INSTRUCTOR WEBINAR SERIES FOR

PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

2019

I. OBJECTIVE

A school's website and social media accounts aren't informative enough to truly let prospective students know what studying there is like. Physical visits aren't always feasible for folks coming from far away. To help decide whether to spend two years and thousands of dollars in a program like ours, it's helpful for prospective students to engage with the people who would be teaching them and ask directly about the experience of attending the school.

A webinar series is one solution the Graduate School of Journalism tried this year: Professors and lecturers described in their own words the classes and tracks they teach and then answered viewers' questions, which often went deeper than the formal information the School puts out.

II. 2019 SERIES

In 2019, we hosted four webinars on Zoom that ran alongside a series ███████████████, admissions director, offered on student life. They were held in the Logan Multimedia Center and intended to be a half-hour (though the time varied by the number of viewer questions).

DAVID BARSTOW
- Investigative Reporting Program and investigative work in general
- Friday, November 1, 3:30 p.m.
- Dean Wasserman introduced David and the series as a whole
- _____ registrants
- _____ viewers

JENNIFER KAHN

- Narrative Writing program
- Tuesday, November 5, 10 a.m.
- _____ registrants
- _____ viewers

RICHARD KOCI HERNANDEZ
- New Media program
- Tuesday, November 5, 10:30 a.m.
- _____ registrants
- _____ viewers

MARY KAY MAGISTAD
- Audio program
- Thursday, November 21, 11:30 a.m.
- _____ registrants
- _____ viewers

Sam Goldman moderated and scheduled the webinars, ███████████████████ and ██████████████████ provided logistical help, ████████████████████ oversaw the technical side, and ████████████████ and ████████████████████ provided the overall vision, curation of professors, day-of production and promotion.

III. Staff

Individual webinar staff can take on more than one of the roles below if they have time, but responsibilities can otherwise be split into the following roles:

MODERATOR

- Write up potential questions beforehand (in case there aren't enough from the audience to fill the allotted time)
- Welcome viewers
- Introduce the speaker and be their interlocutor
- Ask Q&A questions
- Sign off

LOGISTICS
- Determine the right venue
- Schedule days and times that work well for faculty
- Create RSVP forms for each webinar
- Follow up with speakers with reminders and a request to send any visual content (slides, video, etc.) to the tech person
- Do any day-of work registering sign-ups into the webinar platform
- Test that the connections work properly in the room before and after the session starts
- If necessary, send the moderator questions from the webinar chat box

PROMOTION
- Send out RSVP forms to prospective-student lists
- Post the forms to social media multiple times
- Follow up with registrants with a reminder email

TECH
- Set up each event on the webinar platform for the right day and time
- Test video and audio during each event's set up
- Make sure viewers can join the webinar at the appropriate time
- Turn the webinar into a recorded video that is posted on the School's YouTube channel

IV. Faculty and topics

The series can have as many webinars as the School likes, though the best speakers would be instructors who either lead a School track or are involved enough to speak authoritatively about their respective programs. In addition to platform tracks (audio, narrative, etc.), webinars could be done on common reporting areas, such as investigative journalism, health, and the environment.

The faculty are responsible for their own material, but a staff member can help them coordinate their final presentations (this wasn't an issue in 2019).

V.   Format

In 2019, we used Zoom, a common and easy-to-use webinar platform.

Half an hour is likely an ideal length: long enough to be substantive but short enough to keep viewers' attention. The video and audio capabilities of the Logan Multimedia Center (formerly the Library) make it an ideal location: The moderator and speaker can sit behind one of its tables with their own microphones and in front of the blue-and-yellow UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism branded backdrop. Everyone should be there five minutes early (even earlier for the tech person) in order to test everything and go over any final directions. A water bottle can be provided to the speaker if they don't already have one, and a sign should be placed on the door to keep people from disturbing the live event.

To show the School's appreciation that viewers tuned in (and to show the dean is an accessible figure), the dean should welcome viewers at the outset of the first webinar, introduce the series, the first speaker, and the moderator, who takes their place behind the table.

After the first webinar, the moderator can welcome viewers to the series, the episode, and the speaker (this should be brief.) Then, the speaker launches into a 15-minute-or-so overview of their track or reporting topic. Depending on what the speaker's comfortable with, they can talk directly to the camera on the other side of the room or to the moderator (and the camera can zoom in or out depending on that choice).

During the event, someone in the room is in the webinar making sure things look good from the viewers' end. Another person (it could be the same person) is in the webinar collecting the questions viewers type into the chat box to periodically send to the moderator during the event, and asking that viewers with questions about the admissions process itself direct them to ██████████████'s email. This frees the moderator to pay more attention to the speaker than to sorting out which questions to ask. In 2019, ██████████████ sent them to Sam via G-Chat, which he had open on his laptop. This is also an opportunity to send the moderator notes like "time for one more question." In case there weren't enough questions to fill in the half hour, or if there's a temporary lull in the questions, the moderator can ask ones they've written out beforehand.

After the Q&A, the moderator can thank the speaker and viewers and remind them of the deadline to apply. In 2019, we also signed off with the application/enrollment deadlines for the summer journalism minor, the summer journalism certificate, and the Bloomberg Business Journalism Diversity Program.

VI. Venue and dates

While the Library is ideal, any venue should have a video and audio system that connects to Zoom and can be booked in advance for at least an hour at a time. It should also have some sort of official "UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism" backdrop or a background that highlights the School in some way.

With the school's application deadline in early December, the webinars should be scheduled for the fall, when prospective students are deciding on programs to apply to and filling out their applications. Ideally, the webinars will fall at the same time/day over consecutive weeks, but venue availability and speakers' schedules heavily impact the possibility.

VII. Registration

SLATE appears to be the best all-around system for creating RSVP forms that populate a registrant list, members of which can then receive scheduled reminder emails. Forms should ask for first and last names, email, and school/organization/institution. Registrants should receive a follow-up reminder email a day or two before their respective event.

In 2019, sign-ups had to be periodically registered manually into the Zoom system the day before or the day of, with their first and last names and email. The person doing this had to keep an eye out for last-minute sign-ups to make sure they had access to the webinar. In order to avoid this extra step, the Zoom events probably need to be set-up/scheduled before RSVPs come in.

VIII. Promotion

Any email lists of prospective students (including the summer minor attendees) should be sent links to the webinar sign-ups and should receive reminder emails when the events near. School social media accounts should also promote the webinars periodically leading up to the events, and the School website can list them as upcoming events.

IX. Moderator prep

The moderator should have some basic familiarity with each instructor and their topic, including having the pronunciation down for the instructor's name and knowing their precise title and other roles or accomplishments that are worth noting.

The moderator should also come up with a list of questions to ask in case the Q&A lags or too few questions are asked. Though priority should be given to submitted questions, some good ones to prepare include:

- How much face-to-face time do students get with you and your colleagues outside of scheduled classes?
- What kind of industry-networking help is there?
- Is there help getting projects published?
- Describe some of the recent thesis projects in your track.
- Where does student work get published?
- Can you receive financial assistance for reporting projects?
- Can students report far and wide or just locally?
- Why should someone spend two years and thousands of dollars at this program when they could come up through the industry?

Some good questions for specific tracks:

- Isn't print or longform writing dying out?
- Have podcasts supplanted traditional radio reporting?
- Is it better to specialize in one skill—like coding or data visualization—or to become a generalist? [new media]
- Can investigative reporting be a course of study like narrative, audio, documentary, etc.?

What Sam found helpful was to have these questions in front of him during the webinar (as well as other important info, like the deadline to apply to the program), and to have his laptop open so he could see the viewers' questions come in on G-Chat.

Whether it's the moderator or a logistics person, someone should make sure the speaker is familiar with the webinar format ahead of time and to request from them any visual components (slides, video, etc.) to send to the tech person a day in advance. If the speaker wants to connect their laptop to the webinar (say, so viewers can watch them scroll through student projects), that should also be made known in advance.

To avoid interruptions, the moderator's (and everyone else's) phone and laptop should be set to silent during the webinar.

X. Technical needs

While the Library is ideal, any venue should have a video and audio system that connects to Zoom or another webinar platform. Both the moderator and speaker should have their own microphones.

[██████████ can add anything else!]

XI. Post-webinar

After the webinar ends, a recording of it should be saved and uploaded to the School's YouTube channel and emailed to the respective webinar's registrants (whether they tuned in or not).