

[Skip to Content](#) ?

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News

University News & Information

[Admissions & Aid](#)
[Majors & Colleges](#)
[Research](#)
[Alumni Community](#)
[Campus Life](#)
[Athletics](#)
[About](#)


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Contacts: Kelsey Donofrio
949-701-3845; kdonofri@calpoly.edu

Jessica Padilla
916-647-7834; jnpadill@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Journalism Department Launches Integrated Digital-first Curriculum

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly's Journalism Department is the first in the California State University system to launch an integrated, digital-first, student-run news organization as part of its journalism curriculum.

Called Mustang Media Group (MMG), it is breaking down barriers that previously separated students in print, broadcast and digital news to create a full-circle media organization. Public relations students will join journalism students in many aspects of MMG, playing a key role in community engagement and marketing.

"With the creation of Mustang Media Group, our students are participating fully in the 'disruptive innovation' taking place in the media world," said Mary Glick, Journalism Department chair. "The faculty here were at the forefront of these changes when they proposed a converged curriculum and newsroom years ago. Now, it's a reality."

There are many changes planned for the Journalism Department through MMG this fall:

Integrating Platforms

The Mustang News (formerly Mustang Daily) newspaper; KCPR-FM radio; campus television station CPTV; and student-run public relations agency Central Coast PRspectives, have joined together under the MMG umbrella. Mustang News has reduced the frequency of its print edition from four days a week to two. This will allow students to focus on long-form, explanatory journalism in print and more-frequent breaking news online and in social media. MustangNews.net is the new portal to all student media. Students who produce the 30-minute weekly news show on CPTV and daily 5-minute newscasts on KCPR-FM will now broadcast and stream their shows on the Mustang News website.

Entrepreneurial Business Operations

The business division of the printed newspaper, which in recent years has gradually shifted its student advertising sales force toward more special sections and events, is becoming an innovative media services operation where students can practice "Earn by Doing." Now under Mustang Media Group, General Manager Paul Bittick and Advertising/Marketing Coordinator Lea Brandy-Janowicz are exploring revenue opportunities for all student media. MMG has created www.facebook.com/MustangMediaGroup to extend information for MMG advertisers and clients; an effort to provide media services for clients is being developed under the guidance of broadcast specialist Thomas Morales.

New Capstone Course: Journalism 462

The Journalism Department has developed Advanced Media Practicum, a capstone course to work closely with Mustang News. The course has students working in

teams to gain experience as true multimedia journalists who can deliver the news across print, broadcast, online, mobile and social platforms. "This class will help MMG produce timely, consistent and thorough news," Professor Brady Teufel said. Teufel will teach the class, work closely with a cross-section of specialist faculty media advisers for their select skills. The following are Dan Eller (CCPR), Richard Gearhart (CPTV and KCPR-FM), and Patrick Howe (Mustang News). Professors Teresa Allen, who teaches all levels of reporting and writing, and Bill Loving, who teaches media law, ethics, and beginning reporting, and lecturer Patti Piburn, who teaches all levels of broadcast reporting, will also structure their classes to submit work to Mustang News.

Integrating Public Relations

Journalism majors who take the public relations track are now going beyond their normal school curricula working closely with their peers in news to produce student media and news. They are working with the business operation to increase audience and boost popularity for Mustang News and MMG and have assembled a working street marketing team for hire by outside clients. These new functions are in addition to the work of students involved in the department's student-run public relations agency, CCPR, which continues to develop campaigns and collateral for a host of clients. The new class will allow students to take a team approach to news and community engagement.

"Students will do research to figure out what news their audience prefers," Teufel said, "then promote the story through creative efforts to get the audience interested and involved in the story. They will review and learn from what their audience likes about the news stories to determine what to do better next time."

Student Leadership Team

Five student leaders were selected by faculty in a competitive application process to manage the news operations of Mustang Media Group:

Sean McMinn, editor of Mustang Media Group

J.J. Jenkins, editor in chief of Mustang News, runs the print news operations

Carly Rickards, integrated content editor, manages multimedia

Olivia DeGennaro, news director, works with broadcast news operations on CPTV and KCPR-FM

Jenna Watson, manager of CCPR

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