

2003
Annual Survey of Journalism
&
Mass Communication Graduates

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Executive Summary

- ❑ The level of full-time employment for journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients remained low in 2003. The actual figure was at a level that has not been seen since the depression of the early 1990s.
- ❑ The level on unemployment among journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients in 2003 was once again higher than the level of unemployment in the U.S. labor force in general and the level of unemployment for those 20-24 years old.
- ❑ The job market for those earning a master's degree from the nation's journalism and mass communication programs also was weak again in 2003. The percentage of graduates with at least one job offer on graduation has remained the same for the last three years, as has the average number of job offers on graduation.
- ❑ Only half of the journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients in 2003 found work within the broad field of communication. Using this reference, the job market in 2003 was equal to the recession job market of 1991 and 1992.
- ❑ The gap between the employment level of bachelor's degree recipients who are members of racial or ethnic minority and those who are not slightly decreased in 2003, as compared to a year before. The difference is small enough to be easily attributable to sample fluctuation, but, at a minimum, there was no evidence of a widening gap.
- ❑ The median salary earned by journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients has not changed in three years, standing at \$26,000.
- ❑ Benefits offered journalism and mass communication graduates continued to decline. Less than eight in ten of the journalism and mass communication graduates with full-time jobs reported having a basic medical plan as part of their employment.
- ❑ The percentage of journalism and mass communication graduates in 2003 who reported regretting their career decision dropped in 2003, but it returned only to the 2001 level.
- ❑ More than two-thirds of the journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients in 2003 who found a full-time job said they were proud to be working for their employer, and only one in 10 said they were not committed to their organization. These sentiments have remained largely unchanged in recent years.

Overview

Journalism and mass communication graduates did not see much evidence of any improvement in the nation's economy in 2003 and the first half of 2004. Job offers were few. Unemployment rates were higher than the national average. Salaries were low and inadequate to compensate for increase in the costs of living.

About a quarter of the 2003 journalism and mass communication graduates said they regretted their career choice. Only one in five expects to retire in the field.

Yet two-thirds of those who found full-time work reported being proud of the organization that employed them. Nearly a quarter said they were committed to their employer. Three in five said they considered the work they did to be meaningful. These feelings are nearly identical to those of graduates who found full-time work in recent years.

Employment Rate Unchanged

Nearly two of three of the bachelor's degree recipients from the nation's journalism and mass communication programs had at least one job offer when they graduated in the spring of 2003 (**Chart 1**). The figure was nearly identical a year earlier, but as recently as 2000 more than four of five of the graduates had at least a single job offer on graduation. The mean number of job offers for 2003 graduates was 1.2—the same as a year earlier but considerably under the 2.3 figure of 2000.

About one in 10 of the 2003 bachelor's degree recipients who actually looked for work did not have a single job interview in the six to eight months after graduation (**Chart 2**). An additional 3.6% had only telephone interviews. Both figures were roughly the same a year ago.¹

Only 56.1% of the 2003 journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients held a full-time job on October 31, 2003 (**Chart 3**). This is the lowest level of full-time employment reported since 1994, when this figure was first used. While the drop of two percentage points from a year earlier could be attributable to sampling error, the drop from 2001 is unlikely to be a statistical fluke. Of those who actually looked for work, 65.6% in 2003 found full-time employment (**Chart 4**). In 2003, 17.8% of the graduates took part-time work, which, past research has shown is usually a fall-back when full-time employment isn't available. In 2003, 16.6% of the bachelor's degree recipients who looked for jobs were unemployed in October of that year. That figure is comparable to the rate of unemployment in the last two years, but

¹The questions on interviews were used for the first time in the 2002 survey instrument.

considerably higher than as recently as 2000. In fact, the level of full-time employment grew from 1994 to 2000 and has been falling each year since.

The level of employment of journalism and mass communication graduates when they returned the questionnaire in 2003 was at a level (62.4%) that has not been seen since the depression of the early 1990s (**Chart 5**). Bachelor's degree recipients who had not started to look for a job for one reason or another were classified as unemployed in these analyses. In 2002, a statistically comparable 63.3% of the graduates had a full-time job within the first year of graduation. That figure had been 66.3% in 2001 and stood at 76.1% as recently as 1999. In 2003, 12.6% of the graduates had taken a part-time job and 8.7% returned to school. Unemployment stood in 2003 at 16.2%—statistically comparable to the 16.1% in 1991.

Of those 2003 graduates with a full-time job, 85.7% said the job was a permanent one (**Chart 6**). Of those graduates with part-time jobs, only 39.4% said the job was permanent. In both cases, the figures are lower than a year ago, though the drop may be attributable to sampling error. The pattern of decline in the percentage of full-time employed with a permanent position going back to 2000, however, is not likely due to chance fluctuation.

The level of unemployment among journalism and mass communication graduates in 2003 was once again higher than the level of unemployment in the U.S. civilian labor force generally and the level of

Keep your head up-the economy is terrible right now so try not to take rejection personally. It truly isn't as much what you know as who you know-at least to get your foot in the door.
- Public relations graduate having PR internship

unemployment for those 20-24 years old (**Chart 7**). The latter group is a relevant comparison cohort for the journalism and mass communication graduates in terms of age. Nationally, for the June 2003 through May 2004 period, unemployment averaged 5.9% overall, as it had in the previous 12 months. For those 20-24 years of age, unemployment in the 2003-2004 period was 10.0%, up from 9.7% a year earlier. For journalism and mass communication graduates, the unemployment rate was 13.0%, or at the same level as a year ago. Not only is the figure for journalism and mass communication graduates higher than for those of the comparable age cohort nationally, but the gap has persisted in recent years. In 2000, in contrast, the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates was nearly the same as for their age cohort.²

The rates of employment shown in charts 3 through 5 may actually be underestimates. Estimates weighted to reflect differential return rates of the schools participating in the graduate sample suggest that full-time employment as of October 31, 2003, could be 55.6%, rather than the 56.1% shown in Chart 3. The full-time employment rate in Chart 4, based on the weighted estimate, is 65.1%, rather than 65.6%.

²All unemployment rates represent unemployment among those actually looking for work and do not include those who have not yet started looking for work or who have given up efforts to find a job.

And the full-time employment rate in Chart 5, using the weighted estimate, is 61.2% rather than 62.4%. The unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates in Chart 7, based on the weighted estimates, is 13.7%, rather than 13.0%.³ It is hard not to conclude, based on any of these estimates, that the job market for the 2003 bachelor's degree recipients from the nation's journalism and mass communication programs was a tight and challenging one.

The job market for those earning a master's degree from the nation's journalism and mass communication programs also was weak again in 2003. The percentage of graduates with

Volunteering in the field for respectable companies reflects well on you. People aren't kidding when they say the job market is horrible.

- Unemployed journalism graduate

at least one job offer on graduation has remained the same for the last three years, as has the average number of job offers (**Chart 8**). Master's degree recipients, as in the past, report more job offers than bachelor's degree recipients, though the differences are not large enough to rule out sampling error as the explanation.

The level of full-time employment for the master's degree recipients on October 31 of 2003 was 64.6%, compared with 60.6% a year earlier (**Chart 9**). The variation could be a chance occurrence; the samples are small for the master's degree recipients. Similarly, the level of full-time employment for those master's degree recipients who actually looked for work increased slightly (**Chart 10**). The level of full-time employment of master's degree recipients continues to be greater than for bachelor's degree recipients. This also is true if the employment reference is when graduates returned the questionnaire (**Chart 11**).

Undergraduate students in journalism and mass communication programs specialize in a variety of areas as part of their studies. Historically, these specializations have had impact on the job market experiences of the bachelor's degree recipients, as they reflect differing interests in the various communication industry segments. Students who specialized in news-editorial (print) journalism found the job market in 2003 to be much like it was a year earlier (**Chart 12**). In fact, the market for students in this speciality has been largely stable the last three years. In contrast, the job market for graduates with a broadcasting (telecommunications) specialization confronted an even more depressed market in 2003 than did similar graduates a year earlier (**Chart 13**). In fact, the job market in each of the recent years going back to 1999 had become increasingly difficult for graduates with a broadcasting specialization. The level of full-time employment hasn't been this low for broadcast graduates since the early 1990s. Advertising graduates (**Chart 14**) and public relations graduates (**Chart 15**), in contrast, reported levels of full-time employment at the time they returned their questionnaires equal to or just up from those reported by their counterparts a year earlier.

³The explanation for these weights is presented in the methodology section of this report.

A clear indicant of the strength of the job market is the percentage of journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients who found work within the broad field of communication. In 2003, only half of the graduates said this was the case for them (**Chart 16**). Using this reference, the job market in 2003 was equal to the recession job market of 1991 and 1992. There is no evidence in these data of a turnaround in the market.

Of the 2003 bachelor's degree recipients who had taken a communication job, about a quarter (25.6%) were writing, reporting or editing—or doing some combination of these. That figure was nearly identical a year earlier. A third (32.7%) of the bachelor's degree recipients with communication jobs were producing or selling advertisements or involved in some other promotional or corporate communication form of work. That figure, too, is unchanged from a year earlier.

Among the 2003 bachelor's degree recipients who were working in the communication field, 14.1% had jobs in the daily or weekly newspaper industry, compared with a statistically comparable 14.9% a year earlier. Another 17.0% (15.8% in 2002) had jobs in broadcasting or the cable industry. In 2003, 8.7% of the bachelor's degree recipients took jobs in a public relations department or agency, and another 9.2% were with an advertising agency or department. A year earlier, those figures had been 9.1% and 7.5% respectively. Of the 2003 bachelor's degree recipients who took a job in communication, 2.1% were working for a consumer magazine, and 1.7% were working for a newsletter or trade publication. Both figures were nearly identical a year earlier. Only 0.7% of the 2003 bachelor's degree recipients with a job in the field of communications had a position in on-line publishing. Graduates have found these positions increasingly difficult to obtain since 1999.

The gap between the employment level of bachelor's degree recipients who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups and those who are not persisted in 2003, though the size of the gap was steady to declining. In 2003, 61.4% of the minority bachelor's degree recipients had a full-time job when they returned the questionnaire, while 70.0% of the non-minority graduates had full-time work (**Chart 17**). The gap of 8.6% compares with a gap of 10.3% a year earlier. Graduates who decided to return to school are eliminated from the computation shown in the chart. Had they been included, the gap in 2003 would have been slightly greater. In 2003, 54.9% of all minority graduates had full-time work, while 64.1% of the non-minority graduates were similarly employed, or a difference of 9.2%. In 2002, that gap was 12.5%. While the differences between 2003 and 2002 are not statistically significant, at least the evidence is that the gap has not increased.

Among those minority bachelor's degree recipients who had found full-time or part-time work in 2003, 65.0% were working in a communication job. For non-minority graduates, the figure was 66.8%. The difference is small enough to be easily attributable to sample fluctuation (**Chart 18**). Across time, the gap between minority and non-minority success in finding a communication job (among those who found a job at all) has varied quite a lot. As recently as 2001, minority graduates showed a slightly higher rate of employment in communication, though here, too, the difference was likely to be due to sampling. It seems

the more important issue for minority graduates is simply finding work. If they find it, they are as likely to be in the communication field as their non-minority counterparts. Since minority graduates are less likely to find work overall, however, they still are less likely to have a communication job overall than are non-minority graduates.

Though female graduates of journalism and mass communication programs historically have achieved just slightly higher levels of full-time employment than the male students, the gaps have generally been small (**Chart 19**). In 2003, female bachelor's degree recipients were again a bit more likely to have found full-time employment than the male bachelor's degree recipients. The difference is unlikely to be due to simple sample fluctuation, and the pattern across the years suggests that women do have slight greater success than men in the market.

Salaries Remain Flat

The median salary earned by journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients has not changed in three years (**Chart 20**). In 2003, graduates earned \$26,000, the same as graduates earned in 2001 and nearly a thousand dollars less than graduates earned on average in 2000.

Because of inflation, the salary earned by the 2003 graduates actually represents a loss of purchasing power over the salary earned by the 2001 and 2002 graduates. The 2003 graduates started their careers with about \$500 less in salary than did the graduates of 2002 and about \$750 less than did graduates in 2001. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), an index of inflation, was 3.1% higher in May of 2004 than in May of 2003. The CPI-U in May of 2003 was 2.1%. Not since 1996 have journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients earned so little.

The situation for master's degree recipients was only slightly better. In 2003, the median salary for graduates of the nation's journalism and mass communication master's programs earned \$32,760, up from \$32,000 a year earlier (**Chart 20**). But inflation made the 2003 salary worth a little less than the median salary of a year earlier. Even in unadjusted dollars, the 2003 master's degree recipients earned about \$2000 less than did their counterparts in 1999.

The median salary of \$26,000 earned by journalism and mass communication graduates in 2003 does not compare favorably to salaries earned by graduates in other areas. According to data obtained from college and university career services offices around the country by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), liberal arts graduates generally are being offered starting salaries of

\$29,119.⁴ Business administration graduates are getting average offers of \$38,237, and accounting majors are being offered on average \$42,155.

Salaries earned by bachelor's degree recipients who took full-time jobs with the daily newspaper industry increased by nearly \$500 over salaries earned by graduates with similar jobs a year earlier (**Chart 21**). Even so, the salary earned by the graduates with daily newspaper jobs was still less than in 2001, even without an adjustment for inflation, and under the median salary earned by all bachelor's degree recipients. The median salary earned by the graduates who took full-time jobs in the weekly newspaper industry recovered from its drop of a year earlier and stood again at the 2001 level (**Chart 22**). Even so, the weekly newspaper median salary in 2003 was \$2000 below the overall median for journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients.

Don't be afraid to change papers and change jobs to move up and stay happy.

Graphic design graduate working at daily newspaper

The median salary earned by bachelor's degree recipients who took full-time jobs in the radio industry held steady in 2003 (**Chart 23**). Radio salaries, even adjusted for inflation, had been making gains coming out of the recession of the early 1990s, as was also true for weekly salaries, but the last two years in radio showed a loss in real purchasing power. The median salary in broadcast television was flat in 2003 (**Chart 24**), meaning a real loss in inflation-adjusted dollars. In 2003, the median salary in television was \$4,000 below the average earned by journalism and mass communication graduates overall, as was true a year earlier. Broadcast television salaries in 2003 were \$2000 lower than those paid at weekly newspapers and radio stations.

The salary earned by graduates who took jobs in the advertising industry held steady in 2003 and remained \$1000 above the overall median (**Chart 25**). The median salary for graduates who took a job in public relations increased by \$1000 over 2002, presenting one of the few bright spots for journalism and mass communication graduates (**Chart 26**). Public relations salaries actually declined by \$750 in 2002, and the increase means that the 2003 graduates still earned \$1000 less than their counterparts in 2000. The increase in median salary for the graduates going into public relations, however, was enough to offset the impact of inflation.

In 2003, salaries were above the overall median salary for those graduates taking jobs in cable television, advertising, public relations, the newsletter and trade publications industry, and online publishing (**Chart 27**). The online publishing industry, which historically has been paying the highest salaries earned by graduates of journalism and mass communication programs, in 2002 paid only

⁴A summary of the Salary Survey for 2004 is available on the web at <http://www.naceweb.org/press/display.asp?year=&pid=192>.

\$26,000, but in 2003 it again led the field. Very few graduates found work in online publishing in the years since 2000.

Bachelor's degree recipients who had full-time jobs outside of communication in 2003 reported salaries with a median of \$24,960, which compared with the median salary of \$26,500 for those who took a job in the field of communication.

Journalism and mass communication graduates who took jobs in the northeastern part of the U.S. in 2003 had a higher median salary (\$27,020) than graduates who took jobs anywhere else in the country (**Chart 28**). The midwest and the west had median salaries of \$26,000, while the south had a median salary of only \$25,000.

Only a relatively small percentage of graduates of journalism and mass communication programs reported being members of labor unions again in 2003. Of the bachelor's degree recipients with a full-time job, 4.3% were in unions (**Chart 29**). This figure has been roughly the same since at least the late 1990s. Graduates who were members of unions again in 2003 once had salaries above those of graduates who were not union members (**Chart 30**). In 2003, the median salary earned by a bachelor's degree recipient who was a member of a labor union was \$26,676; for those not a member of a labor union, the median was \$26,000.

Across nine different categories of benefits, bachelor's degree recipients in 2003 received less compensation and protection than did graduates a year earlier. All drops were slight, but graduates in 2003 were less likely to report getting basic medical, major medical or disability coverage than a year earlier (**Chart 31**). The percentage saying that--either through employer payments or their own contributions--they had prescription drug coverage, dental coverage or life insurance also dropped (**Chart 32**). Maternity and paternity benefits, child care and retirement contributions also were less likely to be reported by 2003 graduates than those in 2002 (**Chart 33**). None of the drops in these three tables is strong in and of itself, but across benefits and across time, the erosion of benefits received by journalism and mass communication graduates is clear in these tables.

Job Satisfaction and Commitment

The overall flatness of the job market and of salaries is reflected in the responses of the 2003 journalism and mass communication graduates to a number of questions about their jobs and their careers. The percentage of graduates saying they chose their job because it was what they wanted to do was about the same in 2003 as in 2002 (**Chart 34**). The percentage who took their job because it was the only one available also remained roughly the same. Only about one in five of the graduates in 2003 said "Things are fine" in their current work environment, with about the same ratio saying "A lot of improvement

is needed” (**Chart 35**). These responses have remained largely unchanged over the three years that the questions has been included in the graduate survey.

Job satisfaction increased slightly for those with a full-time job in 2003, but the increase is likely to be due to sampling fluctuation (**Chart 36**). There was no change in job satisfaction for those with part-time work. Part-time work is clearly not very attractive to most of those who have it.

The percentage of students who said they wish they had selected a different career dropped in 2003, but it returned only to the level of such sentiment in

I don't regret my AD/PR degree, but if I could do it over, I would at least get a minor in business or finance.

- PR graduate attending law school

2001 (**Chart 37**). About a quarter of the graduates said they regretted their career choice, wishing they had selected a different major. The percentage of bachelor’s degree recipients who think they will retire with their current employer remains unchanged from a year earlier (**Chart 38**). Few graduates have this expectation. The percentage of bachelor’s degree recipients in 2003 who plan to retire in the field of communication actually increased, representing one of the few indications of positive change in students job sentiments.

As has been the case for the last three years, more than two-thirds of the bachelor’s degree recipients in journalism and mass communication who found a full-time job say they are proud to be working for their employer (**Chart 39**). While that figure was higher in 2000, when the economy was stronger, it nonetheless represents a significant level of positive feeling about the current employer. Only about one in 10 of the graduates with a full-time job said they were not committed to the organization employing them (**Chart 40**). About 3 in 5 of the bachelor’s degree recipients said they felt the work they are doing is meaningful (**Chart 41**). The ratio has been nearly the same since the item was first included on the survey in 2000.

Three new items included in the 2003 survey provide further evidence that journalism and mass communication bachelor’s degree recipients with a full-time job have a generally positive view of

Journalism is a career that requires passion. It's not enough if journalism is "fun." You have to be willing to give up the rest of your life to it.

- Journalism graduate working outside communication

their employer. Two-thirds of the graduates said they have opportunities to advance within the organization employing them and a similar ratio said the company promotes from within (**Chart 42**). A lower ratio—more than half--said the company invests in its employees. These positive sentiments are not shared equally by all graduates, with the type of employer having significant impact. Graduates with jobs in the daily newspaper industry are less likely to feel they have an opportunity to advance in the company than are the other graduates (**Chart 43**). Daily newspaper and television job holders are less likely to feel

their employer invests in its employees. The most positive sentiments are expressed by those working in the advertising industry.

Journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients are looking for lots of different things in their careers, a new set of items in the 2003 graduate survey suggest (**Chart 44**). The graduates want jobs with advancement possibilities (74.0% said this feeling applied to them a lot), but they also say a family and social life are extremely important to them. Relatively unimportant are jobs that don't require movement for advancement, the prestige of the job, and a desire to be one's own boss. Fewer than half of the graduates say they are looking for a job that is valuable to society, though six in 10 say they want to contribute to society. Slightly more than half, however, say it is important that they be able to help others. Six in 10 of the graduates say financial security is important to them.

Perhaps the graduates are thinking of the debt burden of college in reflecting on their financial security. More than half of the journalism and mass communication graduates in 2003 left the university with a debt because of expenses incurred to attend (**Chart 45**). The percentage of students who reported being in debt at the time of graduation has remained about the same since 1995. The level of debt, however, has increased since that time. In 1995, 18.7% of the graduates said they were in debt for \$15,000 or more, while in 2003 that figure was 28.3%, statistically comparable to the figure a year earlier (**Chart 46**).

Closing Comments

The job market for journalism and mass communication graduates remains depressed. The hints of improvement in the market as the year progressed didn't seem to materialize. For 2003 graduates, the situation was much like the situation for graduates in 2001 and 2002. The robustness of the job market at the end of the decade (and century) has faded into memory. Three years ago it appeared as if most every journalism and mass communication graduate who wanted a job could find one, with nearly two-thirds of the graduates reporting six to eight months after graduation they were working in the communication field. In 2003, that ratio was one of two. Even for minority graduates, who have had more difficulty in the job market than their counterparts, the late 1990s were good years. The gap between minority and non-minority employment in 1998 was as small as it had been since 1992. In 2001, minority graduates who found jobs were at least as likely as nonminority graduates to find work in communication.

Not only are journalism and mass communication graduates finding it hard to get a job, but they also are receiving compensation packages that are increasingly less generous--though "generous" is "generous" word for describing compensation even back at the end of the decade. Salaries for bachelor's degree recipients with a full-time declined by a \$1,000 on average from 2000 to 2001. They have not recovered. When adjusted for inflation, salaries have actually declined by \$1,600 since 2000. Where the

graduates find work makes a big difference. On average, a bachelor's degree recipient who found work in the cable television industry or public relations in 2003 earned \$6,000 more than the graduate who found work in the broadcast television industry. Benefits packages also are being eroded. In 2003, only 76.3% of the graduates with full-time jobs said they had a basic medical plan as part of their employment, compared with 82.0% in 2000. In 2003, 25.9% of the graduates with full-time jobs said the employer paid all of the expenses of the basic medical plan, while in 2000 that figure was 33.0%.

Given the poor job market, it probably should be viewed as surprising that only a quarter of the graduates in 2003 wish they had chosen a different career. Those graduates who have found jobs are proud of their employers and reasonably strongly committed to them. They think their work is meaningful and generally feel the personnel policies of their employers will reward them for their investments.

Obviously, the journalism and mass communication graduates are confronting the same challenging job market as graduates in other fields of study and as workers generally. Employment nationally has yet to show strength. The growth in the economy generally has been slow.

Earlier analyses have shown that a particular segment of the economy is especially important in predicting the job market journalism and mass communication graduates will encounter: advertising spending. Levels of full-time employment and salaries correlate more with advertising spending than they do with the Gross Domestic Product, an indicant of the overall economy. And advertising spending predicts the level of full-time employment and salaries earned by journalism and mass communication graduates better than does spending in other segments of the industry or overall total spending on the communication industry.⁵

The good news for journalism and mass communication graduates is that Veronis Suhler Stevenson Media Merchant Bank predicts that advertising spending will grow strongly through 2007 **(Chart 47.)** Incomplete data for 2003 suggested a growth rate of 3.8%, followed in 2004 by a projected growth of 6.6%. Growth in 2005 through 2007 is expected to average 7%. A comparison of the growth rates in advertising and the level of employment for journalism and mass communication graduates **(Chart 5)** shows that the declines in the employment market for journalism and mass communication graduates actually run a little ahead of the declines in the advertising market. From 1975 to 2002, VSS has shown declines in advertising expenditures only twice: 1990 to 1991 (-3.5%) and from 2000 to 2001 (-8.0%). The level of full-time employment for journalism and mass communication graduates dropped

⁵These conclusions come from comparisons in 2003 of expenditures in the communications industries from 1986 to 2003 with the level of full-time employment for journalism and mass communication graduates shown in Chart 5 and the salary data shown in Chart 20 of this report. Data on expenditures in the communications industry and the GDP figures come from *Investment Considerations for the Communications Industry: A Thirty-Year Review of the Communications Industry*, Veronis Suhler Stevenson, New York, March 2004. VSS reports data on four sectors of the communications industry: Advertising, Speciality Media and Marketing Services, Institutional End-User Spending, and Consumer End-User Spending. Full-time employment and salary for journalism graduates correlates highest with the first of these and better with the first than with total spending across the four categories.

from 1989 to 1990 and continued to decline through 1991. Full-time employment also dropped slightly from 1999 to 2000 and has not recovered since. If the strong growth in advertising spending projected by VSS for this year and the next several is realized, the job market confronted by journalism and mass communication graduates in the next several years should start to show signs of improvement.

Salaries clearly are a reflection of the level of full-time employment. In the period from 1986 to 2003, the salaries received by those who received their bachelor's degrees from journalism and mass communication programs correlated strongly with the level of full-time employment. When full-time employment has been high, level of compensation also has been high.⁶ Clearly, journalism and mass communication graduates must deal with the basic consequences of supply and demand in the marketplace. With enrollments in the nation's journalism and mass communication programs growing, supply is increasing even as the market has remained weak.

Journalism and mass communication graduates in 2004 and beyond must hope some of the growth in advertising expenditures translates into fuller industry growth in the next several years.

⁶The correlation between level of full-time employment and nominal salary over the 18-year period was .282, but the correlation between salary and inflation-adjusted salary was .70.

Survey Methodology

The *Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates* is designed to monitor the employment rates and salaries of graduates of journalism and mass communication programs in the United States, including Puerto Rico. In addition, the survey tracks the curricular activities of those graduates while in college, examines their job-seeking strategies, and provides measures of the professional attitudes and behaviors of the graduates upon completion of their college studies.

Since 1997, the *Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates* has been conducted at the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. From 1987-1996, the survey was conducted at Ohio State University.

Each year a sample of schools is drawn from those listed in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Directory*, published annually by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and *The Journalist's Road to Success: A Career Guide*, formerly published and printed by the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund, Inc., and now available on the web at the following site: <http://djnewspaperfund.dowjones.com/fund/pubcareerguide.asp>. Schools list themselves in the *AEJMC Directory*. All U.S. programs accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications and all U.S. members of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication are in the *AEJMC Directory*. To be included in the *Newspaper Fund Guide*, the college or university must offer at least 10 courses in news-editorial journalism and those courses must include core courses, such as an introduction to the mass media and press law and ethics, as well as basic skills courses such as reporting and editing. Selection of schools for the sample is probabilistic, so that those chosen represent the population of schools in the two directories. In 2003, 100 schools were drawn from the 463 unique entries of four-year programs in the U.S. (including Puerto Rico) in the two directories.

Administrators at the selected schools are asked to provide the names and addresses of their spring bachelor's and master's degree recipients. A questionnaire was mailed in November 2003 to all spring graduates receiving either a bachelor's or a master's degree from the selected programs. A second questionnaire was sent to nonrespondents in January 2004. A third mailing was sent in March 2004 to graduates who had not responded to the first two mailings. With each of the mailings to the 2003 graduates, the recipients were given the option of returning the instrument via a postage-paid return envelope or completing it on the web.

The questionnaire asked about the respondent's experiences both while a student and in the months since graduation. Included were questions about university experiences, job-seeking and employment, and salary and benefits.

In 2003, the survey was mailed to 8,265 individuals whose names and addresses were provided by the administrators of the 100 programs. A total of 3,060 returned the questionnaires by the end of May of 2004. Of the returns, 2,840 were from students who reported they actually had completed their degrees during the April to June 2003 period. The remaining 220 had completed their degrees either before or after the specified period, despite their inclusion in the spring graduation lists. A total of 420 questionnaires was returned undelivered and without a forwarding address. Return rate, computed as the number of questionnaires returned divided by the number mailed, was 37.0%. Return rate, computed as the number returned divided by the number mailed minus the bad addresses, was 39.0%.⁷ Of the 2,840 usable questionnaires, 2,680 (94.4%) were from bachelor's degree recipients and 160 were from those who received a master's degree. Only 118 unique responses were received via the web.

The findings summarized in this report are projectable to the estimated 45,795 students who earned bachelor's degrees and the 4,080 students who earned master's degrees in academic year 2002-2003 from the 463 colleges and universities across the United States and Puerto Rico offering programs in journalism and mass communication. Comparisons are made with data gathered in graduate surveys back through 1986. Data on master's degree recipients have been available since 1989.

Sample error for the 2003 (as well as 1999, 2000, and 2001) undergraduate data is 1.9%. Sample error terms for earlier surveys were: 2.1% (1996-8), 2.0% (1990-1995), 2.1% (1989), 3.7% (1988), 2.8% (1987), and 3.2% (1986). In all cases, the confidence level is set at .05, meaning that the odds are 19 to one that the figures presented in this report are within plus or minus sample error of what would have been obtained had all graduates of journalism and mass communication programs, rather than a sample

⁷The return rates in 2002 were 42.4% and 45.6% and 42.2% and 45.7% a year earlier. In general, return rates have been declining for this and other surveys across time. But time is not the only factor. Return rate from 1987 to 2003 for the graduate survey correlated -0.17 (Pearson r) with the reported level of unemployment for bachelor's degree recipients. This correlation increases to -.31 if year is controlled for via partial correlation analysis. (Year is negatively correlated with return rate at -0.92.) Analysis of return rates across time had not shown any linkages to the level of employment up until 2001. See Lee B. Becker and Wilson Lowrey (2000), "Monitoring US journalism and mass communication labor market: findings, history and methods of an ongoing survey project," *Australian Journalism Review*, 22 (1):20-36 (available at <http://www.grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys/suprpts.htm>). Return rates (using the first measure) for the 100 participating schools in the 2003 graduate survey varied considerably, from 0% at three of the very small programs, to 62.6% at one of the largest. Because of the finding of a negative relationship between return rate and unemployment rate, computation of unemployment rates in 2003 was weighted by participating program and are reported in the text above. The return rate in 2003 also was adversely affected by a change in sampling procedures involving Michigan State University. In previous years, only journalism graduates had been included in the sample. In 2003, graduates of all departments within the College of Communication Arts and Sciences were included in the sample. Return rate for MSU journalism graduates in 2003 was 52.1% (first measure) vs. 30.5% for the graduates not in journalism. Michigan State is a large program, contributing 553 graduates to the sample. The return rate for 2003 eliminating the MSU graduates not in journalism from the computation was 37.6% (first measure) versus the 37.0% for the sample with all MSU graduates included. For the second measure of return rate, the figure without MSU graduates other than those in journalism was 39.7% vs. 39.0%. The decline in return rate in 2003 seems to be a function of year, unemployment, and changes in the sampling procedure.

of these graduates, completed questionnaires. (Sample error, of course, is only one of the sources of error in survey estimates.) Sample error for responses from those receiving master's degrees in 2003 is 7.7%, nearly the same as in previous years for which data are available. In many instances in the report that follows, fewer than the full number of cases is used for inferences. For example, some of the data are based solely on persons working full-time when surveyed. In these cases, error is greater than 1.9%, depending on the actual number of persons for whom data are reported. In addition, many comparisons between subgroups in the sample and between the 2003 and earlier samples are made. Standard statistical tests have been used to evaluate the observed differences, or trends. Only those differences likely to hold if a census of all graduates were undertaken are discussed in the text.

Women made up 74.5% of respondents. Members of racial or ethnic minorities made up 18.4% of those returning questionnaires. These sample characteristics are similar to those in recent years. Overall, the sample reflects slightly higher return rates from women and slightly lower return rates from minorities, based on the known characteristics of the 463 schools from which the sample was drawn.

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Supplemental charts and tables from the *Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates* are included in an Appendix to this report. The charts and tables report data on the curricular specialization of the graduates, their job seeking strategies, and other aspects of their college and post-college experiences. Also included is a detailed salary table. As appropriate, data from earlier years are included in the supplemental charts and tables.

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Partner Schools

The following 100 schools participated in the 2003 Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates and are partners in this project:

Alabama State University (AL)	University of Iowa (IA)
University of South Alabama (AL)	Wichita State University (KS)
University of Alaska Anchorage (AK)	Eastern Kentucky University (KY)
Arizona State University (AZ)	University of Kentucky (KY)
Arkansas State University (AR)	Northwestern State U. of Louisiana (LA)
Ouachita Baptist University (AR)	Southeastern Louisiana University (LA)
Azusa Pacific University (CA)	University of Louisiana at Monroe (LA)
California State University Fullerton (CA)	University of Maryland (MD)
Humboldt State University (CA)	University of Massachusetts (MA)
San Jose State University (CA)	Michigan State University (MI)
Santa Clara University (CA)	Oakland University (MI)
University of Northern Colorado (CO)	University of Minnesota (MN)
University of Southern Colorado (CO)	University of St. Thomas (MN)
University of Bridgeport (CT)	Rust College (MS)
Delaware State University (DE)	University of Mississippi (MS)
Florida A & M University (FL)	Central Missouri State University (MO)
University of Florida (FL)	Evangel University (MO)
Berry College (GA)	Lincoln University (MO)
Clark Atlanta University (GA)	University of Missouri Kansas City (MO)
University of Georgia (GA)	University of Missouri Columbia (MO)
University of Hawaii at Manoa (HI)	University of Montana (MT)
Columbia College Chicago (IL)	Hastings College (NE)
Northern Illinois University (IL)	University of Nevada Reno (NV)
Northwestern University (IL)	University of New Hampshire (NH)
Butler University (IN)	Rider University (NJ)
Indiana University (IN)	University of New Mexico (NM)
Purdue University (IN)	Ithaca College (NY)
University of Southern Indiana (IN)	Long Island University Brooklyn Campus (NY)
Loras College (IA)	New York University (NY)

Partner Schools (continued)

St. Bonaventure University (NY)	Texas Christian University (TX)
State University of New York Plattsburgh (NY)	Lamar University (TX)
Syracuse University (NY)	University of Texas Pan American (TX)
Elon College (NC)	West Texas A&M University (TX)
Lenoir-Rhyne College (NC)	Brigham Young University (UT)
University of North Carolina at Pembroke (NC)	Castleton State College (VT)
University of North Dakota (ND)	James Madison University (VA)
Ohio University (OH)	University of Richmond (VA)
Ohio State University (OH)	Virginia Union University (VA)
Ohio Wesleyan University (OH)	Eastern Washington University (WA)
Youngstown State University (OH)	University of Washington (WA)
Oklahoma State University (OK)	Bethany College (WV)
University of Oklahoma (OK)	Marquette University (WI)
Southern Oregon University (OR)	University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee (WI)
University of Oregon (OR)	University of Wisconsin--Stevens Point (WI)
Elizabethtown College (PA)	University of Wyoming (WY)
LaSalle University (PA)	Howard University (DC)
University of South Carolina (SC)	University of Puerto Rico (PR)
Black Hills State University (SD)	
Tennessee Technological University (TN)	
University of Tennessee Martin (TN)	
Abilene Christian University (TX)	
Stephen F. Austin State University (TX)	
Texas A & M University College Station (TX)	

Charts and Tables

1. Job offers to Bachelor's degree recipients

Job offers for Bachelor's degree recipients on graduation: percent with at least one job offer

2. Job interviews of Bachelor's degree recipients

Number of interviews by Bachelor's degree recipients who looked for work

3. Employment status Oct. 31

Employment status of Bachelor's degree recipients

4. Employment status Oct. 31

Employment status of Bachelor's degree recipients who looked for work

5. Employment status

Employment status of Bachelor's degree recipients when they returned questionnaires

6. Permanent positions

Status of Bachelor's degree recipients: percent in permanent positions

7. Unemployment rates

Unemployment rates of journalism Bachelor's degree recipients compared to U.S. labor force data

8. Job offers, Master's degree recipients

Job offers to Master's degree recipients on graduation: percent with at least one job

9. Employment Status Oct. 31

Employment status of Master's degree recipients

10. Employment Status Oct. 31

Employment status of Master's degree recipients who looked for work

11. Employment status

Employment status of Master's degree recipients when they returned questionnaires

12. Employment, news-editorial

Employment of Bachelor's degree recipients in the editorial specialty

13. Employment, broadcasting

Employment of Bachelor's degree recipients in the broadcasting specialty

14. Employment, advertising

Employment of Bachelor's degree recipients in the advertising specialty

15. Employment, PR

Employment of Bachelor's degree recipients in the public relations specialty

16. General types of work

An overview of Bachelor's degree recipients' work situations

Charts and Tables (continued)

17. Minority employment

Full-time employment of minority and non-minority Bachelor's degree recipients

18. Minority employment in communications

Employment of minority and non-minority Bachelor's degree recipients in communication jobs

19. Gender and employment

Full-time employment of female and male Bachelor's degree recipients

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Overall nominal median annual salaries and adjustments for inflation for Bachelor's and Master's degree recipients with full-time jobs

21. Salaries in dailies

Annual nominal median salaries and adjustments for inflation at daily newspapers - Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

22. Salaries in weeklies

Annual nominal median salaries and adjustments for inflation at weekly newspapers - Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

23. Salaries in radio

Annual nominal median salaries and adjustments for inflation in radio - Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

24. Salaries in television

Annual nominal median salaries and adjustments for inflation in TV - Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

25. Salaries in advertising

Annual nominal median salaries and adjustments for inflation in advertising - Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

26. Salaries in PR

Annual nominal median salaries and adjustments for inflation in public relations - Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

27. Salaries compared

Median yearly salaries for 2003 Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

28. Salaries by region

Median yearly salaries for 2003 Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

29. Union membership of JMC graduates

Union membership of Bachelor's degree recipients

Charts and Tables (continued)

30. Yearly salary for union members and non-union workers

Median salary per year for Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs: union and non-union

31. Job benefits I

Benefits available to Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

32. Job benefits II

Benefits available to Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

33. Job benefits III

Benefits available to Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

34. Why jobs chosen

Employed Bachelor's degree recipients' reasons for selecting jobs

35. Overall job situation

Employed Bachelor's degree recipients views of their jobs

36. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction of employed Bachelor's degree recipients

37. Regret career choices

Bachelor's degree recipients who wish they had selected another career

38. Retirement plans

Attitudes toward retirement of Bachelor's degree recipients with jobs

39. Organizational pride

Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

40. Organizational commitment

Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

41. Meaningfulness of work

Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

42. Personnel policies of employers

Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

43. Personnel policies by employer type

Bachelor's degree recipients with full-time jobs

44. Job career goals

Bachelor's degree recipients

45. Debt at graduation

Bachelor's degree recipients who had debt at graduation

46. Debt because of college

Bachelor's degree recipients' debt at year of graduation

47. Advertising expenditures nationally

Advertising spending 1985 to 2002 and projected spending 2003-2007

Appendix: Supplemental Charts and Tables

S1. What they studied

Specialty within curriculum of Bachelor's degree recipients

S2. Campus activities

Campus activities of Bachelor's degree recipients

S3. Grade point averages

Final grades of Bachelor's degree recipients

S4. Grades by major

Final grades of Bachelor's degree recipients by major: percent with A or A-

S5. Seeking print jobs

Jobs sought by Bachelor's degree recipients in the area of print media. Excludes students not seeking jobs

S6. Seeking broadcast jobs

Jobs sought by Bachelor's degree recipients in the area of broadcasting. Excludes students not seeking jobs

S7. Seeking PR/advertising jobs

Jobs sought by Bachelor's degree recipients in the area of PR and advertising. Excludes students not seeking jobs

S8. News-editorial tasks

Bachelor's degree recipients' job tasks in the area of print journalism

S9. Advertising tasks

Bachelor's degree recipients' job tasks in the area of advertising

S10. Corporate communication tasks

Bachelor's degree recipients' job tasks in the area of corporate marketing and communication

S11. Newspaper work

Bachelor's degree recipients working in newspaper jobs

S12. Telecommunication work

Bachelor's degree recipients working in telecommunications jobs

S13. PR and advertising work

Bachelor's degree recipients working in public relations and advertising

Appendix: Supplemental Charts and Tables (continued)

S14. Other communication work

Bachelor's degree recipients working for magazines, newsletters/ trade press, book publishers, WWW

S15. Hiring news students

Employers of Bachelor's degree recipients with a news-editorial emphasis

S16. Hiring broadcast students

Students with an emphasis in telecommunications who choose their own specialty

S17. Hiring ad students

Students with an advertising emphasis who choose their own specialty

S18. Hiring PR students

Students with a public relations emphasis who choose their own specialty

S19. Where grads seek work

Types of jobs sought by journalism and mass communication Bachelor's degree recipients in 2003

S20. Minorities and job seeking I

Types of jobs sought by journalism and mass communication Bachelor's degree recipients in 2003

S21. Minorities and job seeking II

Types of jobs sought by journalism and mass communication Bachelor's degree recipients in 2003

S22. Gender and job seeking I

Types of jobs sought by journalism and mass communication Bachelor's degree recipients in 2003

S23. Gender and job seeking II

Types of jobs sought by journalism and mass communication Bachelor's degree recipients in 2003

S24. Overtime without pay

Bachelor's degree recipients working more than 40 hours per week as full-time employees without reimbursement

S25. Software use

Types of software used by the Bachelor's degree recipients: design, graphic editing, web, photo

Table 1. Median salaries by employer type

Comments from the 2003 Graduates

Every year, those completing the *Annual Survey of Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates* are asked to provide advice "to those who follow you." Here is a sampling of the comments from the 2003 graduates.

Prolong graduation and just get an internship now! All employers want 1-3 years work experience and honestly I know I could do any PR/journalism/advertising/comm. job posted, but not one company will even give you a chance to get an interview and I graduated Summa Cum Laude. I'm frustrated and unhappy with my job and I would rather work in a restaurant again or go back to school.

**Female bachelor's degree in advertising,
working outside communication**

It is important to plan ahead. Start looking for a job at LEAST 6 months before graduation. Be willing to make some concessions when starting out. You will not make what you think you are worth at first, but you can get there quickly once you get in and make a name for yourself.

**Female master's degree
recipient in
speech/interpersonal
communication, working
full-time in
telecommunications**

Make sure you know that the media industry is hard to find employment in, no matter what your specialty or emphasis.

**Male bachelor's degree
recipient in broadcast
production, employed
full-time working
outside
communications**

My suggestion: Teach more writing, more software, and eliminate the time wasters I took like "media in the community" and "magazine editing." If this career starts kids at the bottom, why train them to be the editor of a magazine? Teach them to write first.

**Female bachelor's degree in
advertising, working full-time
with an ad agency**

Get published! Clips get you the interviews; long letters and personal statements do not. Do all in your power to obtain an internship. It is vital in this field. Freelance; seek out opportunities to write for small & large publications. E-mail editors and ask. Two words: Writer's Market.

Male bachelor's degree in journalism, freelancing for three major daily newspapers

Get internships and go to networking events. The people you know will get you the interview, so meet people in the field.

Female bachelor's degree in journalism, working full-time in book publishing

Always remember the importance of credibility because it can vanish quickly.

Female bachelor's degree in journalism, working full-time with a weekly paper

Be prepared to have a variety of temporary positions before a permanent one. Live in the city where you want to work--don't wait for a job offer--interviewing is much easier if you're local. Be prepared to truly work from the bottom up in this industry.

Female bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism, working full-time for a television show

Write for your student paper or work for the student radio or participate in any student publication...Work in the field as soon as possible; Otherwise it's very easy to lose the momentum gained in college.

Male bachelor's degree recipient in journalism, working full-time outside communications

Take any class which stresses writing. A graduate in print or broadcast who can write will seldom be unemployed. Be able to multi-task. Know how to do several things well. All branches of journalism are trending toward the hiring of good generalists with excellent critical thinking skills....Be aware of, and learn, new technologies. Read, watch, and follow the news. A journalist who is not committed to understanding his/her world and community is useless.

Male master's degree in journalism, working as media professor at a college

I would advise communication graduates to maximize their potential for employment by looking beyond traditional communication employers (newspapers, TV, PR agencies, etc.). I have found a great job in state government working for public health. My agency, as well as others, realizes the value of having a skilled communicator to disseminate information to the public....I would encourage communication graduates to explore new opportunities and show new organizations how their talents can be major assets.

Male master's degree recipient in organizational and group communications, working full-time for a governmental agency in communication

Real world computer proficiency is also a must (Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Office). Students should be flexible, creative, and willing to work long hard hours in order to be successful.

Male bachelor's degree recipient in public relations, working full-time with PR agency