

Elizabeth Spiller
Executive Vice Chancellor
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Dear EVC Spiller:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal for external vetting. Developing a doctoral program in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications is not a new idea. The faculty have discussed establishing a Ph.D. multiple times over the last two decades. The faculty want to advance research in our fields and be competitive with our peer institutions. When we joined the Big 10, we became the only journalism program in the academic alliance that did not offer a terminal degree in our field. A doctoral program is also a condition for acceptance into the Alliance of Schools and Colleges of Communication and Journalism, so the benchmarking data available to our college is limited by our lack of offering a terminal degree.

The growing demands of our undergraduate programs, inconsistent focus on research by college administrators, lack of faculty with doctoral degrees and limited budget to support graduate assistants have all been identified as barriers to moving a Ph.D. program proposal forward from the college in the past. While we still need to meet the demands of our undergraduate programs, everything else in the college has changed. With the installation of a new dean came a renewed focus on research. With recent hires, 15 faculty now have doctoral degrees and would be able to oversee dissertations. As we move to the Incentive Based Budget Model at UNL, we can support development of the doctoral program through growth in other areas.

Another change in our college is the realization that we can offer something different than our peer institutions. Like our peer institutions, we value professional experience in journalism and mass communication and hire faculty with a master's degree and significant work experience. Several of our faculty, and faculty in journalism programs across the country, pursue a doctoral degree after they have already been hired at an academic institution. However, there are a limited number of programs in our fields nationally, and no programs across the Big 10, that offer a Ph.D. online with working professionals in mind.

In addition to reaching academics seeking a terminal degree, an online Ph.D. program would also cater to those conducting media and communication research in industry at government agencies, think tanks and corporations. Most of our 200+ students enrolled in classes across our master's and certificate programs are working professionals taking online classes. We can recruit directly from our graduate alumni base.

Our proposal focuses on expanding our online offerings in professional journalism, integrated media communication, public relations and social media, and financial communication to become the first Big 10 school to offer a Ph.D. designed for working professions in our fields. We need your assistance to determine what to call the program, how best to market it and to ensure we have the necessary infrastructure to launch. I'm happy to answer any questions or provide additional information as you consider this proposal.

Sincerely,



Shari R. Veil, MBA, Ph.D.
Professor and Dean
College of Journalism and Mass Communications

PH.D. PROPOSAL

COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND
MASS COMMUNICATIONS





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MASS COMMUNICATIONS

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WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM?

The proposed Ph.D. program in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications (CoJMC) is for students interested in undertaking research-oriented work rooted in the areas of media, communication, advertising, public relations, and journalism. The program would focus on the analysis and criticism of media institutions and media texts, how people experience and understand media content, and the roles of media in producing and transforming culture. This could include instruction in communications regulation, law, and policy; media history; media aesthetics, interpretation, and criticism; the social and cultural effects of mass media; cultural studies; the economics of media industries; visual and media literacy; and the psychology and behavioral aspects of media messages, interpretation, and utilization.

The uniqueness and value of the doctorate program at the CoJMC is a stackable program that has embedded off-ramps including a master's degree and graduate certificates. These qualifications that can be completed along the way provide a guidepost for progress by awarding credentials that lead up to the dissertation. A fully online Ph.D. program, designed with working professionals in mind, creates the opportunity for students from diverse backgrounds to complete the program remotely or relocate to take advantage of on-campus resources in person. The coursework includes mass communications theory, research methods, relevant electives, and a doctoral seminar that leads up to a dissertation.

The example requirements include a natural extension of the currently successful graduate programs at the CoJMC. A Ph.D. gives a pathway to continue after the CoJMC's M.A. programs as well as recruiting graduate students from other institutions and workplaces.

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PHD REQUIREMENTS OUTLINE

I. Master's Degree (up to 36 hours)

CoJMC M.A. Programs

- Integrated Media Communications (IMC)
- Professional Journalism

Transfer credits from another institution

II. Mass Communication Issues & Theory (12 Hours)

- JGRD 901: Ethics in Mass Communication
- JGRD 915: Mass Communication Theory
- JGRD 962: The Digital Media Landscape
- JGRD 995: Issues in Mass Communication

III. Research Methods (15 Hours)

JGRD 919: Methods of Mass Communication Research (3cr)

Mixed Methods Research Certificate (15 Hours)

- Or a combination of courses that address these content areas:
 - Quantitative (3cr)
 - Statistics (3cr)
 - Measurement (3cr)
 - Qualitative (3cr)
 - Mixed Methods (3cr)

IV. Specialization - Electives & Certificate (12 Hours)

CoJMC Graduate Certificates

- PR and Social Media (12 Hours)
- Financial Communications (12 Hours)
- Sports Media and Promotion (12 Hours)

Or a combination of courses with a clear specialization focus such as

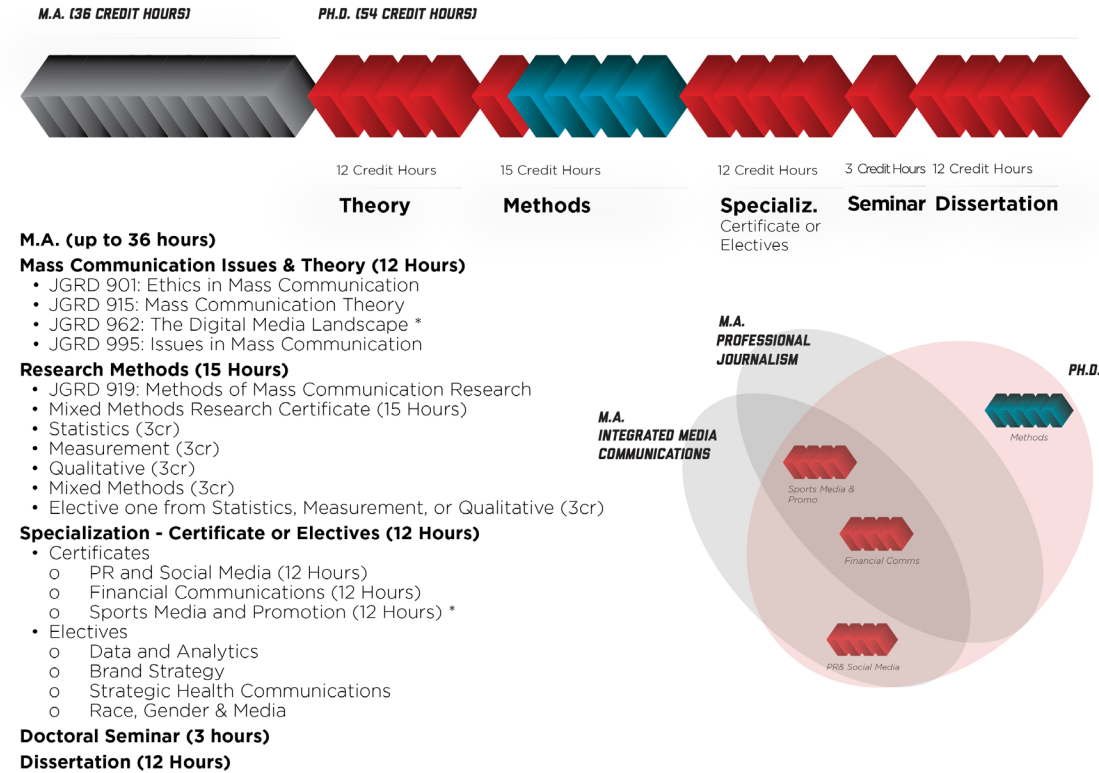
- Data and Analytics
- Brand Strategy
- Strategic Health Communications
- Race, Gender & Media

V. Doctoral Seminar (3 Hours)

VI. Dissertation (12 Hours)

PHD PROGRAM DIAGRAM

COJMC PHD OVERVIEW



The diagram outlines a program balancing mass communications theory, research methods, and independent research reflected in the outline above.

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SAMPLE COURSE ROTATION

	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026
Issues/Theory									
JGRD 901	X						X		
JGRD 915		X						X	
JGRD 962				X					
JGRD 995					X				
Methods									
JGRD 919		X			X			X	
MM Cert	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Specializations									
PR&SocialMedia									
ADPR 830	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ADPR 866		X	X		X	X		X	X
ADPR 850	X		X	X		X	X		X
ADPR 834	X		X	X		X	X		X
Finn Comm									
JOMC 820	X			X			X		
JGRD 819		X			X			X	
ADPR 850	X		X	X		X	X		X
Sports Promo									
SPMC 875	X			X			X		
SPMC 876		X			X			X	
SPMC 877		X			X			X	
SPMC 878	X			X			X		
Selected Electives									
JGRD 902		X					X		
JGRD 903				X				X	
ADPR 881	X			X			X		
ADPR 884		X			X			X	

HOW IS THIS PROPOSED PROGRAM ALIGNED TO THE ACADEMIC GOALS OF THE DEPARTMENT(S), COLLEGE(S), AND UNIVERSITY?

A doctoral program at the CoJMC aligns with the college's strategic plan in two primary areas and addresses multiple points in the UNL 2025 plan. Additionally, a new program creates opportunities for collaboration across departments and any graduate student interested in incorporating media into their research agenda.

COJMC STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Aim 2, strategy 1 of the CoJMC strategic plan specifically calls for the development of a doctoral program designed for working professionals. In addition, the goals for the graduate program are to increase graduate enrollment by 20%, expand course offerings, increase funding for graduate students, and explore ways graduate students are involved in the CoJMC Experience Lab.

Aim 3 of the CoJMC strategic plan outlines several strategies to emphasize and prioritize research and creative activity across the college. The development of a doctoral program will also increase research collaboration and support our goals to increase the impact and the number of scholarly and creative works, ultimately increasing visibility on campus and among peer institutions through publications and awards for CoJMC faculty and students.

UNL 2025 ALIGNMENT

A doctoral program at the CoJMC connects the four core aspirations for UNL. Ph.D. students will create new knowledge and provide leadership in the mass communications field. These interactions around research and creative activity will be transformative through their learning at the CoJMC. Building spaces to facilitate this collaboration embodies the "every person and every interaction matters" mantra to promote equity, dignity, and respect for individuals from diverse backgrounds through hands-on learning experiences. Engaging at UNL and their extended community beyond campus will create connections that will transform student lives.

2

A doctoral program at the CoJMC directly aligns with the following aims of the N2025 plan.

1. Innovative Student Experiences

The CoJMC Experience Lab is a new opportunity for undergraduate students to gain hands-on experience working with peers, faculty, industry professionals, and real-world clients. This requirement for undergraduate students includes skill development in content production, social and digital media, and other emerging technologies. Engagement in the CoJMC Experience Lab for on campus Ph.D. students will create leadership and professional development opportunities with the potential to become a lab environment to develop real-time, applied research.

2. Impactful Research and Creative Activity

The CoJMC faculty have expertise in media related to emergent technology, health communication, diversity, and the environment. A primary goal for a doctoral program at the CoJMC is to increase the impact of research and creative activity. Ph.D. students will increase productivity while fostering an atmosphere of innovation and creativity. Encouraging these efforts will result in more impactful research originating from the college.

3. Interdisciplinary Endeavors to Solve Critical Challenges

Ph.D. students would expand research in the critical areas of social media, artificial intelligence, data, fake news and misinformation, diversity, ethics, and the environment. This aligns directly with four of the Chancellor's Commissions: Chancellor's Commission on the Status of People of Color, Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women, Chancellor's Commission (on the Status of) Gender and Sexual Identities, Chancellor's Environment, Sustainability and Resilience Commission (CESRC). CoJMC faculty serve on these commissions and could engage Ph.D. students in this important work. In addition, the college collaborates with many departments across campus through a variety of centers. A good example of this is the engagement of six CoJMC faculty members as fellows with the Nebraska Governance and Technology Center.

4. Broadening Nebraska's Engagement

Targeting working professionals inherently will broaden and build connections with community and industry. This work has begun with the college's M.A. program, which provides working professionals an opportunity to continue their educational goals. An online Ph.D. program has the potential to extend this reach. Furthermore, innovative research in the critical areas, listed above, also positions the college and university in a leadership role around issues in media and communications.

5. Inclusive Excellence and Diversity

An online, flexible doctoral program would allow access to a terminal degree for non-traditional graduate students. Many working professionals are not able to relocate for a graduate assistantship and dedicate full time to a doctoral program. The online format, increases access to an advanced degree, making it possible for a wider, more diverse population to pursue a Ph.D. As a result, this increases diversity in our industry and academy.

Research topics in media naturally encompass diversity and inclusion issues. There is an opportunity to build on faculty expertise and extend future research in this important area.

6. Participation and Professional Development

A Ph.D. would level up and open new prospects for students to pursue additional opportunities in their industry. Collaboration with faculty, other graduate students, and undergraduate students as part of the Experience Lab creates opportunities to build skills and connections internally and with external communities beyond UNL. The CoJMC has collaborated with agencies, organizations, and the surrounding community for many years. There are strong connections that will extend with remote Ph.D. students, thus, creating a larger network for potential professional development.

WHO WILL BE THE AUDIENCE FOR THIS PROGRAM?

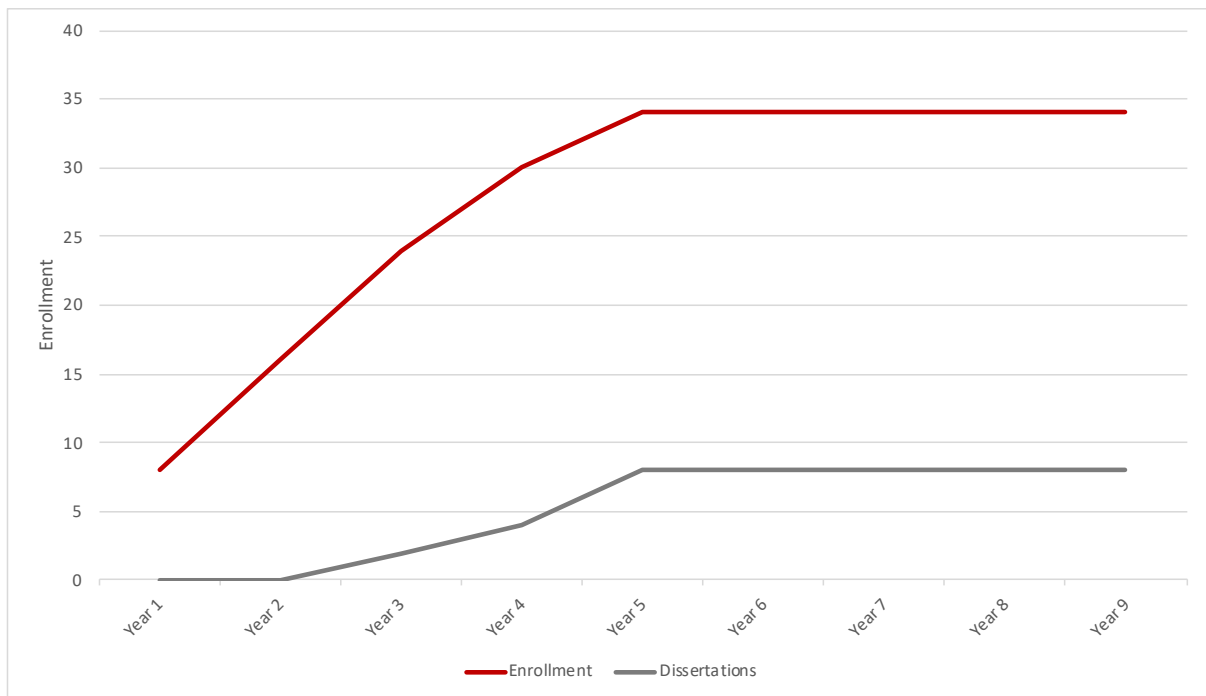
The program will serve students who want to pursue careers in the academy or in industries that would value graduates who understand the industries we serve and who would buttress that understanding with rich research skills. This program would prepare graduates for teaching and research in journalism, media, advertising, and public relations departments. Students will be prepared to conduct media and strategic communication research for government agencies like the CDC and FDA, for example. Faculty expertise in strategic health communication compliments this avenue. Research-intensive advertising and communications firms and companies in technology areas that prize research skills (Google or Facebook, for instance) are also potential employers. The CoJMC's connections with the Nebraska Governance and Technology Center will be an opportunity for future Ph.D. students to engage in the growing field of media law and policy.

The primary audience for the doctoral program is working professionals. In our fields, academic programs highly value industry experience. However, after 10-20 years in the industry, professionals are unlikely to give up their livelihood to pursue a Ph.D. full time. One audience will be professionals looking to move to a career in academia and those who have already started the transition to academia as an adjunct or professor of practice and would like to pursue tenure-track positions with research expectations. Another audience includes those looking to advance their career with research skills to work for government agencies, R&D operations, or think tanks. A doctoral program at the CoJMC will provide experiences to develop transferrable skills across the academy and the industry.

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WHO WILL BE THE AUDIENCE FOR THIS PROGRAM?

Designing a Ph.D. program for working professionals increases the recruiting potential for new students by including non-traditional students interested in pursuing a terminal degree in integrated media communications. The initial cohort could include up to eight doctoral students for a completely online program. Projecting eight new doctoral students per year would result in a full program over five years. After five years the doctoral program enrollment will level out at 34 doctoral students assuming dissertations are completed during a 3-5-year period.



Projected year-over-year enrollment growth with number of dissertations completed each year.

WILL THIS BE AN ON-CAMPUS PROGRAM AND/OR FULLY ONLINE PROGRAM, OR A HYBRID/BLENDED PROGRAM?

The current proposal is a fully online program. An online program allows students to pursue doctoral degrees from a distance. Few such programs are now available with the most notable example being Regent University, a private religiously oriented college in Virginia. Regent offers doctoral programs in communications and in strategic communications that require a one-week summer residency at the school (though online options were available during COVID times). Offering such weeklong immersions in the program, either during the summer or during the academic year, is an option the college would consider for the start and end of a student's Ph.D. efforts. Such programs are now available in other disciplines, such as nursing, education, and various types of engineering at various universities, including the University of North Dakota, George Washington University, the University of Southern Mississippi, and Johns Hopkins University. There is no online Ph.D. program in mass communication or a related field in the Big 10 Academic Alliance.

Students in the online-Ph.D. program would begin with the CoJMC master's courses that are already offered online. The alignment with the M.A. and Ph.D. online programs optimizes college resources by sharing coursework and certificate programs where possible. As with our M.A. graduate students there is the option to be a residential student on campus, but not a requirement. We would provide identical coursework for the residential cohort and the distance students, with asynchronous and web-conferencing approaches facilitating the work for both types of students. The online option serves the needs of modern students and working professionals.

WHAT ARE THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED PROGRAM (I.E. INSTRUCTIONAL CAPACITY, ADVISING, STUDENT SUPPORT, SPACE, ETC.) AT THE PROPOSED ENROLLMENT LEVELS? ARE THESE RESOURCES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE?

AVAILABLE COJMC RESOURCES

The proposed program builds on the college's current M.A. graduate program. This limits the additional resources needed beyond advising and support unique to doctoral student needs. Currently, the CoJMC is made up of 15 faculty who hold Ph.D.s with a few working on completing their doctorates.

CoJMC Faculty with Ph.D.s

- 10 - Advertising and Public Relations
- 2 - Journalism
- 2 - Sports Media and Communications
- 1 - Broadcasting

The current graduate program is offered fully online with an infrastructure in place to add the proposed program. Prior to COVID-19, CoJMC faculty already had extensive online teaching experience that has only been enhanced due to the pandemic. Around 75% of CoJMC faculty have completed UNL's Institute for Online Teaching offered by the Center for Transformative Teaching in 2020. This is built on a long history of distance education for the graduate program at the CoJMC starting in 1994.

Elective courses for the Ph.D. are currently offered as part of the M.A. program. Additionally, the PR and Social Media and Financial Communication graduate certificates are currently available. A Sports Communications graduate certificate is being developed. The rest of the proposed program is made up of existing courses that are in the catalog of courses resulting in little additional curricular action needed to create the program.

Currently, the college offers 12 graduate assistantships which could be used to create 3-4 Ph.D. assistantships for around \$27,000-34,000/year each to be competitive in recruiting talented students. The college also has a Hitchcock Fellowship at \$12,500/year. Three endowed professorships also provide flexibility to support funding doctoral students.

The majority of each cohort will be working full time in the industry and therefore paying tuition. With the implementation of the incentive-based budget model, this growth in the graduate program will help support graduate assistantships for on-campus students.

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RESOURCES NEEDED

Although the college can expand the current graduate program to include a Ph.D. with little additional curriculum development, resources are needed to be successful. Additional faculty, specifically those qualified to advise and serve on dissertation committees are needed. As the program grows, we will need to increase the number of faculty. In turn, as the first cohort of Ph.D. students are forming their committees our number of research-focused faculty will need to scale with the enrollment. If seven of our faculty pursuing Ph.D.s finish and five additional faculty are added, there would be around 1.5 qualified faculty to every active dissertation committee.

In addition, as the program grows, we will need to add a staff position to work with the students and manage quality across all online graduate courses and ensure consistency between production, Canvas structure, and content. This position would be dedicated to online course development (media production, QA, implementation, course/program assistance) working with our instructional designer and faculty as content experts.

Last, supplemental funding for graduate assistantships will be required to be competitive with recruiting new students and supporting current teaching responsibilities covered by graduate students at the master's level. Additionally, a budget will be required for program promotion, recruiting, and retention to ensure the success of a new Ph.D. program.

An estimated cost of additional resources.

** (includes salary & benefits)*

New faculty - \$95,000 x 5
Media Production Coordinator - \$60,000
Assistantship - \$50,000
Recruiting & Retention - \$10,000

Total: \$595,000 / year

ARE THERE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS INVOLVED IN OFFERING THIS PROGRAM ACROSS DEPARTMENTS, CAMPUSES, OR INSTITUTIONS?

Currently, the graduate program includes coursework from UNK's marketing and communication departments, and the Ph.D. in political science offers a specialization in media as part of their program.

Additionally, there is potential for partnerships and sharing of courses in and around graduate certificates. Currently, the CoJMC has a partnership with the College of Business contributing to the Financial Communication graduate certificate. The CoJMC has also worked with Communication Studies and Marketing at the M.A. level. Integrated media communications also intersects with programs in law, English, psychology, leadership, and sociology, among others.

The college has several faculty who specialize in strategic health communication and are currently working on funded research projects which may be an avenue to explore with UNMC programs, specifically Public Health. There is also a growing area in sports communication in the college that could collaborate with the athletic department.

The entire college and faculty are closely connected to the profession and regularly work with industry professionals. There is a history of collaboration internally and externally in the CoJMC. For example, the college is currently collaborating with the College of Business and Husker Athletics around the new Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) rules for college athletes. The series of courses developed for NIL will help student-athletes navigate new opportunities. As a result, this creates the opportunity to build new centers at UNL and potentially work with external partners like Opendorse.

As noted, several of our faculty are actively engaged with the Nebraska Governance and Technology Center, focusing on communicating policy-relevant STEM topics to the public in an era of mis- and dis-information, the role of technology in responding to a rapidly changing world and designing technology that is responsive to human needs and expectations.

WHAT IS THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE (WITHIN NEBRASKA, REGIONALLY, AND NATIONALLY) FOR THE PROPOSED PROGRAM?

NEBRASKA PH.D. PROGRAMS

UNL

- Communication Studies (Residential)
- Business / Marketing (Residential)

UNO

- Information Technology (Residential)
- Public Administration (Residential)

UNK

No Ph.D. programs but many online M.A. programs where students could continue on to Ph.D. at the CoJMC

UNMC

- Public Health: Health Promotion in Disease Prevention (Residential)

BIG TEN

Most of our Big Ten peers offer Ph.D. programs in media studies – albeit under different names – already, so we are to a degree an outlier in that group. However, all programs are residential programs.

CARNEGIE-KNIGHT INITIATIVE SCHOOLS

The Carnegie-Knight Initiative is a group of partner schools, including the CoJMC. The goal of the partnership is to develop a vision of what a journalism school can be at an institution of higher education. Below are other partner institutions that offer related Ph.D. programs, all residential.

- Arizona State University
- University of California-Berkeley
- Columbia University
- Northwestern University
- University of Maryland
- Harvard University
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- University of Missouri
- University of North Carolina
- University of Southern California
- Syracuse University
- University of Texas-Austin

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REGIONAL

Regional and relevant schools with a Ph.D., all residential.

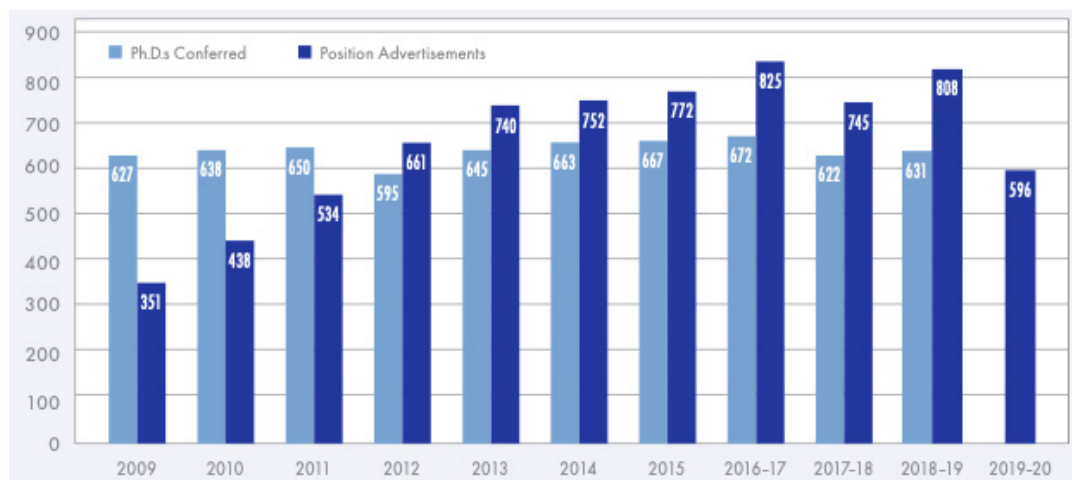
- Kansas University
- University of Colorado–Boulder
- University of Oklahoma
- Texas Tech University
- University of Florida

WHAT IS THE WORKFORCE NEED AND DEMAND FOR RECIPIENTS OF THIS CREDENTIAL?

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, postsecondary teaching, business, and communications areas project growth much faster than average.

A 2018-19 report by the NCA (National Communication Association) found that academic employment opportunities for communication faculty, including journalism, media, advertising, and public relations - were among “the most numerous in the humanities.” Between 2009 and the 2018-19 academic year, the NCA reported a rise of 130 percent in the number of advertised academic communication positions. The tally rose from 351 advertised positions in 2009 to 808 in 2018-19. Further, the association reported that between 2012 and 2019, the number of communication job ads outpaced the numbers of Ph.D. graduates each year. Specialists in strategic communication, public relations, and advertising were the most sought-after, according to the report, followed by those in mass communication and media studies, and by those in digital and emerging media.

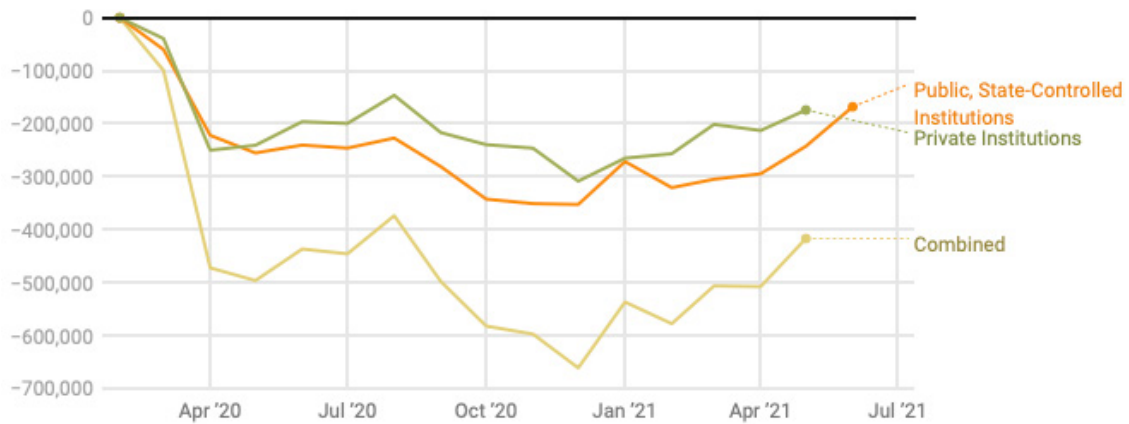
The 2019-2020 report captures the impact COVID-19 had on job listings. There is an expected dip in the listings but projections in the report expect a rebound moving forward.



Number of advertisements for positions in communication and communication doctorates conferred 2009 through 2019-2020 from the NCA.

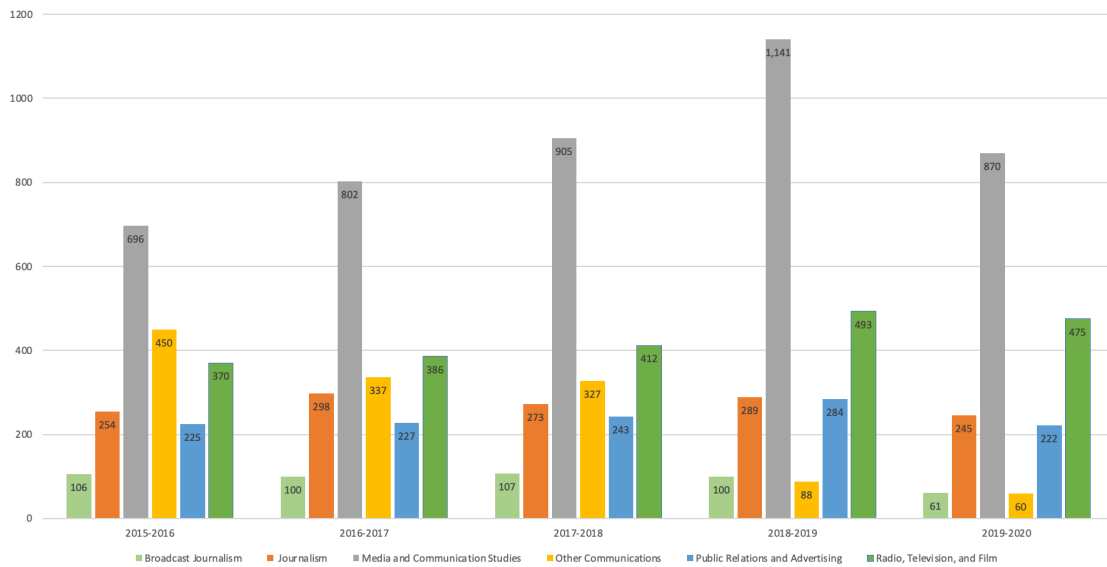
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This is supported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showing signs of recovery for jobs in higher education.



Cumulative job losses since February 2020, by sector. Updated July 8, 2021 by the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Faculty job listings on HigherEdJobs.com related to media and communication over the last 5 years indicate a similar pattern. There has been a dip in faculty job listings during COVID-19 from a high of 2,395 total listings in 2018-2019 to 1,933 in 2019-2020.



Last five years of faculty job listings in media and communication from HigherEdJobs.com between 2015-2020.

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NON ACADEMIC PATHS FOR PH.D.S

A Ph.D. from the CoJMC provides students with the skills and credentials to pursue a higher level leadership position in their respective areas to achieve professional goals. The skills and experiences from a Ph.D. at the CoJMC include transferable skills to industry. Career paths beyond traditional academic jobs include leadership and consulting around a range of strategic and/or operational issues for corporations, governments, and nonprofit organizations.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in Nebraska alone, the job outlook for careers in public relations is expected to grow by 10.1% and in advertising by 14.7% in the next ten years. Nationwide, the job outlook is expected to increase by 6% and 8% respectively. The nationwide job outlook also looks good for related careers in event planning, (+7%), fundraising (+9%), and social and community service management (+13%). Furthermore, job growth for market research analysts is expected to increase by 20% in the next decade.



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