Report to the Pauley Task Force:

Broadcast Journalism Education
Trends and Comparisons

By

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Introduction

This report is provided to the Pauley Task Force with the expectation that it will provide a useful backdrop for informed discussion of the realities of broadcast education in the United States in the mid-1990s. We are including baseline information about programs, enrollments, curricula, job searching strategies and starting salaries in hopes of fostering meaningful dialog about the realities of broadcast education and the broadcast industry. We believe that future discussions will be best informed by an understanding of the present features of broadcast education. This is Part 1 of a twopart report for the Pauley Task Force.

Data Source

The data used in this report are drawn from two major and unique surveys undertaken annually at The Ohio State University. The surveys include an annual census of administrators of all the journalism and mass communication programs in the United States to measure characteristics of their programs such as enrollment, degrees granted, and demographic and curricular trends. The second survey is of graduates of the nation's journalism and mass communication programs and asks questions about the experiences of those graduates while in school, job search strategies after leaving school, experiences in the job market, and salaries.

Findings in Summary

1. About one in five of the approximately 32,900 students receiving a bachelor's degree from a journalism or mass communication program in academic year 1993-94 specialized in radio and television. About one in four of the graduates of these programs sought a job with television; one in five sought a job in radio.

2. The percentage of journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients with a radio-television specialization who actually found full-time work six to eight months after graduation was about five percentage points lower than for journalism graduates overall. Fewer than three in 10 found work in some aspect of the radio-television industry.

3. Salaries earned by journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients who took jobs in radio and television were very poor compared with those of graduates who took jobs with daily newspapers, public relations and advertising. They are comparable to those of graduates who took jobs with weekly newspapers.

4. An estimated 91% of the college hires in television news came from journalism and mass communication programs. The figure in radio news is 77%.

5. There is an oversupply of graduates relative to demand for jobs in radio and television news. The oversupply exists in television news even if only those graduates who specialized in broadcasting, had an internship and worked for their campus television station are considered.

6. Broadcast journalism students make up the majority of broadcast students in journalism and mass communication programs. The percentage of students in broadcast journalism is only three percentage points lower than the percentage specializing in print journalism.

7. Broadcast journalism programs do a better job of attracting minority students than do the other journalism specialties, including print journalism. The majority of students specializing in broadcast journalism are women.

8. Those students who specialized in broadcast journalism were weaker than those who went into print journalism in terms of college grade point average, high school grades, and completion of requirements for a second major. They were also less likely to have selected journalism because of a love of writing.

9. Nine in 10 of the broadcast journalism graduates had completed an internship while at the university. Two in
three had completed an internship in television, and one in three had completed a radio internship. Few of these internships were paid.

10. Nearly half of the broadcast journalism students had worked for their college radio station. Slightly fewer had worked for their college television station.

11. Of those students who specialized in broadcast journalism as part of their undergraduate programs, just under one in five found work in television six to eight months after graduation. About one in 10 found work in radio.

12. Broadcast journalism students who found work reported lower levels of job satisfaction than did other working journalism graduates.

13. The broadcast journalism students who actually looked for radio and television jobs were weaker in terms of college grade point average, high school grades and completion of a second major, than were the print journalism students who sought work with newspapers.

14. There is some evidence that television news directors selected the better graduates from among those applying, so that those who are actually hired in television have college graduate point averages just below those hired in daily newspapers. The average high school grades of those hired were slightly higher. Radio appeared to be less successful in hiring the better applicants.

Findings in Detail

Enrollment Trends

Journalism education is a national phenomenon widely dispersed in the country, generally in the areas of greatest population centers. Although many think of journalism education as a Midwestern phenomenon, it has grown substantially from these roots. Journalism education also is not a creature of the major media centers of New York and Washington. The dispersion of journalism education around the country is shown in Chart 1.

There has been a steady increase in journalism and mass communication enrollments since the early 1960s (Chart 2). These enrollments peaked in 1989 and then declined slightly. The latest figures available show the field is home to nearly 129,000 undergraduate students and about 11,700 graduate students. A notable fact about these figures is the steady growth they reveal. There is no particular bulge evident for Watergate or All the President's Men—events of the 1970s. Obscured a bit by the way the figure is drawn is the finding that the field is becoming more graduate oriented. Enrollments in graduate programs continued their steady increase in recent years as undergraduate enrollments begin to decline. This may have important implications for hiring in the future as better educated individuals become available to employers.

The percentage of students enrolled in the study of journalism and mass communication who are female increased rather dramatically in the 1967 to 1982 period, after which it remained steady (Chart 3). Today, six of 10 undergraduates studying journalism and mass communication are women. The percentage of racial or ethnic minority students grew markedly from 1973, when data on this topic were first gathered. In 1994, 27% of the undergraduates studying journalism and mass communication were racial or ethnic minorities.

Not all students enrolled in journalism and mass communication programs at any given time actually graduate. Graduates—not enrollments—are the key indicator of the size of the labor force provided to media employers by universities. The nation's journalism and mass communication programs produced more than 32,800 BA degrees in 1994, and almost 3,700 graduate degrees (Chart 4).

Six in 10 of the graduates of journalism and mass communication programs in recent years have been women, consistent with the percentages of students enrolled (Chart 5). Only 22% of the 1994 graduates were racial or ethnic minorities, compared with the 27% figure for enrollments, indicating that graduation rates for minorities are lower than they are for majority students. Obviously, the issue of minority retention is something the field needs to be concerned about.

Journalism education in the U.S. incorporates both a liberal arts curriculum and specialized instruction in the journalism major. National accrediting guidelines call for programs in which the liberal arts instruction is the dominant part of the curriculum of the journalism student.
Many journalism and mass communication programs offer specialties within their curricula. These specialties are often called sequences, and common ones are for print (often called news-editorial) journalism, radio and television (often called broadcasting), advertising and public relations. Based on these administrative classifications, the data show that student interest in broadcasting as a specialty peaked around 1989, and then declined for about four years (Chart 6). The last two years have produced something of a rebound of interest, but the proportion of students in this area has not yet returned to the 1989 levels. The rebound in broadcast is actually part of a larger trend in journalism education that suggests a return to the roots of the field in news, rather than PR and advertising.

Not all programs are sequenced, and students may see their own interests differently from the way the schools see them. A student may build a specialty by combining courses in a way that schools do not officially recognize. Chart 7 show students' own classifications of their interests, and it shows somewhat more stability than the school classifications in the previous chart. But, the overall picture of a recent resurgence of interest in broadcasting following a decline is the same as in Chart 6.

Another indicator of student interests is the level of participation in campus media activities. Chart 8 shows campus activities of BA recipients during the past nine years. Interest in campus TV and radio has remained relatively flat in recent years.

**Employment**

About one in four of the graduates in journalism and mass communication programs with a specialty in broadcasting sought work in television once studies were complete (Chart 9). Just under one in five (18.3%) sought work in radio, based on the responses of the 1994 graduates. These figures have been relatively stable in recent years.

In 1994, just under two-thirds of the graduates of journalism and mass communication programs found work within six to eight months after graduation (Chart 10). The rate of employment was up from a year earlier and back to the rate in 1990, when most media organizations began to suffer severe financial strain as a result of the weak advertising market.

While the employment rate increased for broadcasting graduates in 1994 versus a year earlier, it remains considerably lower than for graduates overall (Chart 11). In 1994, 60.9% of the broadcast graduates had found full-time employment when surveyed, a gap of almost 5% in comparison with all journalism and mass communication graduates. This difference is significant because the sample sizes for these comparisons are quite large.

Graduates take a variety of jobs, not all of them in the field of communication. Just under 56% of the 1994 graduates were working in the field within six to eight months of graduation (Chart 12). Only 28.5% of the broadcast graduates had found work in broadcasting (Chart 13).

**Salaries**

Finding work is important to graduates. Receiving a salary that compensates them for their studies is also important. Salaries can be expressed in a number of ways. The simplest is nominal salary, which is expressed in everyday, current dollars. A second way of reporting salaries is in terms of what may be called real dollars, that is, dollars corrected for inflation. In the following charts, 1985 is used as the base, and salaries are reported in terms of their purchasing power in 1985 dollars. This is a measure of the purchasing power correcting for inflation since that time.

In 1994, bachelor's degree recipients, on average, earned $20,000 annually, in 1994 dollars. That translates to $14,200 in 1985 dollars. The 1994 salary is an increase from 1993, even with the adjustment for inflation, but it still is less than graduates were making in 1990. Graduates who earned a master's degree in 1994 earned $25,000, or $5,000 more than undergraduates, measured in 1994 dollars. The $25,000 reduces to $17,800 if 1985 dollars are used as the base. In real dollars, 1994 master's degree recipients actually were earning less than those who graduated a year earlier. These data, shown in Chart 14, are for those with full-time jobs six to eight months after graduation.

Undergraduates who took jobs in television earned considerable less than the overall average (Chart 15). In 1994, the median annual salary for bachelor's degree recipients with full-time work was $16,000 in that year's dollars and $11,400 in 1985 dollars. With the adjustment for inflation, salaries were flat from 1993 to 1994, and lower than in

In radio, the 1994 median salary was the same as for television, but this was actually a decline from what graduates reported earning in radio a year earlier (Chart 16).

Chart 17 shows that graduates who found jobs in daily newspapers had a nominal median salary of $21,000. Chart 18 shows salaries at weekly newspapers at $15,600. Chart 19 shows advertising at $20,000, and Chart 20 shows the median salary in PR for recent graduates to be $21,000, equivalent to that of daily newspapers, and $5,000 above what is earned in both television and radio.

The overall picture that emerges for broadcasting is one of poor salaries relative to the other journalism employers. This raises serious questions about whether broadcasting is competitive for the best and brightest students. Complaints about low quality graduates are often signals that the business is not competitive for the best students, not that there is a shortage of good students interested in the area.

**Supply and Demand**

Salaries, of course, are linked to demand. This section of the report attempts to answer the question of whether there is an oversupply of students seeking jobs in broadcasting, resulting in the suppression of salaries. The answer, at least for television, appears to be yes. This answer comes from estimates of supply taken from the annual graduate surveys and of demand drawn from surveys conducted by Vernon Stone of the University of Missouri. A survey of daily newspaper editors conducted at The Ohio State University for 1990 provides a comparable estimate of demand in the daily newspaper industry.

Based on the most recent Stone survey (for 1990-91), an estimated 18.1% of the hires in television come directly from college, and an estimated 91.2% of those hires are drawn from journalism and mass communication programs (Chart 21). In radio, 34.0% of the hires come from college, and 76.9% of those hires are from journalism and mass communication programs (Chart 22). In the daily newspaper industry, 22.1% come from college, and 75.2% are journalism and mass communication majors (Chart 23).

Estimates of the labor force supply come from the Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates of 1990. Graduates each year are asked if they had sought employment in television, in radio or with a daily newspaper. Data projected from responses to the surveys are shown in Chart 24. They show 25.3% of the graduates sought jobs in television, 16.9% of the graduates sought jobs in radio, and 22.9% sought jobs with daily newspapers.

These are gross estimates of supply. They do not take into consideration the basic requirements of most media jobs: specialized training, relevant internships, and work with the campus media. These qualifications are used to reduce the estimates of supply in Chart 25. These analyses show that only about 2.8% of the graduates who sought work in television and had specialized in television as part of their program, had a television internship and had worked for the campus television station. The actual number of graduates so qualified was just over 1,000. For radio, the percentage was 1.8%, representing about 650 individuals.

Even with this stringent definition of qualifications, there is an oversupply of graduates to jobs in television, Chart 26 shows. The gross estimates show a ratio of almost 10 to 1. For radio, the gross estimates are in excess of three applicants for every job. For newspapers, the ratio is more than 4 to 1. Television is able to pay low salaries because it has an ample supply of applicants. Radio probably is able to pay low salaries by decreasing the requirements for entry.

**Characteristics of Broadcast Students**

Not every student in broadcast journalism at a journalism and mass communication program is preparing for a career in broadcast journalism. The clear majority, however, are. Chart 27 shows that, overall, just under 14% of the graduates of journalism and mass communication programs during the years 1987 to 1994 were studying broadcast journalism. During that period, 6.6% were in nonjournalistic broadcast production specialities. Combined, these students make up a larger percentage of the students than print journalism, advertising, or even public relations. The percentage of students in broadcast journalism alone is only 3.5% less than the percent in traditional print journalism.

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In 1987, broadcasting (journalism and production) accounted for 23% of the journalism and mass communication graduates. In 1994 broadcasting accounted for 21.4% of the graduates (Chart 28). The combined figures were higher in 1994 than at any time since 1987, and broadcast journalism alone accounted for more graduates in 1994 than at any time since data on this topic have been available. Since 1992, broadcast journalism has grown in popularity by 3.4 percentage points.

Broadcast journalism has done a slightly better job than the other sequences at attracting minorities (Chart 29). Averaged across the eight years of the graduates surveyed, 17.3% of the students who specialized in broadcast journalism and 17.1% of those in broadcast production were racial or ethnic minorities. Of print journalism graduates, 15.4% were minorities.

Women make up a lower percentage of the students in broadcast journalism than in other sequences (Chart 30), except for broadcast production. Broadcast production is the only sequence with fewer than half of its students female.

Those students who go into broadcast journalism and broadcast production are decidedly weaker academically than those who go into print journalism, if overall grade point average is used as the criterion for evaluation. Chart 31 shows, in fact, that those students going into nonjournalistic broadcast production are the weakest graduates of the nation's journalism and mass communication programs. (Students in broadcast news production are included in the broadcast journalism category). Only a quarter of the broadcast journalism students report an overall grade point average equivalent to an A upon graduation, while a third of the print journalism students report such grades. The broadcast journalism students also earned lower grades in high school in English, math, history and science than did students in print journalism (Chart 32). While the data in Chart 31 are based on responses of graduates from 1989-94, the data in Chart 32 come only from 1992—the single year this question was asked of graduates. In excess of eight in 10 of the print journalism graduates of that year reported earning A grades in high school English, while closer to six in 10 of the broadcast journalism students reported A grades in English. There is a 10 percentage point gap—with broadcast journalism students on the low side—between high school history grades of the two groups of students. The gaps for math and sciences are small, but in the same direction. The average across these four subjects also shows print journalism students having done better than their broadcast journalism counterparts. The broadcast production students show themselves once again to be the weakest academically.

Writing is an important part of journalism, to be sure, and it is reassuring that journalism students report good grades in English. The lower grades for history are not so reassuring. The decidedly poorer grades in math and science suggest weaknesses in the students coming into journalism programs unlikely to be greatly improved upon while at the university, where students have opportunities to select courses that play to their strengths and avoid those in which they are weak.

An enjoyment of writing is a much more important reason why students in print journalism selected journalism and mass communication as a major than is the case for broadcast journalism students (Chart 33). Among print journalism students, 62.6% said the enjoyment of writing was the top reason for going into journalism. Among broadcast journalism students, only 18.6% said writing was the top reason. More important was an interest in the medium, reported by 35.8% of the broadcast journalism students. An interest in current events was the most important motivation for entering journalism for only a small number of students, regardless of speciality.

Many journalism programs require their students to build an area of concentration outside journalism. In some cases, this can be an actual second major, for which the student completes not only the journalism major requirements but also requirements in a second field, such as history, political science, English, business, or any number of other options. Generally, the better students choose the rigors of such dual-major programs.

Nearly four in 10 of the print journalism students in the years 1989-94 (when this question was asked) had completed a dual major program (Chart 34). Closer to three in 10 of the broadcast journalism students had completed such a curriculum. Broadcast production students report the lowest level of participation in dual-major programs.

The vast majority of students in journalism and mass communication programs complete an internship, and here the broadcast journalism students are at the top in comparison with their colleagues in other specialities (Chart 35). Just under nine in 10 of the broadcast journalism students had completed such internships, compared with eight in 10 of the students in broadcast production or print journalism.
Two-thirds of the broadcast journalism students took an internship in television (Chart 36), and slightly more than one-third had an internship in radio (Chart 37). A small percentage of the internships actually were paid. Only one in 10 of broadcast journalism students reported having a paid internship in television (Chart 38), or in radio (Chart 39). Television and radio are considerably less likely to provide paid internships than other employers of journalism and mass communication graduates. Of the reported internships in newspapers, 60.8% were paid. For television, this figure was 17.1%, while for radio it was 25.4%. Of the internships in public relations, 48.3% were paid. In advertising, the figure was 44.7%, while in magazines it was 44.3%.

Just more than three-quarters of the graduates in broadcast journalism programs had worked for at least one of the campus media prior to graduation (Chart 40). This is a lower percentage than for the print journalism students, but it is considerably higher than is the case for students in broadcast production, public relations or advertising. Of those broadcast journalism students, 45.2% had worked for the campus television station (Chart 41), while 48.3% had worked for the campus radio station (Chart 42). Slightly less than 25% of broadcast journalism students had worked for the college newspaper, compared with 74.5% of the print journalism students (Chart 43).

**Employment by Broadcast Speciality**

Broadcast journalism and broadcast production students reported the most difficulty in finding work in the 1987-94 period among graduates of journalism and mass communication programs. During this period, 61.1% of broadcast journalism students reported having a job offer at graduation, and 55.9% of the broadcast production students were in a comparable situation (Chart 44). Among print journalism students, 68.7% reported at least one offer at graduation—a figure similar for those in public relations.

The broadcast students also reported the lowest level of employment six to eight months after graduation (Chart 45). (Not all the first job offers pan out or are accepted by the students.) For the 1987-94 period, 61.7% of broadcast journalism students reported being employed six to eight months after graduation, and 58.9% of broadcast production students were employed. Among graduates in print journalism, this figure was 65.2%. Figures were higher for students in advertising and public relations.

While just under 76% of the print journalism majors who found work six to eight months after graduation were working in the field of communication, the figure for broadcast journalism students was 66% (Chart 46).

Of all broadcast journalism students, 17.6% were working in television six to eight months after graduation, while 8.9% were working in radio (Chart 47). Among the broadcast production students, 8.5% found work in television, while 2.7% found work in radio. Students in the broadcast sequences were more likely to actually be working in radio or television than students from the other sequences.

Broadcast journalism students were less likely to be engaged in writing, reporting and editing six to eight months after graduation than were students in print journalism (Chart 48). Among the latter, 55.7% of all graduates (unemployed and employed combined), reported they were in jobs dominated by writing, reporting and editing, while only 21.7% of broadcast journalism students reported being in jobs dominated by writing, reporting and editing.

Among those graduates with jobs, job satisfaction was lower for those in broadcasting specialities than for others (Chart 49). This is hardly surprising, given that they earn less, are less likely to be working in their chosen field, and had a more difficult job search than their counterparts.

**Qualifications of Those Seeking Broadcasting Jobs**

Not all broadcast journalism students actually seek work in television or radio. Not all of those who seek work actually land jobs. How do those broadcast journalism students who seek work in television and radio compare with others seeking work in journalism? Specifically, how do they compare with print journalism students who seek work with daily or weekly newspapers?

Chart 50 compares in terms of college grade point average those broadcast journalism students who reported seeking work in radio and television with those print journalism students who sought work with daily and weekly newspapers. The comparison is not favorable to the broadcast journalism students. Differences are small, but the broadcast students who actually looked for broadcast jobs were weaker than the print students who looked for jobs with newspapers.
Much the same picture is true if high school grades are examined, as they are in Chart 51. Those broadcast students who sought work in broadcasting scored lower in high school English than did the print students who sought print jobs. Broadcast students also scored lower in history. Differences in math and science grades were very slight, but, once again, broadcast students seeking work in the field were below their print counterparts. Averaged high school grades reflect these same patterns.

Print students working at newspapers were more likely to have had a second major than broadcast students working in broadcasting (Chart 52).

More than three-quarters of the broadcast students seeking work in television had a television internship in college (Chart 53). The percentage of print students who had an internship and sought jobs with dailies is 68.4%. For print students seeking a job in weeklies the figure is 60%. The percentage of broadcast students seeking a job in radio who had a radio internship is only 53.1%.

Only about half of the broadcast students seeking jobs in television worked for a campus television station (Chart 54). Of the broadcast students seeking jobs in radio, 60.8% had worked for a campus radio station. Much higher percentages of the students seeking jobs in print had worked for the campus newspaper.

Qualifications of Those Hired in Broadcasting

The broadcast students actually hired in radio had considerably lower college grade point averages than the broadcast students hired in television or the print students hired at daily newspapers (Chart 55). Print students hired by weeklies did less well in school than print students hired by dailies.

If high school grades are used as the criterion, as they are in Chart 56, the evidence suggests that broadcast employers do a pretty good job of weeding out the weaker applicants. Those students actually hired by radio and television from among the broadcast journalism graduates had high school grades—on average—at or above those of the print journalism students hired at newspapers. Only in high school English did the print students hired in print do better than the broadcast students hired in broadcast jobs.

Broadcast students hired in radio and television were less likely to have had a second major in college than print students hired at daily newspapers (Chart 57). Broadcast students hired in television were very likely to have had a television internship (Chart 58). They were less likely to have worked for a college television station than their counterparts hired at print media were to have worked for the college newspaper (Chart 59).

Concluding Comment

If there is an oversupply of broadcasting graduates relative to the ability of industry to absorb them, should the schools cut back production? Is there another way to view the problem? Broadcasting and the media in general are significant industries and social phenomena. These industry segments are important from an economic perspective, as well as from the point of view of their evolving cultural significance. As such, broadcast education represents not only a pathway to a career in this area, but an increasingly important area of study and scholarship in its own right. It is not surprising that students are drawn to the field. Many are drawn for its career opportunities. But others may be drawn to the study of broadcasting as a compelling, significant economic and cultural enterprise that has important implications for the quality of social life. In other words, many students may be drawn to media studies for the reasons similar to those that motivate students to major in sociology, psychology or political science to gain a basic understanding of fundamentally important forces in the world.

Many major universities have reduced or are reducing the size of their journalism education operations, including broadcasting, in response to budget concerns or in search of higher quality students. The question of further reductions, however, needs to address the matter of to what extent the study of media as a liberal arts major, not necessarily as a vocational choice, is appropriate relative to other traditional liberal arts and science majors like English literature, philosophy and sociology.