

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California



Sept. 15, 2011

Contact: Teresa Allen tallen@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Journalism Professor Participates in Media Ethics Conference in Pakistan

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Choosing whether to abide by ethical standards or accept a bribe that would help put food into the mouths of their children was one of many ethical dilemmas posed by Pakistani journalists to a Cal Poly professor who recently participated at a media conference held at the Multan Press Club in Pakistan.

Journalism Professor Teresa Allen, whose teaching specialty at Cal Poly is media ethics, appeared twice before the journalists in Pakistan using Skype technology to conduct a question- and-answer session regarding journalism and ethical behavior. Allen is doing sabbatical work through the fall with the Center for International Journalists (CIME), an organization based in Europe that works with journalists from around the world on issues of economics and ethics.

As a CIME advisory board member, she represented that organization at the recent Investigative Journalism and Responsible Reporting Initiative Conference sponsored by the Multan Press Club.

"The topic of media ethics, in general, is quickly evolving both in the United States and around the world as we see a historic change in how journalism is being practiced and delivered to consumers," Allen said. "Such questions as, 'Who is a journalist' and 'What media source do we go to for balanced reporting' are common issues around the world as the industry is redefined."

Additional issues discussed at the conference included implementing a global media ethics policy to support journalists who want to be ethical but are afraid of losing their jobs -- or even their lives -- when reporting the news based on ethics and truth. "Many journalists in attendance expressed concern that reporters were pressured into writing favorable stories on politicians or advertisers or forced to accept bribes because they were not offered a living wage as a journalist," Allen said.

Allen plans to participate in additional discussions in spring 2012, when CIME holds its annual international journalism conference on ethics. She hopes to participate as a panelist, a teacher and as part of an international effort to draft a global media ethics policy.

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