



“I will not be here and not have a journalism program.”

Update on the discontinuation of multimedia journalism at A-State

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Faculty Senate met with Chancellor Todd Shields, Ph.D., and other faculty to discuss the deletion of the bachelor of science in multimedia journalism (MMJ) degree and how to prevent similar situations in the future.

“I will not be here and not have a journalism program,” Shields said.

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) decided to discontinue the MMJ program at an April 28 meeting. Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Communication Brad Rawlins, Ph.D., sent an email to students informing them about the decision Oct. 24.

Gary Edwards, Ph.D., associate professor of history, prepared a document regarding the circumstances of the discontinuation of the MMJ program to be reviewed during the meeting last Friday. “We failed multimedia journalism,” Edwards said.

Those in attendance discussed what led to the end of the MMJ program, including ADHE policy, communication issues, internal strife between MMJ and creative media production (CMP) faculty

and curriculum issues.

ADHE Policy:

According to Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) policy, a bachelor's degree program must have an average of six graduates per year for three years to meet viability standards. Otherwise, the program will be cut. Only 4.3 MMJ students graduated during the review period.

Shields said he prepared to defend the MMJ program to the AHECB, but the board would not hear arguments. “I went ‘What the hell was that?’ That had never happened since I’ve been doing that since 1994,” Shields said.

“We failed multimedia journalism,” Edwards said.

Communication Issues:

In addition to declining numbers, Rawlins, who formerly served as the director of the School of Media and Journalism, said the MMJ department was not properly informed about the possible cut of the program. He said if the department had been made aware, they would have addressed the issue much quicker and more vigorously. “I’ve done a deep search with all my emails and talked to people, it’s just not there,” Rawlins said.

Shields said he does not know why the department



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(From left to right) MMJ program coordinator Lillie Fears, Ph.D.; CMP program coordinator Mary Jackson-Pitts, Ph.D. and Chancellor Todd Shields, Ph.D.

was not notified. He said communication should be improved, but each department should monitor its own enrollment and address issues before the ADHE notifies them.

“ADHE is no longer the one we talk to,” Shields said. “They’re the ones that dictate to us.”

Internal Strife:

The chancellor and provost, Calvin White, Ph.D., met with MMJ and CMP faculty July 13 and proposed the two programs combine to keep journalism at A-State. Shields said he hoped the programs would be revised over the fall semester. “That did not happen. In fact, I was told ‘We’re not working together,’” Shields said.

After that meeting, Mary Jackson-Pitts, Ph.D., program coordinator of CMP, sent an email to Gina Hogue, Ph.D.,

interim director of the School of Media and Journalism saying, “We are not willing to reimagine or launch a new journalism curriculum with the existing MMJ faculty. We have a proposal to establish a broadcast journalism emphasis under the creative media production program.”

The cause of the issues between the departments was not discussed at the senate meeting. “I don’t know the history,”

“I went ‘What the hell was that?’ That had never happened since I’ve been doing that since 1994,” Shields said.

Shields said. “I don’t necessarily want to relive all that, whatever it is. I kind of don’t care. It’s ‘Do you want to work together

and have jobs or do you not? Do you pull together for the benefit of the students and the campus, or do you not?”

Shields said he still hopes the MMJ and CMP faculty will work things out and revise the programs to be combined.

“It surprises me, in fact almost maybe hurts me in a way that is hard to describe. That’s not the A-State that I’ve seen anywhere else,” Shields said. “If people are being uncollegial to the point of hurting students in the program, that has to be dealt with.”

Shields said if the MMJ and CMP programs cannot work together, he will consider removing the program from faculty control and giving control to someone with experience in revising programs.

CONTINUED: JOURNALISM, 3A

MMJ Deletion Timeline:

APRIL 28

Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) decides to end MMJ program at board meeting.



JULY 13

Chancellor and provost hold meeting with the School of Media and Journalism faculty to discuss possible solutions.



OCT. 24

MMJ students receive email notification of the program’s discontinuation



FEB. 2

Faculty Senate to discuss the MMJ program and how to prevent similar situations in the future.



FEB. 16

Faculty Senate set to continue discussion and review new resolution to improve communication issues.

Students curating new museum exhibit with Department of Art + Design

SHAILEY WOOLDRIDGE

COPY EDITOR

A handful of students are helping curate an exhibit at the Arkansas State University Museum expected to open in the summer.

Katherine Baker, Ph.D., associate professor of art history, teaches the class museum fundamentals II in which the students are working on this exhibit.

“These two areas are going to be dedicated to the history of A-State from the very beginning to today,” Baker said. “The students have decided on something we call ‘the big idea.’”

The big idea represents the central theme of the exhibit.

“Think of the big idea like the thesis of a paper: what is the point of this installation? That drives every exhibit that a museum creates- what’s the point? What are we trying to share with the audience?” said Elisabeth Engel, interim director of the museum.

Mary Carden, a senior wildlife and museum science student from Wynne, Ark., said this exhibit allows students and alumni to see the change A-State has undergone to be what it is now. “It’s a good way to educate. I

feel like it just shows everybody who we are and what we have,” Carden said. “There’s more history behind A-State than what we may know now.”

“It’s very much a bringing together of past and present, making sure that we’re speaking to alumni who have experiences here, current students who have experiences here and unifying the past and present,” Baker said. “Something very important for museums is the way that you do that is through objects.”

Among the objects to be displayed in the exhibit are a nursing uniform from the 1970s early days of the nursing school, Carl Reng’s hat, beanies first-years were once mandated to wear, letterman jackets and pennants.

Engel said the earliest objects in the exhibit are photographs dating back to the 1920s to late 1910s.

Students from several different majors are involved in this class and curation of the exhibit.

“A broad spectrum of people who are interested in museums and can bring their skills and their knowledge to something that we collaborate on,” Baker said.

Construction to make room for the exhibit was recently completed. Baker said later in



Photo illustration by Shailey Wooldridge | Copy Editor

(From left to right) Mary Carden, a senior wildlife and museum science major from Wynne, Ark., Olivia Gray, a senior art history major from Stuttgart, Ark. and Eret Ledbetter, a junior history major from Stuttgart. Each student is holding an item in the new exhibit.

the semester students will be painting this area and adding light to better display items.

“All the construction was essentially mocking out and creating a larger space for them to work with,” Engel said. “It’s contained within those two exhibit cases. It was just a revision and refreshment of the

physical space so that they can drive the content that goes in it.”

The cases before were mostly empty, showcasing a few items from the courthouse belonging to the “Old Town” exhibit behind them.

“It’s access to information that a lot of people you know either won’t do the research on

or don’t realize that they have an interest in. There’s a reason why we’re doing this. There’s a reason why we want to save these things and talk about these stories,” Engel said. “History isn’t just a lesson it’s something that we can connect with and should be present. We should learn from it and not just read about it.”

THIS WEEK IN THE HERALD:

OPINION, 2A

- Razor wire does not discriminate
- The value of college outside of STEM

NEWS, 3A

- Campus Crime
- Ensemble of trumpet students earns spot in national competition

NEWS, 4A

- This week’s puzzle
- Provost announces changes to 2024-2025 calendar, inclement weather policy

SPORTS, 1B

- A-State basketball sweeps doubleheader against Old Dominion, ULM
- Fourth record broken for track and field

ARTS & E, 2B

- TikTok: please don’t stop the music
- This week’s Pop Pick
- Raise a “Red Solo Cup” for Toby Keith

LIFE, 3B

- New coffee cart opens at Dean B. Ellis Library
- Ranking Dr. Pepper options on campus
- Horoscopes