



Awareness of challenges and optimism for their future: Mapping communication students' attitudes towards employment prospects over their first year at university

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Abstract

Despite well-publicised cuts in media sector employment in the late 2000s and early 2010s, with significant job losses in journalism in particular, university enrolments in Australian communication degrees continue to be strong. This pilot year data from an ongoing study explores how students' motivations and expectations for employment change throughout their first year of university by mapping the attitudes of Charles Sturt University (CSU) journalism and public relations students throughout 2013. Journalism students were found to enter their degree with a strong commitment to the social responsibility principles of their profession, whereas public relations students were more focused on lifestyle and financial aspects of their future employment. Despite a strong awareness of the challenges facing them in the traditional or legacy media job market, this was still the aspirational employment outcome for most journalism students and despite a growing knowledge across their first year of study regarding job losses within the Australian media industry most were optimistic about their future and confident they would build a long-term career in journalism. Many previous studies have explored student expectations of employment prospects and professional ambitions against the backdrop of media job losses. This study adds a further dimension to the existing literature by establishing (within the CSU context) that students are aware of the job losses and employment challenges when they choose to study journalism, and a growing awareness of these difficulties does not impact significantly on their ambitions.

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Introduction

Undergraduate students have been enrolling in communication degrees, and journalism in particular, in increasing numbers internationally and in Australia in recent years (Hanusch, 2012; Vlad, Becker, & Kazragis, 2011) though the latest research from the US shows this trend has now reversed there in the last two years (Becker, Vlad, & Kalpen, 2012a; Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2013). In this context, while there have been a recent spate of significant and highly publicised traditional media sector job losses (Jackson, 2013; Kruger, 2013; Maxwell, 2012; Zappone, 2012), there can also be seen an emerging optimism in the international media landscape (Pompeo, 2014; Saba, 2014) and in Australia (Carson, 2013; Finlayson, 2013).

Over their first year of studying, the ambitions of the journalism and public relations cohorts emerged in two separate patterns. While the journalism students were initially very focused on obtaining work only in traditional roles, PR students were less specific in conceptualising their future careers, even identifying preferences in fields more traditionally associated with journalism. However, by the end of their first year, the ambitions of both groups had shifted. At the beginning of 2013, less than half the journalism cohort was concerned about future job security, with a significant majority confident they would build a long-term career. This confidence remained, despite significant course discussion around industry changes and job losses. Their initial preference for gaining employment in traditional roles remained, but by the end of the year journalism students also indicated a greater interest in roles more traditionally associated with public relations and in emerging social media and online roles.

Overall, the data showed a social responsibility role was considerably less important to PR students than journalism students. After a year of study, PR students highlighted the two most important things they believe their industry does is to get information to an audience quickly and to give their employer a chance to express views and opinions. Initially, a significant proportion of PR students showed interest both in PR roles and more traditional journalism areas such as magazine publishing, TV production and presenting and radio presenting. By

the end of their first year, their knowledge of entry level and emerging PR roles had increased and their preferences had narrowed to be far more concentrated in PR and advertising. Magazines remained the only traditional journalism area where PR students showed significant interest.

This study shows that while students are aware of traditional media job losses, they are also conceptualising media work, both now and into the future, in quite different ways. This represents a generational shift that empirically supports some of the emerging literature in the field (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012) and may mean students are equipped to adapt to a spectrum of journalistic activity in the increasingly multi-disciplinary and multi-skilled workplaces they are likely to enter (Hanusch, 2012).

Beyond giving a clearer and more recent picture, extending from the literature, about communication students' motivations and level of awareness about employment prospects, there may be implications to inform pedagogy and curriculum planning from the development of this pilot year into a longitudinal study. The longitudinal study, which does not track the same cohorts of students, but rather successive cohorts coming through their first year, may also allow further examination of the sustainability and possible challenges of offering communication courses in Australia, as outlined by Cokley et al. (2011).

Background

While mainstream media organisations have been experiencing steadily declining employment over the past three decades (Curran, 2010), some substantial traditional media sector job losses have occurred in recent years (Green, 2012) with Fairfax announcing 1900 journalism, production and printing-related job cuts in mid-2012 (Zappone, 2012), News Corp announcing restructuring and job losses in the same week (Maxwell, 2012), the Ten Network announcing a round of job cuts in 2012 and Channel 9 and Channel 7 announcing cost-cutting measures in January 2013 (Kruger, 2013). In June 2013, AAP and Fox Sport cut a large number of jobs from their newsrooms (Jackson, 2013; Media Companies AAP, Metro Media Publishing Cut Staff, 2013).

Conversely, following these drastic losses in traditional media in 2012, 2013 and the first half of 2014 have seen a gradually increasing optimism. In the US, surveys show an improved job

market for those graduating with Bachelor degrees in journalism or communication (Becker & Simpson, 2013; Becker, Vlad, & Kalpen, 2012b) though the conditions and benefits of their employment may be declining (Boyles, 2013). There have also been several much-cited 'game-changing' developments internationally, such as the acquisition of the *Washington Post* by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos for \$US250 million in August 2013 (Pompeo, 2014), and the investment of at least \$US300 million into digital media start-ups in the US in 2013, which have created thousands of full-time jobs over the past six years (Saba, 2014).

This growth in confidence in the US has coincided with the entry into the Australian market of more non-traditional media organisations (Finlayson, 2013). The entry of new players into the local media landscape, such as *Buzzfeed* (Bodey, 2014), the *New Daily*, *Guardian Australia*, and *The Saturday Paper*, are all indicative that while there may be dire problems in the traditional industry, journalism in Australia continues to prevail. While there have been clear challenges in TV and newspapers in particular, there are still jobs available, with recent university journalism graduates taking up a number of new types of non-traditional roles (Simons, 2014).

The fluctuating state of the Australian journalism industry contrasts with the continued rise in public relations sector employment, with excellent prospects for young practitioners (Chia & Synnott, 2012, p. 18). It is worth noting, however, that change is occurring rapidly in this industry too, as new roles emerge but are not easily identified (Chia & Synnott, 2012, p. 18).

Also, while a degree of optimism is emerging, it is important to note that this study was conducted in early 2013, directly after hundreds of traditional journalism jobs were lost in Australia. The research is bracketed by an observation that despite these shifts and uncertainty within the media industry, students continued to enrol in communication degrees in significant numbers. In recent studies, it has also been noted that communication graduates are still opting for careers in newspapers, radio and television (Harrison, Bromley, & Frangi, 2012) and that universities are often preparing them for careers there (Cokley, et al., 2011) when in fact evidence shows there are more opportunities for students in smaller, perhaps non-mainstream, organisations (Simons, 2014).

This paper seeks to explore first-year student motivations and aspirations, and their awareness or concern about employment options in both traditional and non-traditional media sectors, given:

- The previous findings in literature about the relationship in the tertiary education sector between sectoral employment and degree enrolments in other areas of study (Aziz & Kamal, 2012; Bright, Pryor, Wilkenfeld, & Earl, 2005; Metz, Fouad, & Ihle-Helledy, 2009);
- The fluctuating state of the Australian media industry; and
- The declining job prospects in traditional media contrasting with the recent emergence of a more buoyant mood in Australian journalism (but after the data for our study was collected).

Methodology

Based on the current literature we developed the following general research questions:

- What are students' perceptions of the media industry?
- What motivates students to study journalism or public relations?
- What do they want to do when they graduate?
- How aware and/or concerned are they about the changes in media industry employment?
- How may these perceptions and motivations change after gaining greater awareness of the challenges and opportunities of media sector employment in their first year of university study?

Our study builds on a number of previous surveys of communication students in Australia (Hanusch, 2012; Harrison, et al., 2012) and overseas (Bjørnsen, Hovden, & Ottosen, 2007; Cokley, et al., 2011; Hanna & Sanders, 2008). We surveyed commencing first-year journalism and public relations students at CSU, and while the focus is primarily on the responses from journalism students, we chose also to survey public relations students in order to examine divergence in cohort knowledge, motivation and expectation for study and employment.

Hanna and Sanders' research (2008) into attitudinal change in British journalism students effectively explored the impact university course content had on changing student perceptions, by surveying students at the beginning of their degrees and then toward the end of their time at university, but before entering the workforce. Key to informing our methodology, therefore, is the timing of the data collection for this study. It was critical to initially capture data before students were given any specific introduction to their discipline specialisation or course content. By collecting a second round of data from this same group of students at the end of their first year of study, we were able to map attitudinal change in student motivation and perception for studying journalism and public relations at CSU. The intention is to extend this study for five years, gathering data from a cohort of first-year communication students at the start and end of each consecutive year from 2013 onwards.

The content of our survey questions is based largely on similar questions used by Hanusch (2012), Hanna and Sanders (2008) and Bjornsen et al. (2007). The initial survey consisted of 14 questions, while the survey at the end of the year was expanded slightly to include 18 questions. The four extra questions were inserted at different times to elicit qualitative responses regarding shifts in study or the development of media interests or role models.

To frame the study, students were asked to nominate what course they were enrolled in and whether this was their first degree. An extra question here in the end of year data collection asked students whether they intended to change course or specialisation and why this was the case.

Our dataset is drawn from surveying first-year communication students at CSU. Students were captured in the first lecture of their journalism or public relations compulsory discipline subjects and 86 valid responses were drawn from seven different course enrolments: Bachelor of Arts, BComm (Commercial Radio), BComm (Journalism), BComm (PR), BComm(PR)/BBusStudies, BSportStud/BComm (Journalism) and BComm (Theatre/Media). For the purposes of this study we removed the Bachelor of Arts, BComm (Commercial Radio), and the BComm (Theatre/Media) both because the sample sizes were too small for effective analysis, and because the focus of this research is on the perceptions and possible divergence between:

- Group 1: The two degrees of the journalism cohort – BComm (Journalism), BSportStud/BComm (Journalism); sample size initially $n=55$ and second round $n=56$

- Group 2: The two degrees of the public relations cohort – BComm (PR), BComm(PR)/BBusStudies); sample size initially $n=31$ and second round $n=25$

The change in the valid sample size of the cohorts in the second round of data collection may be twofold: firstly, four students identified that they had changed course specialisation during the year (unfortunately detailed information was not given by these students about this change), and also students in the cohort may have chosen not to complete the survey, may have transferred or not enrolled in the second semester subject where data was collected, despite our best efforts to ensure matched subject cohorts. Cohorts were matched based on subject enrolment and attendance data available to the researchers.

Despite our observation, supported by the literature (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray, & Krause, 2008; Reza, 2012), that technology use is widespread and increasing among commencing university students, the survey was initially done on paper for two reasons. Firstly, it was useful in order to ensure equity for students without ready internet access, and secondly because one of the key possible motivators for entry into a communication degree was the strong identification with a media role model (Densem, 2006; Pearson, 2009). We wanted students to be able to identify that role model without the use of a search engine or other technological aid. While questions relating to media role models produced some diverse and sometimes amusing responses, it did not confirm the data of previous researchers (Densem, 2006; Pearson, 2009) and may need further exploration in a survey specifically designed around that research theme. As a consequence the data collected from the questions about media role models has been put aside and will not be examined here.

The small sample size of the cohort participating in this survey is recognised by the authors. The results here are intended only to reflect CSU students and are not claimed to be representative of wider trends. This data is based on the pilot year of a longer study that maps CSU students' perceptions and motivations over a period of five years, and any correlation between these and industry employment trends. The researchers are currently working on integrating a third component into this study, which is changing the nature of curriculum to allow an examination of the intersections between course content, student perceptions and motivations and industry employment prospects. Within this broader study is the consideration of including cohorts from other institutions or a greater breadth of qualitative data collection.

Results and discussion

In considering our first general research question, ‘What are students’ perceptions of the media industry?’, we looked to the results from the survey question: ‘What personal skills, attributes or abilities do you think are most important for working in your chosen area of the media/communication industry?’ Students were asked to choose the three that best suited, and the results can be seen in *Table 1*, below.

	Journalism students	PR students
Initially	1. Curiosity 2. People skills 3. Writing skills	1. Good people skills 2. Ability to perform well under pressure 3. Ability to meet deadlines
At the end of their first year	1. Thoroughness and accuracy 2. Writing skills 3. The ability to perform well under pressure	1. Good people skills 2. Ability to perform well under pressure 3. Ability to meet deadlines

Table 1: Student responses to the question ‘What personal skills, attributes or abilities do you think are most important for working in your chosen area of the media/communication industry?’

The inclusion of thoroughness and accuracy at the end of their first year for the journalism students reflects results from Bjornsen et al. (2007) that show students at university level understand the importance of the characteristics they describe as “good journalism” (p. 394). A failure to replicate Pearson’s (2009) or Densem’s (2006) studies of teenagers’ perceptions of journalists, which both showed physical characteristics to be important, potentially reflects a serious engagement in the profession from the outset in students. When asked to choose three key words to describe how they would feel working as journalists, in both rounds of data the top response was ‘challenged’, reflecting an understanding of the pressures faced by working journalists in undertaking their duties.

The fact that there was no change in the perceptions of the public relations cohort perhaps reflects that they have an understanding of the nature of their profession from the outset that is reinforced by their first year of study.

In considering our second general research question, ‘What motivates students to study journalism or public relations?’, we looked to the results from the survey question: ‘What influence did the following factors have on your decision to study your current course?’ Students ranked their responses from a list of factors that influenced their decision to study; the top three results for each cohort can be seen in *Table 2*, below.

	Journalism students	PR students
Initially	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A desire to inform 2. An interest in news and current affairs 3. A strong interest in media work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A desire to travel for work 2. Job security 3. The potential for high incomes
At the end of their first year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A desire to inform 2. An interest in news and current affairs 3. A desire to travel for work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A desire to travel for work 2. The potential for high incomes 3. Job security and strong interest in media work

Table 2: Results based on question ‘What influence did the following factors have on your decision to study your current course?’

By the end of their first year, the journalism cohort had swapped the positions of a strong interest in media work and the desire to travel for work between third and fourth. The social responsibility role that has been identified as critical by both Bjornsen et al. (2007) and Hanna and Sanders (2008) remained the most important. This can be seen in the ‘desire to inform’ criteria, and through the social responsibility role of journalism in the student choices. This desire to inform people remained a clear and constant first priority throughout the first year of their study, and the importance of the social responsibility role also remained consistent in the seventh position. Journalism students initially ranked future potential for high income and future job security in tenth and fourteenth positions respectively and little had changed by the end of their first year: future potential for high income remaining in tenth position, with job security moving to eleventh. As educators this may tell us students are making informed decisions about their professional future; given these priorities for choosing journalism, fluctuations in journalism jobs or job losses would have little impact on students’ decision making process.

For the PR group this social responsibility role decreased slightly in importance as a factor in their choice of study and career. Although the rankings of roles relating to social responsibility remained the same (6th and 7th position) their ratings out of 5 (where 5 is very strong influence) dropped from 3.81 and 3.65 to 3.25 and 3.21 respectively.

In considering our third general research question, ‘What do students want to do when they graduate?’, we looked to the results from two different questions, one that asked them to isolate their top three employment goals and another that asked them to rate their interest in a broad range of media sector roles, including traditional and emerging roles in journalism and public relations as well as advertising and the creative industries.

When asked about their career goals and where they would like to work for most of their career, and specifically to rate only their top three selections in order of preference from one to three, some interesting data emerged, as can be seen in *Table 3*, below.

	Journalism students	PR students
Initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% identified traditional media roles as their first choice for career • 8% identified traditional PR roles as first choice • 10% chose emerging roles • 10% chose other roles or were undecided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74% identified traditional PR roles as their first choice for career • 41% identified magazines in their top 3 choices • Event management was by far the most popular choice followed by corporate PR
At the end of their first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78% identified traditional media roles as their first choice for career • 8% identified traditional PR roles as first choice • 6% chose emerging roles • 8% chose other roles or were undecided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% identified traditional PR roles as their first choice for career • 38% identified magazines in their top 3 choices • Event management remained the most popular choice followed by corporate PR

Table 3: Response to the questions ‘What media sector is your career goal? and Where would you like to work for most of your career? (Rate only your top 3 selections in order of preference from 1 to 3.)’

While the number of PR students wanting to work in magazines remained relatively stable, the entire cohort showed very little interest in other traditional journalism roles: 10% of students identified working in national television as their third career choice and this was the only instance, aside from magazines, where PR students chose a traditional journalistic role.

Journalism students began their first year highly focused on traditional journalistic roles and these results were repeated at the end of their first year of study. This finding replicates the work of Hanusch (2012) and his study across six Australian universities where journalism students were found to predominantly aspire to work in traditional journalist roles despite the declining jobs in those sectors.

Students then rated their interest from 32 broader media sector roles in regards to how they felt about working in them after they graduated, and results drawn from these ratings can be seen in *Table 4*, below.

	Journalism students	PR students
Initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very heavily focused still on traditional media roles (top 7 ideal roles) • Took until 8th to see emerging journalism role ranked • First traditional PR role ranked was event management at 15th • Very high levels (up to 76%) of disinterest in many PR roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much more diverse in their choices than journalism group • TV roles ranked 6th and 7th and radio presenting 9th • Much lower levels of disinterest in traditional journalism roles • Expressed a greater lack of understanding about junior and emerging PR roles
At the end of their first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still focused on traditional media roles (top 5 ideal roles) • 6th and 8th choices were emerging journalistic roles • First traditional PR role ranked was media relations at 16th • High levels of disinterest toward PR roles dropped, but a significantly high rate (85%) toward advertising copywriting remained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More focused on PR roles in their choices • TV roles ranked 12th and 13th and all radio roles moved to 21st with an emerging online role ranked 6th • Levels of disinterest in traditional media roles increased • Overall showed a greater understanding of junior and emerging PR roles

Table 4: Responses to the directive 'Rate your job options in regards to how you feel about working in them when you graduate'.

As often befits the knowledge of a commencing student (Cokley, et al., 2011), nearly 20% of public relations students showed a lack of understanding about some of the entry level and emerging roles (digital analyst or consultant and micro-blogging were amongst the least understood) within their field initially but this changed by the end of their first year. The greater understanding of PR industry roles within their specialisation at the end of first year no doubt reflects the PR course content. This understanding may be what has led to the willingness of these students to identify PR roles as career priorities at the end of their first year of study.

Finally, in considering our fourth and fifth general research questions, 'How aware and/or concerned are students about the changes in media industry employment?' and 'How may these perceptions and motivations change after gaining greater awareness of the challenges and opportunities of media sector employment in their first year of university study?', we looked at the student survey responses to a series of questions about their awareness of job availability and job losses and the top responses can be seen in *Table 5*, below.

You are aware of changes to job availability and job losses within the media industry		
	Journalism students	PR students
Initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% disagreed • 85% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% disagreed • 76% either agreed or strongly agreed
At the end of their first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None disagreed • 94% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% disagreed • 62% either agreed or strongly agreed
You are excited by the possibility of completely new jobs existing in the media industry when you graduate		
Initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% strongly disagreed and 2% disagreed • 87% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None disagreed • 90% either agreed or strongly agreed
At the end of their first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% strongly disagreed • 96% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None disagreed • 86% either agreed or strongly agreed
You are concerned about changes to job availability and job losses within the media industry		
Initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% strongly disagreed and 4% disagreed • 66% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% strongly disagreed and 10% disagreed • 65% either agreed or strongly agreed
At the end of their first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8% disagreed • 77% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% strongly disagreed and 20% disagreed • 57% either agreed or strongly agreed
You are worried by the possibility of current/traditional media industry jobs no longer existing in the media industry when you graduate		
Initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None strongly disagreed and 30% disagreed • 54% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7% strongly disagreed and 21% disagreed • 45% either agreed or strongly agreed
At the end of their first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6% strongly disagreed and 21% disagreed • 56% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% strongly disagreed and 43% disagreed • 34% either agreed or strongly agreed
You will be able to build a long-term career in the media industry		
Initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None disagreed • 80% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None disagreed • 93% either agreed or strongly agreed
At the end of their first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% disagreed • 79% either agreed or strongly agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None disagreed • 86% either agreed or strongly agreed

Table 5: Job availability, changes and job prospects.

It is important to note here that the questions were designed to be deliberately provocative, but toward no particular agenda or desired result; some statements were negatively drawn and others positive. The results from all statements show that students rejected some statements as strongly as they agreed with others, indicating that the sample was engaging with the question and answering it honestly and perceptively rather than being led by it.

Despite there often being little change in the responses about job availability and job losses, both groups felt there had been changes in their expectations and perceptions of the media industry throughout their first year of study. Only 8% of the journalism cohort felt less excited about their future career, despite more than 83% of the same group agreeing or strongly agreeing they were now more aware of the challenges they may face finding employment in traditional journalism roles. Less than 5% of PR students felt less optimistic or excited, with 67% feeling more aware of the challenges to employment.

Overall, these results show that students in both cohorts are making informed decisions about their choice to study journalism; while they do show high levels of both awareness and concern regarding job losses within traditional media they also show very high levels of enthusiasm and excitement for the possibility of new roles existing when they graduate. This data is a key result from our survey as it serves to contextualise student job prospects within the frame of their actual awareness of challenges and changes within media sector employment.

In this same question students were asked in the final round of data collection only whether they felt more aware, realistic, optimistic or excited about their future careers. The results are listed in *Table 6*, below, and are for journalism students.

You feel more aware of challenges to possible employment in the media industry after your first year of study				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
0	4%	13%	50%	33%
You feel more optimistic than you did at the start of the year about your future career in the media industry				
4%	10%	38%	33%	15%
You feel more excited than you did at the start of the year about your future career in the media industry				
6%	2%	17%	42%	33%
You feel more realistic and prepared than you did at the start of the year about your future career in the media industry				
0	2%	10%	50%	38%

Table 6: Job availability, changes and job prospects (journalism students only).

This data further reinforces our previous assertions that students are making informed decisions when choosing to study journalism and that they are both aware of the challenges but optimistic and even excited about their future careers in journalism.

Conclusion

Students are continuing to enrol in journalism degrees at one of Australia's oldest journalism schools because of their perception of the profession as being challenging, rewarding and competitive, drawing on their natural curiosity and forcing them to test themselves to work under pressure. While they show a high degree of awareness about job losses within traditional media, they still want to aim towards working in these sectors, both because of the nature of these traditional journalism roles and because the quality of the work and the social impact and responsibility of journalism is a significant motivator at this stage of their career.

Despite the demonstrated awareness from journalism students about recent changes to media sector employment prospects and their claims they are concerned about these, none of these same students believed they would not be able to build a long-term career in the media industry. In fact, most reported excitement at the prospect of new and emergent roles existing in the industry by the time they graduate. These attitudes remained throughout their first year of university.

The key contribution of this study to the literature is establishing (within the CSU context) that students are aware of job losses and employment challenges within traditional or legacy media when they choose to study journalism and an expanded awareness of these challenges across their first year of university does not significantly change their ambitions to work in traditional journalistic roles.

Public relations graduates face a much brighter future in the graduate job market and their attitudes to their tertiary education show different key motivators and generally higher levels of optimism regarding job prospects than their journalism counterparts and that may reflect this specific employment sector.

With the media sector undergoing significant and ongoing change, research directed at understanding communications students' motivations and aspirations needs to continue. This pilot research is now being transformed into an ongoing yearly study to follow how any significant developments in media sector employment and opportunities may impact on how communications students perceive the industry and their role within it. Not only will understanding our students better inform our pedagogy and curriculum, it may help broaden our understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the changing media landscape by surveying those who will be producing it and shaping it well into the future.

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