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History
OSU Journalism
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Gazette Times

Journalism courses have been listed at Oregon State University for 69 years-- since 1913.

The first courses, noted in the Department of English Language and Literature, were American Journals, Industrial Journalism, Science of Editing and Advertising.

In 1920, the then State Board of Higher Curricula approved a Department of Industrial Journalism "to meet the needs of large groups of persons--farmers, county agents, home demonstration agents, field specialists . . . and others who may have occasion to prepare material for the press on industrial subjects."

The Board of Higher Curricula had been created by the Legislature in 1909 to prevent duplication and to define courses among the College (then Oregon Agricultural College), the University of Oregon and the Normal schools.

In part, the board's statement on industrial journalism said the program was "to train students to write and edit material on various subjects embraced within its distinctive field, such as agriculture, engineering, forestry mining, home economics and the like."

"Industrial Journalism is not offered as a major and no degree is given . . .", the board stated.

In 1922, 1925 and again in 1928 the board was requested to consider the restriction or elimination of industrial journalism at Oregon State.

In 1928, Oregon State was charged of "misusing its academic privileges in the fields of music, physical education and industrial journalism." In his usual poised manner and at considerable length, the late President William Jasper Kerr refuted the charges.

Then, in 1929, the Legislature abolished the existing Board of Higher Curricula and the Separate institutional boards of regents and established the State System of Higher Education to be governed by the State Board of Higher Education.

In 1932, the higher education board approved a reorganizational plan in which institutions were no longer regarded to have separate administrative identities. For example, the dean of journalism at the University of Oregon became the dean and director of journalism, for both the Eugene and Corvallis campuses. Each dean and director was responsible for all the work in his field wherever offered throughout the system.

This "one big family" plan also included a combination of the catalogs of Oregon State, University of Oregon and the Normal schools into a single volume. This single catalog of 1932-33 was dismantled into separate catalogs the next year, testifying to its failure to meet adequate needs.

Another experiment at this time was the exchange of professors between the Eugene and Corvallis campuses. Certain subjects were tried on a limited basis. Journalism was a part of the experiment. Fred M. Shideler, who later became head of the OSU Department of Journalism, participated in this experiment. He drove to the University of Oregon every Tuesday of the three regular terms to teach two newswriting classes and one reporting class in the morning and a three-hour copy-editing class in the afternoon. This experiment was abandoned after its first trial year.

The University of Oregon dean of journalism was listed as "dean and director of journalism" in Oregon State catalogs through 1946-47. The institutional dean experiment had lost most of what zip it ever may have had.

Journalism was still listed as a "service" department in 1934. It was administered until 1960 under the Dean of Lower Division and after that under the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences and then after 1973 under the College of Liberal Arts.

Throughout the history of journalism at OSU, its faculty members were also attached to the Department of Information or its predecessors. In 1967, Information and Journalism were separated.

In January 1969, Oregon State University sought approval for, and was authorized to offer, effective 1969-70, departmental major programs leading to the bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees in technical journalism with minors in agriculture and home economics.

In subsequent years, some 30 technical minors were added, including forestry, aerospace studies, computer science, business administration, engineering, health sciences, military science, naval science, oceanography and pharmacy.

Now, more than 900 students enroll in journalism courses each term. The 900 plus are of two audiences--the general student who is a consumer of news and the technical journalism major who is pursuing a profession.

The department offers 31 courses, 26 of which are upper division.

OSU's program in technical journalism is the only one of its kind in the United States. The program was accredited by the American Council on Education for Journalism after a 1977-78 visitation and evaluation.

OSU's journalism program was the first in the state to acquire a visual display terminal setup for modern, computerized journalism instruction. The equipment was purchased by grants from the Jackson Foundation (Portland), The Gannett Foundation and an anonymous donor.

The administrators of the journalism department have been Frank R. Snow, 1928; Maynard Brown, 1929; Charles D. Byrne, 1929-1932; Fred M. Shideler, 1932-1967; and Fred C. Zwahlen, 1967 to present.

After heading journalism for 35 years, Shideler was named assistant to the president of the university and served under both President James H. Jensen and President Robert W. MacVicar before retiring.