

AEJMC Membership for Life



About AEJMC: The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) is a nonprofit, educational association of journalism and mass communication (JMC) educators, students and media professionals. The Association's mission is to promote the highest possible standards for journalism and mass communication education, to cultivate the widest possible range of communication research, to encourage the implementation of a multi-cultural society in the classroom and curriculum, and to defend and maintain freedom of communication in an effort to achieve better professional practice and a better-informed public. (<https://www.aejmc.org/home>)

Situation: For more than 100 years, AEJMC has offered JMC educators a sense of community, resources for best practices in teaching and research, and opportunities for networking and professional development. Its membership of approximately 2,500 current and retired educators, students, and professionals can join 30 sub-divisions and interest groups. Member dues directly account for 25% of the organization's \$1.2 million operating budget, and another 40% of the budget comes from member-generated conference income.

Challenge: Over the last decade, membership in AEJMC has declined. Although reflective of national trends in declining membership in professional associations, decreasing AEJMC membership negatively impacts the organization's operational budget and results in fewer JMC educators having access to the kinds of professional support that enable them to be their best as teachers and scholars.

Key Objective: Increase membership in AEJMC, across all member categories (student, regular, retired, and professional).

Campaign: Campaigns will educate AEJMC members and potential members about the organization and the benefits of membership, as well as encourage people to join AEJMC and attend the 2026 conference to be held in New Orleans, August 5-8. Campaigns should reflect the RPIE process and include the following deliverables:

- Strategic Plan: A coordinated, strategic public relations plan, based on research, that includes target public(s), goals, objectives, strategies, tactics, and evaluation methods relevant to measuring the stated objectives.
- Research: Secondary data (available from AEJMC) and primary data gathered using formal or informal methods.
- Collateral Elements:
 - Employ at least two of AEJMC's current communication channels (e.g., email, newsletters, social media channels, handouts during the August 2026 annual conference, and aejmc.org).
 - Produce a social media calendar and at least 1-2 posts per week about the benefits of joining and participating in AEJMC. Posts should incorporate testimonials from current members, students, and media professionals; content can relate to seasonal (e.g., conference, holidays) or current events/news (e.g., association elections).
 - Consider working with campus resources (e.g., department newsletter, media production studios, social channels), if appropriate to the campaign.

- **Messaging:** Name the campaign, identify relevant hashtags, create a vision (board) for social content, and identify any partners AEJMC should cross-post/-market with.
- **Evaluation:** Outline how you will gather data on whether the awareness changed and membership rose. Explain how your evaluation data can help AEJMC develop a full-scale national campaign.

Criteria: Judging will be based on the following:

- **Research** – Did teams conduct primary research into why JMC educators eligible for AEJMC membership are not joining or not remaining in the organization? For example, do they not know about the organization or its benefits? Do they have misperceptions about membership eligibility or purposes? Are there other benefits that AEJMC should be offering to make membership more attractive?
- **Planning** – Did the mini-campaign leverage research findings to set goals, objectives, strategies and tactics? Were the campaign’s collateral elements (e.g., flyers, social media posts, emails) appropriate to the targeted audience(s)? Were the campaign’s creative elements (e.g., slogans, taglines, logos) reflective of or appropriate to AEJMC’s mission and core values?
- **Implementation** – Does the campaign book document how planning elements could be executed, or were executed on a small-scale pilot basis either on the teams’ home campuses or in their local region, as appropriate to their research findings and campaign plan?
- **Evaluation** – Did the mini-campaign move the needle in terms of raising awareness about AEJMC and its membership benefits; enhancing positive attitudes toward joining AEJMC; and/or increasing memberships among the target audience(s)? Did teams use their local campaign results to make recommendations for how AEJMC might implement a full-scale national campaign to increase organizational membership across all member types?

Timeline

- Jan. 29 Online registration opens
- Feb. 20 Registration deadline
- April 3 Entries due
- April 15 Winners announced

Awards

- First place: \$500 (plus AEJMC swag)
- Second place: \$300 (plus AEJMC swag)
- Honorable mention: \$100 (plus AEJMC swag)