
student media, but that’s not the majority of students. And I think that if student media took a
more hands on role in encouraging students to be creative, student engagement with student
media would be better. Because two or three students every year can’t create all the
developments that need to occur for student media to stay relevant on campus. So I think that like, student advisers always have these really great ideas as to how to make the paper better, but they don’t actively go to students and say “I think you can do this, you SHOULD do this” and then let the student do that on their own. So I think that if student media advisers were to more specifically select – like have an idea and go after a specific student to do it, then that would be more effective than just having the editorial meeting once a week and having the editorial adviser say “what about this” and not proactively going after a single student to do it. There’s sort of this collective action problem. That’s a real great idea, but maybe I’m not the one to do it, and if everyone says that, nothing gets done. If the student adviser would go to one specific person and say like “Our readership is low because of this reason, and I think we should do this, and I think YOU should do it, then I think a lot more would get done. At the Daily Campus, we had that issue in spades because all of these students were really involved with Greek life or whatever their boyfriend was doing that day and so every time we had this problem and we’d have it pointed out to us, we’d all say oh, that is an issue and then think someone else was going to take care of it and not take individual responsibility for it. And so there were several times that jay would say I think this is the issue, I think you should solve it. It always got solved. But if you don’t put that on one student, I thin the problem is going to go … it’ll just stay the way it is.

R: What would you say the top three skills you walked away from student media would be?

P: I think the first one is not bending to social pressure in terms of coverage. Especially at SMU, it was a really small community and so when the student newspaper reported something that was unpopular, there was this huge backlash from student leaders who thought we were framing SMU in a bad light. And this happened on several occasion. Specifically, there was a girl who was texting on her cellphone and ran into another girl on sorority row – like hit her with her car – and we reported the names of those people because they were publically available and the DMN was reporting them. There was no ethical problem with us reporting their names. But we faced this massive backlash from the student leaders, who thought it was embarrassing that we printed the name of the girl who was texting while driving and that we had like ruined her life. I maintain that she ruined her life when she ran into a girl with her car. But they blamed that on us. So that was difficult situation and a lot of people were just like, let’s just pull her name from the story, but it was really … student media was like, no let’s don’t because if anyone wanted to find out her name, all they’d have to do is go look at the police report and find her name. There’s nothing wrong with us reporting her name. She’s not a victim of a crime. And so that happened. And there was a football player who was arrested for sexual assault, and it was decently graphic. And we toned it down but we still reported what he did. And so that became a huge issue, and so the football team is trying to resurrect itself, why would you report bad news. Our function is not to be a PR agent for the school; it’s to report news. That was another situation where we had to tell people, "No, we reported this there’s nothing wrong with it." And we respect your complaints but we’re not going to adhere to what you’re telling us to do. And so sort of student media esp. in light of being at a small school that had an identity issue that really showed me that the public is going to have a problem with some of the things you’re going to report but you just need to report them because it’s your job. So that was the first thing that student media taught me to do.

And the second was to I guess to be do to my job effectively regardless of the failure of others to do their job effectively. Because especially – college is college there are always going to be students who have editor roles who like, don’t show up one day. Or don’t report their story the way they were supposed to or ask an inappropriate question in an interview. There are always
going to be people who do stupid things. And as an editor, your job is to make sure you produce a good product regardless of what other people do, so if you need to take over for that person, you just do it and it’s not productive to get angry or dwell on it. You just have to do it and get over it because at the end of the day, you have this deadline. I think it taught me how to better deal with people and mini crisis management in the face of a deadline. That was really helpful, especially as editor in chief, to learn how to deal with that.

And then the third thing it taught me is to balance appealing to your audience with news that is useful. So on SMU’s campus we probably would have sold more paper if we did more reporting about Greek life. But in the end, there wasn’t anything newsworthy going on. So we could have made stuff up or created stories and talked about how this sorority threw a party and that would have made more people pick up the newspapers, but that wasn’t newsworthy. So we tried to balance making people pick up the paper with stories that were important. So maybe a lot of people weren’t particularly interested in the human rights events that were going on campus and a lot more people would have enjoyed it if we had talked about like the Kappa Gamma fundraiser that happened on campus but we knew that we needed to report both and that one was more important. And so you either run the KKG story on the front page but in the corner and a 250-word story instead of the main story that was above the fold and jumps to page 6 and a longer story. We hoped that people would pick up the paper for the KKG reporting and continue to read what was more important.
APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT 3 INTERVIEW
Researcher: I’m calling to follow up on the questionnaire that you submitted as part of my thesis research. So I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions pertaining to the answers you gave. I realize we need to acknowledge our relationship in that I was your college media adviser and I know you’ve had several, so I just want you to feel comfortable talking to me frankly, I mean don’t worry about any kind of hurting feelings or anything like that.

Participant: OK

R: I wanted to first thank you for contributing to the study.
P: No problem.

R: I wanted to focus in on the question of general abilities and skills and developing specialties; your answers in those areas were very interesting. You are reporting and writing now. Can you tell me a little more about what you do now in your current job?
P: Right now, I’m reporting, writing, shooting my own photos, designing and copy editing.

R: How large is the Beaumont paper? What is the circulation size?
P: Man, I don’t even know. I think it’s close to 30k.

R: And how many reporters are on staff?
P: Including sports?
R: Yes.
P: There are about 10.

R: And you write four to five stories a week? Can you tell me about the types of stories you write?
P: I’ve been writing profiles, like feature profiles, find stories, stories about political offices up for election.

R: Let’s get into this idea of how student media should or shouldn’t prepare people in a specialty. You started with an area of interest in design and now you’re writing. How did that come together for you and how did student media shape the direction of where you are going?
P: Well, I applied as a reporter solely because I needed a job and I knew it was something I could do. But I applied with the impression I would be able to go into design eventually, which is kind of where I’m headed. Working in student media did for me, working as a copy editor and then a designer, and then doing stories between, it really helped me understand the need for a minor focus in each of the elements of a newspaper and not just a specialty. Though I still think a specialty is necessary, but it’s also necessary to have minor fields that you’re well versed in.

R: Why do you think that is?
P: Most people, from what I’ve seen and heard, most people start out in small newspapers. And in small newspapers, they don’t generally have full staffs like you would find at the ST or DMN so knowing how to shoot your own photos – writing your own stories, shooting your own photos, and laying it out because you don’t always have a photographer who is going to drop everything to go take a photo with you. So being able to do that on your own helps you and it helps the paper.

R: You mentioned one of the things you are able to do now with your skills is take a story idea and come up with a story package. How much responsibility is that for you at the paper you’re at?
P: I have to take total responsibility for it. I have to come up with the idea, develop it, esp. now, I didn’t start out as a reporter, per say, so it’s really difficult for me to figure out who I’m going to
talk to and find all the people to talk to, figure out and think about the different photos and art to go with it, and then be able to construct it into a package.

R: In terms of what you got from student media experiences. You were at two different student newspapers.

P: The experience I had at The Foghorn was a little unorganized, at the foghorn it was we all had there was reporting, and shooting, and in my last semester designing. At The Shorthorn it was more focused. It was trying to help people develop a specialty to become extremely well versed in, and use that their selling point when they are trying to get jobs. So at the foghorn, it was a little more difficult – if I’d tried to get a job immediately afterward graduating from there, I would have had a difficult time because I didn’t understand all of the elements of reporting, and news, and publications.

R: Would it be accurate to say that your experience in transferring from that two-year-experience with the smaller paper to the four-year, more organized four-year paper was positive? Was it positive or challenging?

P: It was both positive and challenging. It was an experience that submerged me into publications and the operations of publications and it was challenging but it was a good kind of challenging because it forced me to think about different stories or when I was copy editing it made me think about is this true, what do I check, where do I check – it expanded my mindset of looking at things as a square to think about it as a cube of information.

R: tell me about you made a comment in the questionnaire that student media should provide more resources for training and preparation in an area even if it’s just one person who is interested. Expand on that a little bit

P: Sometimes it felt like if only one person was interested in a type of training then it wouldn’t be. Sometimes I felt like training was only available if it would benefit multiple people at the same time, as opposed to one person at one time. And I think by providing if one person has an interest in one topic, those resources should be available I know that ya'll have Lynda.com, which is helpful, but sometimes hearing it from another person or getting in contact with a network or a person within a network is even better because then they can get on-the-job experience. I know like with me, we tried to, I went over once to the S-T and sat with Michael Currie, design director, but I don’t know if everybody was aware – maybe aware is a better way to put it – I don’t know if everybody was aware of those types of network opportunities exist.

R: It sounds like a recommendation could be to make those or bill those to people in a way that would motivate them to take advantage of them?

P: Yah.

R: Along the lines of self-motivation, one of the questions that you responded to was rating the help you got in different areas – how much did the experience you have in student media help you or experiences in classrooms help you. One of the things that I thought was interesting was that classroom experience – you ranked it lower than the student media experience, and I wanted to know your reasoning behind that.

P: In classes, for me – and I think for everybody – hands-on experiences are probably the most beneficial type of experience that will help somebody grow. In classrooms, they are kind of stuck in this: In featuring writing, there’s this kind of feature writing. In copy editing, there’s this. Like in news editing, they’re going based of Harrower’s book and not everyone uses Harrower’s style. So I think student media expands your scope of learning, whereas in classrooms, you learn how to do something but you don’t learn the repercussions of doing it wrong.
R: Can you give me an example of ways that you learned from hands-on experiences, maybe a specific incident or experience from within working at the student newspaper that you recall shaping your perspective?

P: When I started at Del Mar, the first story I ever wrote was in 2002 and I wrote this story about a janitor who wrote a lot of poems. I never really understood ... back then I was writing down all my notes, and so I took down these notes and I misquoted him. And nothing ever came about it; no one ever said anything. So I didn’t really think about it. And when I transferred to UTA, there was a real focus on this is why it’s important to take notes, this is why it’s important to make sure everything is accurate; you know, if you need to repeat something back to someone to make sure you understand it, repeat it back to them. Make sure if that if you use a recorder, go ahead and use it but don’t rely on it; so that’s one instance. But I learned that in student media, not in the classroom. Although in the classroom reinforced what I was learning in student media.

R: You were in a leadership role at The Shorthorn for the last several semesters that you were in school. What about the hands-on experience as an editor do you feel like you learned the most from or didn’t learn from:

P: I learned a lot from being an editor. Some of the times, even in my current position, I think about what my editors are doing and then I reconnect back to what I did, what I learned, like at helping people or teaching them or going over stories in detail so they understand why it’s important to get so many different angles ... and something that I see that my editors don’t really do. So I feel like it was going into the editor position only took me one step further in understanding the plight of a student journalist and beyond that, actually.

R: What was the toughest decision that you didn’t expect to have to make in your student media experience?

P: The one thing that I didn’t expect was the long hours. When I first transferred to UTA, I really wanted to be involved with other student organizations and you know getting out there and doing this and doing that. It was more of a personal decision not be as involved with other organizations because I wanted to focus on my career, and what student media could do for my career both in terms of learning as well as networking. So I mean that was an unexpected thing but I had already prepared to join this and do that and join a fraternity, but I decided not to go through with those because one, I wouldn’t have time and giving up the learning experience I was going to get in student media wasn’t something I wanted to do.

R: Do you feel like you had an advantage in the job market over students you went to class with who did not participate with student media?

P: Oh, yes, very much. It’s kind of, especially for being at the shorthorn. I actually ran into a source without any kind of journalism background and we were talking about how I’d just moved here and he wanted to know all this information, and I said, “I used to work at The Shorthorn,” and he went off and on about how amazing The Shorthorn is and he went to a different school but he considered The Shorthorn to be a huge competitor even though they weren’t competing with them.

R: One of the things that you wrote in your answers was that you learned a lot in your time in student media both professionally and personally. I wondered if you could elaborate on those things? What did you learn about yourself professionally and what did you learn about yourself personally that you would be willing to share?

P: So personally would probably be the easiest. As you know I can have a bit of an attitude. I can be a little sassy. I can carry my emotions on my shoulders. That’s something that, during my time at The Shorthorn, I had instances where I had difficult conversations with others and it
really helped me evaluate my own personality and how it works in conjunction with other people, especially in planning or trying to develop ideas and that wasn’t something I think I’d ever learn if someone hadn’t pointed it out or provided different ways that I could communicate more effectively.

R: Do you feel that’s benefitting you in your personal life and your professional life?
P: Very much so. Sometimes I’m still a little sassy, but you know – can’t get rid of it all. (laughs)

R: Tell me what you learned about yourself professionally, as a professional.
P: As a professional, I learned how to look at everything, not just … I’ll take the recent tip I got about the inmates being released. When I heard about it, I immediately started thinking about everything: who I need to call, who I need to talk to, where do I verify this information, who does this affect overall. I started thinking about the types of photos or art I’d need. History information about the inmates who were going to be released, and you know terms of professionalism, that’s not something I ever would have thought about. When I worked at the foghorn, I’d just get a story and think about the things I’d need in the story. Working at The Shorthorn made me realize that it’s not just these three people; there’s probably 20 people who are involved. But it’s starting very broad and working downward in almost a funnel kind of fashion and narrowing it down.

R: One thing you suggested is that student media should provide help and training in building professional websites and networking sites from the day they start. Tell me more about how that could work and why that’s so important.
P: The how is immediately starting with incoming students, show them how to develop a website, even if it’s just a Wordpress blog, where they can post their clips and understand throughout the year as they try things at the shorthorn or they decide to transfer somewhere else, how to keep it updated and to make changes to it on their own without having to spend $200 on a professional website designer to do it for them. And then it becomes a skill on their own; they’ll have basic or intermediate skills in web design, which is especially important with publications going more online. What it helps them with in the future or overall; when they are getting ready to graduate and getting ready to apply and getting ready to apply while they are still in school, they’ll have those clips always available with them instead of sending them in. They’ll be able to put that on their resume when they are looking for regular jobs or looking for a job in their field. And they won’t be waiting until the last minute like I did. Thinking I can put this together really quick, but it ended up taking a month and a half to put together. By the time they graduate, they’ve got it set. They are updating it regularly, even every six months or so, and they are always keeping it fresh, and keeping it fresh is so important, especially in journalism.

R: couple of things you said a put a lot of responsibility on student media to provide training and materials kind of thing. How much is it on the student to learn skills on their own.
P: It’s 100 percent the student. Students have to be motivated. If I wasn’t motivated I never would have come up to you or I don’t know if you offered it to me but about shadowing Michael, but it’s got to be on the student. The student has to have the drive. If they don’t have the drive, they are not going to look for it anyway. In terms of student media … student media just needs to have those things available and make students aware of the stuff that’s available. And in some cases push other students into those things to see how helpful they can be. Motivation comes from students. If you’re not motivated, you’re not going to do it. If you’re not motivated, you’re not going to ask about it. For me, personally, if I wanted to know something, I was going to find out. I’d as you, I’d ask Lloyd, I’d ask Muilenburg. If I didn’t get the answer I wanted or I
felt like there was more information than what was being provided, I’d go look it up. And I think having access to all this information and letting people know where all this information is will be ready for them when they do have motivation, if they ever find motivation.

R: Thank you very much. Is there anything you would want me to consider as I’m working through this that we’ve not talked about?

P: Just that the one thing I feel like I really would have spent more time on or been able to spend more time on is preparation for the job market. We always hear that, I remember hearing that the market is kind of bad right now and that it’s really difficult to get a job in journalism, and it’s kind of like if I told you, Don’t touch fire, it’s hot. Well, I’m not going to know until I do it, and until I did it I didn’t realize, you know, it’s really difficult because you’re not just competing with the 40 students you work with. You’re competing with thousands of students that are graduating, thousands of people who are still looking for work. Being prepared for the types of questions you’ll be asked, being prepared for curveballs about cities, and doing research about where you’re applying. Those are all things I do on my own, but I think, I don’t know if everyone else would do things like look up city population or that kind of thing. And I think it’s important for any student who is getting ready to join the career, you know what I mean.

R: Yah, the job market.

P: Yah. So I wish I would have 1) paid attention more; 2) had it shoved down my throat. That’s probably the best way to put it because sometimes we forget that you can tell people 100 times or 10 times hey we’re doing this or we’re doing that. I sat in your resume training session three, four, five times and it didn’t really dawn on me, well, I can’t really say me because I’ve always known my resume is important, but it didn’t really dawn on me how important structure is, how important it is to get the information that really counts, I didn’t have any major feedback from employers on that. But almost like a total preparation, 101 course for students who are getting ready to graduate.

R: That’s a really interesting idea, especially with the market the way it is. One of the reasons I’m doing this study is to prioritize everything that graduates need to know, skills wise, going into the job market. And job preparedness includes knowing how to find a job. Thank you for elaborating on that.

R: I have one more thing for you. So when I started at The Shorthorn, I really didn’t want to be a reporter. I remember you saying that when people started initially that everyone was a reporter for a semester and then they could whatever they wanted to do from there. And at the time I thought that was the dumbest idea ever. But looking back, it’s actually probably the best idea to do. Because for someone who isn’t a reporter, who had no designs to be a reporter, I’m doing a lot of reporting and I’m struggling and sometimes I don’t know how to respond or I don’t know what to write, sometimes my lede really, really sucks, and it’s really important for everybody no matter what you want to do. Even if you want to be a photographer, I think it’s extremely important for them to be a reporter first. Because you don’t know what you’re going to be doing when you step into that small newspaper or wherever you plan to go. You may be hired as a photographer but be asked to go and report a story as well. You don’t know what you’re going to be asked to do.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


