Get Me Rewrite! Five Years of the Student Newspaper Diversity Project

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In the five years of a newspaper project involving high school and university students that publishes an annual special edition exploring a diversity issue within the local community, several key pedagogical, political, and economic revisions have been made. Nevertheless, the bedrock principles of service-learning and civic journalism have remained constant. The project history shows that a sound theoretical foundation rooted in student and community education and awareness can withstand pressures of censorship by school administrators, ethical and pedagogical concerns that balance student safety with product integrity, and the economic need to become self-sufficient.

In its five years, the Student Newspaper Diversity Project has undergone key structural and programmatic changes while maintaining its conceptual roots in service- learning, community-building, and quality civic journalism. To keep the partnership viable and relevant for both institutions in which it operates—a public university and a public high school in a mid-sized Midwestern community—I have had to confront issues ranging from administrative censorship to student ownership. What has been particularly gratifying, however, is that through various iterations, the cornerstones of experiential education and civic awareness have stayed firmly in place.

Newspaper writing is a form of community writing that is often relegated to journalism courses. The benefits of writing for a wide audience and the critical thinking required in sourcing, information gathering, and story organization, however, make the process a wonderfully enriching avenue for projects

well beyond the journalism curriculum. The lessons I have learned in spear-heading this project will likely be of value to other teacher-scholars working to strengthen student community engagement through writing and literacy.

Placing the practice of journalism in a service-learning framework yields rich results due to the natural symbiosis between the two practices.

Over the years, I have had to make several structural changes to the project. In the pages that follow, I explain the project's original structure, offer support for the service-learning and civic journalism pairing on which the project is founded, discuss four key revisions to the project, and consider both ongoing challenges and the constants that continue to guide the project.

Original Project Overview

The Student Newspaper Diversity Project was created in response to a 2001 call from the National Communication Association to create community partnerships. This NCA initiative, which continues today, is called Communicating Common Ground (CCG). As part of the CCG initiative, the Student Newspaper Diversity Project joins scores of other partnerships that link K-12 classrooms with universities to combat prejudice, discrimination, and hate crimes through communication instruction that seeks to foster respect for and appreciation of diversity. The initiative is a national effort promoted by NCA, the Southern Poverty Law Center, Campus Compact, and the American Association for Higher Education. CCG projects must be approved by NCA designates, and while no funding is attached to the CCG designation, approved projects do join a nationwide educational community of practice and support that is helpful in locating grant funds, sharing common problems, seeking creative solutions, and publicizing projects.

At the time of the CCG call, I had just joined academia after years working as a staff writer in the newsroom of a large urban daily newspaper. I was particularly interested in continuing to work with a news publication and in using journalism to connect with citizens of the local community. This personal and professional desire and the public CCG call prompted me to launch the Student Newspaper Diversity Project. In its original conception, the project involved me, a graduate student in communication with some background in journalism, the staff of a high school newspaper at a local pub-

lic high school,[1] and the newspaper's faculty advisor. The high school student newspaper is a for-credit high school class taught by a faculty advisor who is an English teacher; she and I work as partners to oversee and edit the publication of the high school special edition, which the students named the *On Diversity* edition. *On Diversity* is just one of six editions of the newspaper produced during the academic year by the high school staff, but it is the only one devoted to a single theme and such serious content. The edition has won statewide scholastic journalism awards, in part because it seeks to set the bar far higher than the typical high school newspaper fare of prom dress fashion spreads and controversies over which soda pop brands to stock in the hallway vending machines. In our initial project year, the graduate student and I met with the staff once a week to help produce a special edition of the newspaper that focused on a local diversity issue-a focus in keeping with the vision of the CCG initiative.

The diversity issues we have addressed so far are the experience of and discrimination against local Muslim-Americans; segregation and desegregation in the local public schools; the challenges and issues students face at one local public high school; and the stories and struggles of local residents living in poverty. In the spring of 2006, we are focusing on local public health issues facing a variety of demographic groups in our community, from lead poisoning in low-income neighborhoods to the significant number of under-insured residents in our community to the county health department's work with local Hispanic women fighting depression. The diversity themes selected each year by students and the project leaders must meet a few basic criteria: relevance and resonance in the community; sufficient breadth and depth of subject matter to allow for several stories on the subject; and news value, including timeliness, reader interest, and potential for local impact.

The graduate student and I served in many roles. We served as change agents who set a higher journalistic and community-oriented standard for at least one of the high school paper's six editions; we served as editors by helping students develop their story ideas, cultivate appropriate sources for stories, and revise and edit their articles; and we conducted a formal evaluation of the project's strengths and weaknesses. The graduate student found she was able to mentor students in a different way than the high school newspaper advisor and I could, as she was closer in age, more able to relate to students' perspec-

tives, and less threatening to students struggling with problems in their reporting copy.

The high school brought many strengths to the partnership, including a long-standing student-produced newspaper, an engaged and community-oriented advisor, and a diverse student body. The staff of the paper can number between 12- 24 students, from sophomores to seniors of both genders, with varying levels of economic, ethnic and racial diversity. The school is an urban public high school in a mid-sized Midwestern community with about 1,300 students, approximately half of whom are White and about half African American, with a small but growing percentage of Hispanics. More than 40 percent of the students are considered economically disadvantaged.

I have been able to secure some funding each year, though each year from a different source. In our first two years, sales from ads sold by students (a regular income source for each edition) and a grant from the Southern Poverty Law Center enabled us to print 500 extra copies of the newspaper to distribute outside the school. In 2004, two grants from a local foundation funded the inclusion of the *On Diversity* edition as an insert in the community newspaper. It was delivered to approximately 50,000 subscribers and also posted online. In 2003 and 2005, internal university grants supported undergraduate research assistants and printing costs.

Also in this first project year, as in all subsequent years, I conducted an assessment of the project. These assessments have ranged from pre- and post-test surveys of high school readers (see Christian and Lapinski), to a questionnaire for community readers, to focus groups with university readers. In general, the evaluations have shown a strong positive impact internally on both the high school and university students involved in the project. Students have self-reported that they learned things about their community, journalistic skills, diversity issues, and the value of setting ambitious goals for themselves. The evaluation results have been less encouraging when it comes to *On Diversity's* impact externally; so far, we've found little evidence of the edition's direct impact on readers' stereotypes, attitudes, or knowledge about diversity issues. These findings, coupled with practical experience, have informed the revisions discussed below.

Lastly, a few pedagogical elements have remained constant. One such element is an accuracy and bias check. Since a key part of our project is the reduction of stereotypes and the fostering of diversity, students learn, in addition to checking all facts and quotes, to read their articles carefully for word choice or tone that may be biased or prejudicial. Another pedagogical constant is allowing student experiences to guide lectures and assignments. So, for example, when students are struggling with how to find the best people to talk with for a story, we spend an additional class or two on developing sources through basic online research as well as role play

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to think about what sorts of places particular sources may frequent, be it a public health clinic or the local office of the NAACP. A final pedagogical element is evaluation of project participants through either anonymous evaluation forms or one-on-one interviews. These evaluations have guided course revisions (for example, students said they wanted more reporting time) while ensuring that the most enriching elements of the project are preserved and strengthened.

Project Foundations: Service-Learning and Civic Journalism
Service-learning and civic journalism are intimately related, both fed by the springs of experience, community involvement, and intentional impact. Civic journalism has been defined in many ways, including, notes Rosen, as an attempt to make citizens and journalists more engaged and informed about public life and local community ("Questions and Answers"). Proponents of the civic journalism movement believe that journalism has an obligation to public life and must not merely inform with facts in news stories but must seek to affect public life and empower communities. In a debate on what constitutes public journalism, Rosen asserts that the movement seeks to link "active and interested citizens to one another, with the news organization as a kind of 'switching device,' in the hope that a more engaged, interactive, and informable public might result" ("Questions and Answers" 680).

The civic journalism approach is appealing in the midst of increasing public distrust of and disengagement with mainstream journalism in general. According a report by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of*

the News Media 2004, newspaper readership continues to decline ("Eight Major Trends" section), as does citizen trust in journalists and citizen belief that newspapers present news in a fair and balanced way ("Public Attitudes" section). The latest response from the journalism community to the complexity of American attitudes toward journalists is a movement called citizen journalism. In contrast to civic journalism, citizen journalism is fresher, more citizen-controlled, and far more interactive (often exclusively online) than civic journalism.[2] However, the two approaches do share a common emphasis on citizen participation. Much of civic journalism is rooted in the concept of newspapers as integral *citizens* of the local community, with a vested interest in that community and not just neutral bystanders. A Pew Center for Civic Journalism study by Friedland and Nichols (12) found that more than half of newspapers engaged in civic journalism-designed projects did so to primarily inform the public and raise awareness of public issues.

It is natural to pair such civically-oriented journalism with a service-learning project that emphasizes civic responsibility, experience, and reflection. In fact, the partnership of service-learning and civic journalism goes beyond simply learn-by-doing; the two concepts both look to Dewey for inspiration and draw from the same wellspring of community, civic life, activism, democracy, and participation as tools for change.[3]

Novek, for instance, put the "theoretical framework of civic journalism into practice" ("Good News" 174) by partnering with a high school English teacher to team-teach a civic journalism class and publishing a community-focused newspaper for high school students in a large inner-city U.S. high school. She notes that civic journalism propels young people into community participation and "may also be used as a learning strategy that combines teaching communication skills with community service" ("Read" 145).

My university journalism student evaluations have confirmed that the linkage of service-learning and civic journalism is energizing and educational. One anonymous student written evaluation in the spring 2005 semester reads:

> Before this semester, I really had no idea what sorts of barriers/
> hardships the impoverished face on a daily basis…I think there is
> significant value in writing on local issues such as poverty because

it makes the community aware and informed on problems and it can in turn generate solutions.

Revisions and Rationale

Revisions to the project have focused on four main goals: increasing the number of students involved in the project, responding to institutional censorship and political realities, balancing student safety with story integrity, and meeting the economic demands of publishing a student-produced newspaper.

Revision Area #1: Increasing the number of students involved in the project

After the first year, I realized how much my university-level journalism students would benefit from such a community-based project. Here I was, a university professor teaching, mentoring, and guiding high school journalism students in a project that did little to involve my own undergraduate students. How might I involve more students in the service-learning component of the project while maintaining the project's journalistic and pedagogical integrity?

As I struggled with this question, our second and third years continued to involve a single undergraduate journalism major in regular class visits to the high school newsroom. We continued to publish only *On Diversity* through the high school newspaper staff. In the fourth year of the project, revisions to our journalism curriculum unrelated to the project made it possible for me to incorporate the Student Newspaper Diversity Project in a capstone reporting and writing class that I teach at my university. This key structural change allowed me for the first time to meaningfully involve about 20 undergraduate students who focused on the same diversity topic as the high school newspaper but produced their own course paper, *The Journalism Bulletin*.

The Journalism Bulletin published the university students' original articles and had wholly different content than the high school newspaper's *On Diversity*. About 350 copies of *The Journalism Bulletin* were printed in the university's printing lab, and 200 copies were distributed by a local poverty-reduction organization during Homeless Awareness Week in our community. The remaining 150 copies were distributed to communication students on campus and to key community leaders, and the articles are also posted online through a community website.

Expanding the project to include a university course was successful in its own right; that is, the project continued to involve the key elements of service-learning and of community journalism, and student evaluations were positive in terms of student self-assessment of knowledge gained regarding local diversity issues, journalistic skills, and their own biases about poverty. However, I had not been able to meaningfully connect the high school newspaper staff with the university class—a connection that both groups of students were eager to forge. The connection would extend the service-learning component of the project, and help students at both levels in their reporting and writing. However, making that connection has been difficult, as the two classes meet at different times of day, and the respective students have other activities that largely prevent setting up outside-of-class meetings.

In 2005, my solution, albeit an inadequate one, was to pair the students via email. Each university student was paired with a high school reporter; they shared story ideas, sources, editorial suggestions, and copyediting corrections, and copied the newspaper advisor and myself on each exchange. The exchanges lacked the immediacy and intimacy of face-to-face meetings and the authority of a graded assignment, since the high school advisor's grading structure did not put much weight on the exchanges. As a second point of contact, an undergraduate research assistant who was a member of the capstone reporting and writing class served as a representative of the high school paper to her university peers and vice versa. On her evaluation, she remarked that gaining skills in editing and mentoring the high school newspaper staff were the most beneficial aspects of the assistantship.

 In Spring 2006, the high school journalists came to campus for a half-day to spend time with their reporting partners in my capstone reporting and writing class and to work on copy together in person, as well as to visit campus media outlets such as the student-run newspaper and radio station. The face-to-face exchange was highly successful and has forged the way for more responsive and substantive email editing between the students, an energized project team, administrative support of the project at the university, and deepened respect for one another among the students.

Revision Area #2: Responding to institutional censorship and politics, particularly at the secondary education level

It seems fitting to discuss this revision area at the heels of the first. The incorporation of *The Journalism Bulletin* into the project was prompted not only by the need to involve more students in the project, but also by institutional censorship of *On Diversity*. This is not an unusual scenario for a high school newspaper; in 1988, in Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that limits could be set on the free press rights of high school students (see the websites for The Student Press Law Center; the American Society of Newspaper Editors' High School Journalism program, and the National Scholastic Press Association). *On Diversity* was subjected to prior review in each of its years, but in 2004, a particularly critical administrative prior review led to an *On Diversity* edition that was drastically impacted in terms of content and quality. The 2004 edition was, unfortunately, the edition for which we received enough funding to print 50,000 inserts of the edition in the local community newspaper. Perhaps that is why the edition received such scrutiny by the school's dean of students and, apparently, also the school district's lawyer. The students sought to write honestly about the diverse issues within their own school, with the goal that an accurate and thorough portrayal of the school would reveal to community residents that, even at its worst, the school was not nearly as bad as the perceptions of many citizens. The edition's article topics included student success stories, academic life, adolescent drug and alcohol use, dating, and violence in the school.

A project must fit within the framework of an institution's politics or it may not survive.

Most problematic was the article detailing the number of fights at the school and the administration's efforts to improve safety and to discipline aggressive students in a more productive manner (e.g. one program kept such students in a special class on anger management as opposed to suspending them for a day). The entire article was cut by administrators, because, they explained to the high school advisor, they deemed it controversial and inaccurate. Administrators said that the number of fights requiring administrative action reported at the school, a figure the school district itself apparently supplied to Standard & Poor's school evaluation website on which we found the information, was incorrect. (Administrators had refused to directly supply to student reporters the specific number.) Another article on student drug and alcohol use was cut, but the advisor and I were less concerned about this deletion, as

we had some concerns about the accuracy of the student author's reporting. Interestingly, our concern about accuracy was not the reason the administration cut the article. Instead, it was because the article named students who said they used illegal substances. The administration's protection of minors in this case was, I believe, an appropriate decision.

In all, two full-length articles and an editor's note were cut from the edition, and numerous edits were required before the edition was published and distributed to readers of the local community paper. Several articles that were published were subjected to a politically correct standard that bordered on ridiculous. For example, reporters were not allowed to use the word "fight" in a story; instead, administrators determined that the word "confrontation" would be used instead. Furthermore, the administrator in charge of prior review appeared to make subjective editorial decisions with little rationale, jotting comments in the margins such as "I don't like this." During the controversy, the student editor informed the school's liaison at the community newspaper that we had a story on fighting censored. A reporter interviewed the student editor, the advisor, me, and the administrator in charge of prior review, but she never wrote a story. The community paper wanted to run the student-authored story on fighting, but the advisor wanted to first exhaust all administrative avenues, including seeking the support of the district school board to publish the article in the high school paper. The administrator in charge of prior review eventually said that the high school paper could publish the fighting article in its next issue-in the coming fall, as it turned out, and not in a special edition distributed to 50,000 community readers. The administrator asked, rightly, that the article detail the number of fights specifically at the school, instead of in the district. Several months later, the community paper published its own article on student fighting at the high school. Ironically, the community newspaper's article painted the school and administrators in a harsher light than the high school's version of the fighting story did.

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Institutional Politics

As Ed Orser of the American Studies Department at the University of Maryland suggested in a 2001 online paper, if all politics is local, then all local projects are political. I entered an institution—a public high school—not through a formal partnership set up between two institutions, but as an educator working on a stand-alone project developed independent of either institution. As such, I stepped into the unique politics of that secondary school more or less as an independent agent. In the first two years of the project, I wasn't aware of the greater political context of the high school; the project was going fine and we were basically unhindered in our work. While I met twice with the then-principal (a new principal assumed leadership in 2005) when the project first began, I did not continue to seek regular meetings with the principal. I believed that continued meetings would be redundant to administrators, as they already had someone within their institution with whom to discuss concerns-the newspaper advisor.

But in our pivotal third year, when we really struggled with prior review, I realized that I'd been naive to ignore *On Diversity's* role within the school and district political structure. As a professional journalist, I was unaware of the unique terrain that high school newspaper advisors must navigate. I also realized that I really had no meaningful position from which to negotiate; I had no place in the political order of the institution. Additionally, the politics became even more pronounced since our product is so public: We seek to interact with, to interview, to write about, and to publish for a greater public beyond the classroom.

I have learned that a project must fit within the framework of an institution's politics or it may not survive. In response, I have altered both my reporting goals for the *On Diversity* edition and my role in the high school. In light of prior review, I am more willing to reduce expectations for aggressive or investigative reporting. In addition, my role in the high school has shifted from a project leader who sets a tone and pace for the edition to a facilitator and encourager, a valuable-but institutionally silent-partner.

To help students see that they did have choices other than just passively submitting to administrative decisions, the student newspaper advisor at the high school consulted with the Student Press Law Center. The high school journalists didn't want to press the issue, however, largely out of fear the paper would

be cut from the curriculum altogether. Many times during the prior review process, the advisor was aware that she had to balance her job with how far to combat censorship issues.[4]

In the end, I think, the advisor knew far better than I how to negotiate her turf. She handled the issue by suggesting compromise wording in articles, negotiating with administrators about the role of the student newspaper in the school and community, and generally taking a less confrontational and more long-term approach. On this last point, for example, after the 2004 edition's prior review, she recommended a book on student press law ("Law of the Press" by the Student Press Law Center) to the key administrator in charge of prior review, and since then, the prior review has been far more edifying and non-confrontational.

That said, I did not want to again be in a position of being limited in how and when, should the need arise, I can defend a project for which I am primarily responsible. As the project leader and recipient, grantors expect that I have full control over my project. This decision led me to create *The Journalism Bulletin* and assume a less aggressive role as an editor when it came to story content in the *On Diversity* edition.

My advice to university educators partnering with secondary-level institutions on projects is to realize that faculty roles and reach are typically limited to institutions, and each educator should be the primary spokesperson and leader in his or her institution. In addition, an institution-to-institution (or more aptly, administration-to-administration) partnership may also help smooth the way for individual educators crossing institutional lines, as educators would then be part of a negotiated structure, with a universally-acknowledged role and prescribed authority. Finally, I suggest that holding tight to the project's core values amid cross-institutional politics will help determine whether a compromise can be found or whether a new project partner needs to be sought.

Revision Area #3: Balancing student safety with story integrity
With the creation of *The Journalism Bulletin*, I ran into an issue that deserved immediate attention and led to an immediate revision of my goals for that flagship 2005 publication. One pedagogical goal I had for the semester was to

teach students to tell a story using narrative journalism. This increasingly-used technique of reporting, however, often requires spending a good deal of time with sources in their environments, chronicling how they live. The idea is that by being present for critical moments in sources' lives, reporters are thus present for critical moments in the life of a story. Narrative journalism isn't voyeuristic, which implies a lack of context and complexity, but instead often puts the reporter in a position of empathy, telling a story from the vantage point, as much as possible, of standing in a source's shoes.

Students in my class were predominantly white and middle-class. Several students were concerned about visiting certain neighborhoods even during the day and expressed concern about their personal safety in the reporting venues most fruitful to their stories. I arranged for several class speakers who were experts on poverty issues, and assigned specific readings in an effort to use this reporting hurdle as a teaching opportunity to explore the very issues we were writing about-diversity and discrimination.

Whether student fears were entirely warranted can be debated, but in the role of educator, I felt there was no choice but to sacrifice some reporting opportunities, sources, color, and quotes to ensure student safety. Strengthening my belief was that, although they could take the course during another semester with a different instructor, this was a required course for majors. I spoke with the university's dean of students about the concerns and discovered this was new territory; there were no university policies to follow, nor did our journalism program have any such guidelines. Even a call to the chair of the social work school revealed that a professional always accompanies his or her student interns during field service work.

According to Yeomans in an online article for Florida Campus Compact, "Generally, an institution has the duty to use reasonable care in providing educational services to students" (2). This principle was shaped in part in response to the 2000 Nova Southeastern University lawsuit, which was brought against the university by a student intern who was assaulted and robbed in the parking lot of the facility where she was performing a mandatory internship. The university had been made aware of other criminal incidents occurring at or near the parking lot before the student's assault. Yeomans encapsulates the suit's outcome this way:

In Nova Southeastern University, Inc., etc. v. Gross, 758 So. 2d 86 (Fla. 2000) the Florida Supreme Court found that Nova had a duty to use reasonable care in providing educational services to its students and that assigning a student to a mandatory and approved internship program created a foreseeable risk of danger (3).

To respond to safety concerns both intuited by me and articulated by students, I developed some guidelines for field reporting. I expect I will continue to hone and adjust these guidelines as I gather information from other journalism programs about their field reporting parameters. The fieldwork guidelines helped students to see there were ways around what they saw as nearly insurmountable reporting obstacles; there is certainly far less concern, for example, in a student going during daylight hours to a neighborhood drop-in center and spending time talking with people to develop sources. Similarly, I encouraged students to meet potential sources in safe "third-places" such as my office, a convenient coffee shop in daylight hours, or a social service agency.

One goal was to teach students to tell a story using narrative journalism, a reporting technique that requires spending a good deal of time with sources in their environments, chronicling how they live.

Like the theme of diversity itself, the guidelines prompted rich and varied class discussions about student and public stereotypes about poverty. Students reflected on how their views of poverty were developed, and how these views were often related to racial and ethnic stereotypes. Students wrote about their experiences and preconceptions about people living in poverty before and after their reporting, and their attitudes changed substantially in many cases-generally toward a more educated, empathetic, and complex view of poverty and the circumstances that lead people into poverty.

Revision Area #4: Addressing the economic demands of publishing a student-produced newspaper

As the project has progressed, the question has persisted: How do we maximize our audience with minimal funding? The inherent strengths of the project-youth education, community partnership, diversity, and building awareness of a significant local issue-have helped garner funding for each of the five

Guidelines for Field Reporting

1. Students should avoid reporting in the field after daylight hours. If students are meeting an agency contact at his/her office (one with a lit parking lot and security) after-hours, then that is appropriate.

2. Students should tell someone where they are at all times. Students can inform their instructor, a roommate, a significant other, or a parent about the name and contact information of the person they are meeting and when they plan to return.

3. Students on certain stories with potential for safety concerns will be paired up or will work with an agency contact to interact with sources.

4. If students cannot pair up on stories of concern due to scheduling conflicts, they should meet with the instructor right away to discuss alternatives to reporting the stories.

5. Students should seek out third places to conduct interviews and reporting. Third places are public places such as a neighborhood drop-in center or the community ministerial alliance offices, which may be in a source's environment but not in the source's private space.

6. Students should not conduct interviews in private homes-their own or sources'.

7. Refer to the chapter (Ch. 21 in the 3rd edition) in The Reporter's Handbook: An Investigator's Guide to Documents and Techniques by Steve Weinberg on covering poverty for practical reporting tips such as dressing appropriately, leaving a purse behind, keeping alert, bringing a cell phone with a pre-programmed number to call for help, parking near the reporting location, removing jewelry, etc.

8. Students should be aware of not only their interview sources but also of others nearby who might be unfamiliar or unaware of the student reporters' purposes and intent.

9. Students should cultivate a practical, aware and alert attitude toward their assignments.

10. Despite Guidelines 1-9, students should strive to keep an open mind toward their sources and the environment. People do not choose to live in unsafe areas. Part of a reporter's job is to note hi or her own reactions and emotions to surroundings and events. Realize that sources may feel this discomfort and unease about safety daily.

years of the project. Two key revisions for 2006 are aimed at streamlining the process so we can put as much of our energies as possible into thorough and incisive reporting and writing, and to continue our project on a path of economic self-sufficiency.

One revision will be to publish *The Journalism Bulletin* online to reduce costs and to provide the opportunity for a broader audience over a longer period of time, as I can keep the paper posted indefinitely through a university website. Online feedback forms will be built into the website to facilitate reader response. *On Diversity*, while printed and distributed as usual to its high school community audience, will also be published online in conjunction with *The Journalism Bulletin*. Extending the service-learning aspects of the project, I have arranged a partnership with a colleague who teaches a course in web page design so that select students from his course will help us design and maintain our website. We anticipate that online publication will increase reader access to students' work since free use of terminals equipped with World Wide Web access is easily available on the university's campus as well as in our community's public libraries.

A corresponding revision will be to work with a single representative at our community newspaper to publish as many of the stories by both the high school and university students as possible in the community's newspaper, which has an average weekday circulation of about 55,000. The community newspaper printed select articles from *The Journalism Bulletin* in 2005, but several were not published in part due to the lack of a single editor with acknowledged authority to spearhead the collaboration. The benefit to the community paper is low-cost work on a timely, relevant subject that has already been overseen and edited by a team of editors (myself, the high school newspaper advisor, and a research assistant). The obvious benefit to the project is to provide both high school and university students with a broader audience and with the opportunity to work with a professional news organization in the editing and publication of their work.

Persistent Challenges

Fostering student ownership is a persistent challenge. In my first project year, when I declared to students what we would cover, they rebelled and the student buy-in for a difficult topic-Muslims and the Islam religion-was all the

harder to cultivate due to my top-down decision. In the following years, I have guided students in brainstorming and voting on their own special edition theme. Such a democratic approach yielded wonderful themes, including a powerful look at the de facto desegregation of the local public school system.

However, in designing a university course to produce a special course newspaper, I found it important to arrange speakers and readings in advance, and this required me to unilaterally select a theme. I've selected themes-poverty in 2005 and health issues for 2006-that are general enough to allow wide latitude in story topics and angles. These open-ended topics, combined with dramatic statistics, compelling speakers, and the opportunity to publish their work in the community newspaper, have helped immensely with student investment in the issue. However, I see the selection of a theme to be an ongoing challenge, as is the difficulty of synchronizing the schedules of up to 40 students from two classes at two institutions.

Conclusion

As the project has progressed, my revision strategy has been to follow a modification of journalism's 5Ws and the H:

> *What* are the goals of our project? It is the "What" that guides all other questions and answers below.
>
> *How* realistic are those project goals? Are the goals sustainable? Do they change with each project year? Do they change with the introduction of new project participants? This question helps me continually assess and reassess the project's direction and its foundations. For example: In asking how realistic it is to achieve in-depth community journalism on sensitive topics in the face of administrative prior review at the high school level, I concluded that I needed to readjust my goals for the high school *On Diversity* edition.
>
> *Why* is this project worth doing? Here, I try to chronicle specific benefits for those involved in or impacted by the project. Continued project evaluations provide valuable guidance in

responding to this question.

Who do I need to involve in this project to make it work better, smarter, more efficiently, more economically? This question has led me to discover unexpected funding sources, to expand the project to a university course, to step away from high school administrators and their prior review, and to seek out a single editor to work with at the community newspaper.

When is the most realistic time to make a revision? Sometimes, as in the case of concerns about the safety of university students in reporting on poverty, it is immediate. Other times, as when arranging a field trip to better connect students on the different campuses, it has meant waiting for the next project year.

Where is the project going? Has it run its course or is there still value in its continuation? This question has guided me in the decision to put the paper online, with the expectation that online publication will be less expensive and help to sustain the project and broaden its audience.

Lastly, I pose a crucial addition to the traditional 5Ws and the H: *Who cares?* If the project is not relevant to our community, we cannot fairly claim it is based in civic journalism or in service-learning. This last question continues to challenge me to know my audience-students and community citizens-and to act accordingly. Fortunately, students share this commitment to relevance. In an evaluation in 2004, a student in a one-on-one interview echoed this desire for impact:

I would hope when the (*On Diversity*) edition comes out that people would comment on the professionalism of the paper and the quality of the articles. We take more risks than other high school papers, like interviewing the district superintendent and administrators and doing stories about the problem of fights and drugs here. We are really attacking the issues.

Notes

Due to requirements by my institution's human subjects institutional review board, which approved this research, I am not allowed to disclose the name of the public high school with which we have worked on the Student Newspaper Diversity Project. Similarly, I have had to avoid naming individual students. I have also used pseudonyms for the names of the high school and university course newspapers. I apologize for the at times cumbersome text resulting from this lack of specificity.

2 For examples of citizen journalism initiatives, see: The J-Lab, The Institute for Interactive Journalism, at http://www.j-lab.org/ or Knight Ridder's citizen journalism site at http://www.thecolumbiarecord.com/.

3 For common elements of service-learning, see the National Community Service and Trust Act of 1990 (6); Corbett and Kendall; Katula and Threnhauser; National Society for Experiential Education. For service-learning and civic life, see Stanton, Giles, and Cruz; Panici and Lasky; and Barber. For Dewey's connection, see Anderson et al.; Giles and Eyler; Lisman; Novek "Read"; and Rosen, "Public," "Questions and Answers."

4 The high school advisor's approach and concerns are not uncommon, research shows. In a 1999 national survey of high school principals and newspaper advisers, Kopenhaver and Click found that in the wake of the Supreme Court decision, the majority of high school principals and advisors agree that both the advisor and principal censor student newspapers, that school funding of the paper allows for some control over content, that principals have a right to prevent publication of certain stories, that students engage in self-censorship (337-338), and that the student newspaper should advance the public relations objectives of the school (329). The Supreme Court ruling does not specify who is responsible for problematic content in high school newspapers. But an earlier, 1989 survey by Kopenhaver and Click found that 86% of principals agreed that advisors are obligated to inform the administration of any controversial stories before press time (4).

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