

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM

CRISIS AND SCANDAL ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS: A NEWSPAPER'S BATTLE

KRISTIN STOLLER  
SPRING 2014

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for a baccalaureate degree  
in Journalism  
with honors in Journalism

Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Russ Eshleman  
Associate Head of the Department of Journalism  
Thesis Supervisor

Martin Halstuk  
Associate Professor of Journalism  
Honors Adviser

\* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

## **ABSTRACT**

On many college campuses, student journalists are thrust into national news stories, often competing with journalists 30 years their senior. In some instances, student journalists rise to the occasion, often out-performing their professional counterparts. This was studied by examining three national crises and scandals: the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse case at Pennsylvania State University, the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting at Virginia Tech University, and the Government 1310 cheating scandal at Harvard University. The differences, both good and bad, among collegiate, local and national news outlets were explored in order to gain an understanding about the coverage procedures for each outlet. This thesis draws on a qualitative analysis of collegiate, local and national news outlets' print and digital products to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each in times of scandal and crisis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	iii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
Chapter 1 Collegiate newspapers covering their own scandal .....	9
Chapter 2 Local and national newspapers deal with scandal .....	18
Chapter 3 CONCLUSION .....	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	38

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Professor Russ Eshleman and Professor Martin Halstuk for their guidance. I would also like to thank my family for their support.

## INTRODUCTION

On Nov. 6, 2011, I received a call from my editor at the Daily Collegian – Penn State’s independent daily newspaper. A former football coach I had never heard of had committed unspeakable acts on young boys in our community. Though our paper had been around for 124 years, this event brought us into the big leagues.

I raced down to the Collegian office that Sunday at noon to help out our two cops reporters put together a special edition on Jerry Sandusky as a guide for our readers. By 4 p.m., the entire newsroom was filled with reporters as our editors realized what a phenomenal story it would become.

Before Nov. 6, 2011, I had never considered our mid-sized newspaper to be in competition with the local, or even national news outlets. As that week wore on, I became paranoid that the New York Times or the Harrisburg Patriot-News would steal my stories, and I clutched my notebook to my chest when I passed those reporters in press conferences.

Soon enough, the Centre County’s tiny courthouse in Bellefonte was packed with reporters from around the country. At a typical court hearing, I was only joined by the local Centre Daily Times and StateCollege.com. At Sandusky’s first hearing that December, I found myself sitting next to Jason Carroll of CNN. Many of my Collegian colleagues complained that they were being asked questions from veteran national reporters on how simple court proceedings worked. It seemed that the playing field had been evened – or at least dented slightly.

And since then, the feeling has lessened slightly, but still remained. My experiences as a reporter for the student newspaper during the most tumultuous time in university history inspired me to delve deeper into the topic. I wanted to know how we, as student journalists, stacked up against these expert, long-standing reporters – especially in the Jerry Sandusky case.

But of course, every college needs a good scandal or crisis to push it in the middle of a media circus. Many times, this circus launches the college newspapers into an unexplained fame. I wanted to see if this was true elsewhere around the country. Besides my case study on the Daily Collegian during the Sandusky scandal, I focused on the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting crisis and the 2012 Harvard University cheating scandal. These three cases demonstrate a college event that quickly became national news. These student-run newspapers were each given national play and were even cited in national and local initial reports.

However, many believe there is an extent to which college newspapers can succeed. College journalists volunteer their time and may or may not receive compensation or scholarships. On top of reporting and producing a daily paper, students are required to attend and pass classes, which requires a large amount of time outside of their courses. Some student reporters may not even be journalism majors, as most college newspapers are open to all students. Local and national reporters are seemingly more committed. This is their chosen profession, after all, and they are paid to report every day.

While college newspaper are often discarded as merely “learning institutions,” in these case studies, they have been used as far more than that – as a way to inform the

public in times of crisis and scandal. It is quite possible that in some instances, college newspapers may outshine other professional sources. Therefore, this topic lends itself to a variety of questions. How accessible are university sources to outside journalists who have not established relationships? Can a college newspaper staff of about 100 full-time students compete with the hundreds of national full-time journalists on any story? What advantages, if any, do college newspapers have over their professional counterparts? The forthcoming thesis serves an analysis on how student journalists cover crisis and scandal on their campuses differently than the local and national newspapers, and attempts to answer the questions posed above.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Because of the recent nature of most of the events chosen, there have not been many studies on these particular topics. In those cases where no studies were conducted, different aspects of the scandal and/or crisis were studied. As the Harvard University Government 1310 class cheating scandal happened in late 2012, and only received media attention for a short span of time, no previous studies have been done on the topic.

### **The Virginia Tech shooting**

In *The American Journalism Review*, Sherry Ricchiardi brings up many valid points about how collegiate and local papers covered the shooting, compared to national outlets. She writes, “For a brief time that terrible day, reporters from a medium-size daily and a group of neophytes led the coverage as an anguished campus, nation and world frantically searched for answers” (Ricchiardi, 2007). She brings up four key points that distinguish the local papers from the national. First, she discusses the student-run *Collegiate Times*’ and the local *Roanoke Times*’ proximity to the campus. National newspapers were initially delayed in reporting the news because they couldn’t send people to the scene as fast as the collegiate and local paper. Adding to injury for the national outlets was the poor weather and gusting winds that prevented planes from flying into the area (Ricchiardi, 2007).

The collegiate and local newspapers also had more experience with the campus and more sources they could reach out to. For example, the assistant news editor of The New River Valley bureau of *The Roanoke Times*, Shay Barnhart, was listening to the

local police scanner that morning and was able to gain access to on-the-scene information. For *The Collegiate-Times*, the student journalists were able to utilize student sources and student social media profiles, which led them to compile a list of victims before any national media outlets did. In fact, *Collegiate-Times* Editor-in-chief Amie Steele said national news outlet CNN quoted their list of victims. In an interview with Ricchiardi (2007), Steel said, “ ‘That was one of our greatest strengths,’ she says. ‘During this whole tragedy, we were all experiencing it. We knew the emotions that other students were feeling. We were the ones best able to talk to [students] and take the pulse of what was going on. We were living the story’ ” (Ricchiardi, 2007). Many national news outlets, such as the *New York Times*, linked or credited *The Collegiate Times* when the story first broke. However, the college newspaper fell behind on other ways – such as website views. The newspaper was not prepared for the staggering number of visitors its small college paper would receive. *The Collegiate Times*’ server crashed at 10:30 a.m. on the day of the shooting, after posting two breaking updates on the status of the gunman (Ricchiardi, 2007). National newspapers’ websites, though, were equipped to handle this intense amount of traffic, giving them more access to readership.

With being local came a greater responsibility to the community. For *The Roanoke Times*, this meant taking caution when reporting, and paying special attention to detail. Editor Carole Tarrant said she was more concerned with being right than being first. In an interview with Ricchiardi (2007), Tarrant said, “ ‘But the decisions we made we were going to have to live with for a long time. I was fine with being cautious. I didn’t want to get anything wrong. We had a responsibility to the community’ ” (Ricchiardi, 2007).

However, another study investigated news media coverage of the race of the perpetrator in the shootings. The study was done by Kyle J. Holody, Sung-Yeon Park and Xiaoqun Zhang in “Journalism and Mass Communications Quarterly.” They found that more than one-third of 136 newspaper articles contained racial information. They studied all articles relating to the shooting within a one month period of the shooting, specifically *The New York Times* and *USA Today*, which yielded 136 articles. More than half of the articles by both publications were published within the first four days. They also found that both newspapers virtually stopped covering the incident after the sixteenth day. Based on their research, they found that this was more of a condensed news cycle than that in which the Columbine shooting was covered (Holody, Park & Zhang, 2012).

Furthermore, they found 51 articles, or 38 percent, identified the Virginia Tech shooter’s race, which was Asian. All but one of these, or 37 percent, identified his ethnicity as Korean. Out of the fifty-one newspaper articles that identified the shooter as being part of a minority, 69 percent discussed racial/ethnic identity at the “individual level.” “A substantial percentage of articles (22%) portrayed Koreans as the ethnic in-group that shares the shame and burden of the perpetrator’s crimes” (Holody et al., 2012). However, this study was just done by comparing two national outlets, and left no mention of collegiate or local media outlets.

### **The Jerry Sandusky sex abuse scandal**

Many media outlet’s speed to respond to the news of the Sandusky scandal was studied in *The American Journalism Review* in the article “Slow to React,” by George Solomon. Solomon, director of the Shirley Povich Center for Sports Journalism at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism, studied national news

outlets in comparison to the local Harrisburg Patriot-News, who broke the story. On March 31, 2011, Sara Ganim, of the Patriot-News, reported that Sandusky was the subject of a grand jury investigation for indecently assaulting a teenage boy. However, while Ganim pursued the story for months before the charges were filed in November, Solomon said hardly anyone else did. “That's surprising, given Penn State's hitherto impeccable reputation and lofty position in the college football world and [Joe] Paterno's stature (46 years on the job, most wins — 409 — of any coach in major college football history), not to mention Sandusky's lengthy tenure on Paterno's staff and his relationship with the children's charity Second Mile” (Solomon, 2011).

Solomon then studied other Pennsylvania and national outlet's reaction to the original March 31<sup>st</sup> story. The Associated Press' sports editor Terry Taylor said they picked up the Patriot-News' story and tried to pursue it, but not a lot of coverage came out of it after that. Jerry Micco, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's assistant managing editor/sports, told Solomon that his paper didn't do a lot with the initial report, besides running the AP story and attempting to get comment from Penn State officials. “ ‘In hindsight, it's easy to say more scrutiny should have been evident,’ says Malcolm Moran, director of the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism at Penn State and a former New York Times sports reporter. ‘But we didn't know the depth of what was being discussed. No charges had been filed. How do you proceed on this story using basic journalistic standards?’ ” (Solomon, 2011).

After Sandusky was arrested on Nov. 5, 2011, the major Pennsylvania papers, as well as national news outlets such as CNN and ESPN, jumped on the story and deployed multiple reporters to State College. Micco, from the Post-Gazette, said the Patriot-News

was “miles ahead” when the grand jury report surfaced in November. But two days later, he said he Post-Gazette was publishing “five to seven pieces” a day on the scandal.

Philadelphia Inquirer's sports editor John Quinn told Solomon in an email interview that his newspaper “blanketed the campus with sports and news people” on that Saturday, the morning after the indictments. They also had a Penn State student intern working for them, writing stories, blog posts and doing interviews.

The national news outlets behaved similarly. Though USA Today initially didn't report on the March 31<sup>st</sup> story, Monte Lorell, managing editor for sports at USA Today, said “all hell broke loose” when Sandusky was arrested. The newspaper dispatched two sports reporters, a stringer, news section staffers and columnists, working in three-day shifts (Solomon, 2011). Unlike other newspapers, USA Today assigned the religion reporter to contrast the issues at Penn State with the scandal affecting the Catholic Church. The New York Times was one of the leading national outlets to break some of its own stories. A key reporter on staff was Mark Viera, a recent Penn State graduate who was familiar with the area.

By comparison, national sports news outlet ESPN didn't fare the same. Jason Fry and Kelly McBride of the Poynter Institute, who serve as ombudsmen for ESPN, said the sports network was “too slow off the mark in the days after the story exploded,” Solomon wrote. “ ‘With the biggest staff of sports journalists in the world, ESPN should have been leading the charge to ask tough questions and shed light on this scandal,’ they wrote. ‘Instead, it was the tiny Patriot-News in Harrisburg, Pa. out in front of the journalism pack’” (Solomon, 2011).

## Chapter 1

### Collegiate newspapers covering their own scandals

#### Chaos at the Collegiate Times

Amie Steele was editor in chief of the Collegiate Times for only 15 days when one of the biggest tragedies to hit the Virginia Tech campus arose. On April 16, 2007, Virginia Tech student Seung-Hui Cho shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 others in two separate attacks on campus – the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history.

Steele was at home when she learned of the shooting, and was unable to get to the Collegiate Times' newsroom on campus because roads had been blocked off. Therefore, for the first couple of hours, the Collegiate Times set up their “home base” at its advertising building off campus (A. Steele, personal communication, January 27, 2014).

When the first shooting occurred at West Ambler Johnston Hall, the Associated Press asked if they could send a reporter to work in the advertising building, Collegiate Times Design Advisor Scott Chandler said. The general manager agreed, but after the second shooting in Norris Hall, the Associated Press sent about 20 reporters (S. Chandler, personal communication, December 2, 2013). Chandler said he had been hanging around the advertising building, but left at 2:30 a.m. the morning after the shooting to go to the Collegiate Times' on campus newsroom. He said he overheard that the Associated Press had uncovered some of the names of the shooting victims, which had not yet been released. When he pulled Steele aside to ask if the Collegiate Times had found any of the names, Steele told him her newspaper had every single name of the 32 victims – putting it leagues ahead of the national media. “The students made the decision to hold a few

names that they didn't have confirmation on, but they published a paper with vast majority of the names on it," Chandler said. "That was something no one else had."

Chandler said he was also impressed with the Collegiate Times' simple decision to report the truth. In general, he said the national media were offering subjective theories, making facts up, and sometimes getting facts completely wrong, such as names of buildings on campus. "The national news outlets were filling time," Chandler said. "They didn't know anything."

In the beginning, Chandler said the student journalists were very objective, despite the fact that they were students. But three days after the shooting, the national media started focusing on what the administration did wrong in the shooting, such as not raising alarms for students after the first shooting occurred. "There was a real transition on the focus of it from Virginia Tech as victims to Virginia Tech, were they responsible?" Chandler said. As the national media changed their focus to being accusatory and questioning, Chandler said the attitude on campus changed from being critical of the administration to a, "We are Hokies, we will prevail," school spirit attitude. This attitude changed for the student journalists as well, as Chandler said he saw some students get on the defensive about the national media attacking their school. "I don't know I could look at their coverage and say, 'Here is the shift,' but the theme and attitude in the newsroom was different after that point, and I believe still is today," he said.

Steele said staying objective became a struggle for some of her reporters because they were living through the event and struggling with emotions. "I also think it helped the reporting in the sense that we had empathy for the individuals we interviewed or were beginning to contact because we had those same feelings, too," she said. For Collegiate

Times reporter Taylor Rees Shapiro, being objective wasn't hard. Shapiro had just started at Tech that school year, as a sophomore transfer student. "I think because I was brand new to the school... I hadn't had a lot of loyalty or attachment yet," Shapiro said. "In that way, I was able to main some sort of professional distance."

Shapiro said getting sources was not difficult for him because he was a student journalist. "I could always change skins," he said. "One second I could be a journalist and one second I could be a student talking to another student." Shapiro said there were signs on all of the dorm buildings banning the media from entering. However, because he was a student, Shapiro said he could enter and conduct interviews in the dorms, which allowed him to get a lot of information that the national and local newspapers did not have (T. Shapiro, personal communication, January 31, 2014). Steele said her reporters had contacts that the national media did not have, and the newspaper had a "great relationship with the school [public relations] department."

Facebook was also a tool the student journalists used to their advantage. Shapiro said he sent a Facebook message to a user who started a group in memory of one of the victims with an interview request. The user ended up calling Shapiro back, and asked Shapiro if he wanted to speak to one of his friends who was in the German classroom where the shooting happened, Erin Sheehan. Sheehan was she was one of only four people in the classroom to get out alive – an exclusive detail Rees was able to get because he was a student journalist.

Students were very open to talking at the beginning of the week, Steele said. But as the week progressed and the national media flooded the campus, students became more hesitant to talk. Steele said there were problems with the national media being seen

as “invasive and cold.” “There were stories of camera crews following people who were crying back to their apartments,” she said. “Later in the week, we got sort of womped in with that in students minds.” The national media had no ties to the community whatsoever - they came in, reported on the shooting for a week, and by the time the news cycle evolved, they have moved on, Steele said. “We had empathy for who we were interviewing. For any students we were trying to get in contact with, we were going through it and could relate to it,” she said.

### **The Daily Collegian takes on the media**

For former Daily Collegian Managing Editor Casey McDermott, 3:08 p.m. on Nov. 4, 2011, will always hold a certain significance. It was the moment for unsuspecting Penn State students that their life would be turned upside down and, more importantly, the future of the 124-year-old newspaper would be changed forever. On Nov. 4, 2011, former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was charged with 40 counts of involuntary deviate sexual assault with persons less than 16 years old, indecent assault of a minor and endangering the welfare of a child, among other charges.

The Collegian issues before the scandal were much like any other college newspaper. Local elections were coming up, the football team under Joe Paterno had won another home game and an article featuring “No Shave November” was featured prominently on the front page the day before the charges were filed. When the story was broken by the Harrisburg, Pa. newspaper The Patriot News, swarms of media descended on State College – many of whom had never covered Penn State before.

Former Editor-in-Chief Lexi Belculfine describes this as an advantage for her staff of student journalists. Belculfine said she didn’t know that the Collegian had more

access to sources because when the administration shut down its public relations/information office, it shut it down for both the college and local newspapers in addition to the national newspapers. However, “the benefit for us was that when sitting in a Board of Trustees meeting, we knew who everyone was. It eliminated the learning curve,” Belculfine said (L. Belculfine, personal communication, October 4, 2013).

Early on, the Daily Collegian set itself apart, sometimes working 20-hour days to provide round-the-clock coverage. “As the student newspaper, we had a really unique role in the scandal,” Belculfine said. “Our first duty is and always was that we were writing and reporting for the students on campus.” The local State College newspaper, the Centre Daily Times, and the local online news source, Statecollege.com, were trying to reach a much larger base, such as the people who lived locally and professionals, she said. However, she said the Collegian “knew their audience very intimately.” Especially on the editorial page, Belculfine knew the paper was setting itself apart because the staff was writing to the students, for the students. In a Nov. 10, 2011 editorial, “The Fall of Giants,” personal pronouns such as “we,” “us” and “our” are mentioned times 13 times in a 396-word piece.

For Belculfine, this familiarity to the student body is what helped the Collegian triumph over other outlets. For example, she said even students who may not read the Collegian every day know what to expect from the daily newspaper. “[Students] know [the Collegian is] going to cover THON, [they] know they are going to cover arrests. It would be hard as a student or alumni to watch all these national papers sweep in,” Belculfine said. Ultimately, Belculfine said she didn’t view the Collegian as “the student newspaper” during the scandal.

“We were members of the media,” she said. “We were doing the same work, doing the same time, writing the same stories as the Centre Daily Times and the New York Times. It wasn’t a student newspaper, it was a newspaper run by students.”

Things changed for the student-run business side of the newspaper as well. Former Business Manager Stephanie Haas said immediately after the scandal broke, there was increased interest and demand in everything having to do with the Collegian. Haas was in charge of all five Business Division departments – Creative, Business Operations, Layout, Promotions and Advertising Sales (S. Haas, personal communication, January 28, 2014).

The students were forced to take a hard look at their financials and determine when to increase press runs and by how much. They were also inundated with phone calls and people coming into the office trying to find a newspaper. “We lacked the manpower necessary to deal with interest of this magnitude – we were forced to put some of our long-term projects on hold in order to address the more immediate needs of the News Division, our readers, and our advertisers,” Haas said.

Advertisers did not complain about the constant coverage of the scandal, she said. They knew that the “newspaper content had to reflect what was going on, even if that meant negative stories running alongside their ads,” she said. However, Haas said many advertisers were hesitant to promote their business during such a volatile time at Penn State. Multiple large clients did not want to appear insensitive to the scandal by running an ad with their daily specials.

“However, we all knew that the press run prices were increasing significantly with longer papers and more copies,” Haas said. “Generally, we were in a tenuous

position because we knew visibility of the Collegian was at a relative high, but didn't want to seem callous in our sales approach. We grappled with how best to earn the money we knew we needed and how to respect the advertisers' hesitance.”

Ultimately, Haas said she and her staff found being honest was really the best approach – they explained to their clients that they knew it was a difficult time for everyone at Penn State, but they needed their support at that time more than ever so the paper could continue to inform the community about what was happening.

### **The Harvard Crimson unearths cheating**

It didn't come as a shock to the Harvard Crimson when news broke that an investigation was being conducted in Harvard's Government 1310 class for cheating. Rebecca Robbins, the college administration reporter for the Crimson, said the newspaper was working on the story weeks before and the nation found out.

One of the largest cheating scandals in Harvard history, nearly half of the Government 1310 class were suspected of cheating on a take-home final exam given in May 2012. After noticing similarities in 10 to 20 exams, the professor of the course brought it to the attention of the Harvard Administrative Board. The Board then found 125 exams to be suspicious (Robbins, 2012). Though the exam was open-note, students were prohibited to discuss the exam with other students. Ultimately, about 70 students were forced to temporarily withdraw from Harvard as a result of the scandal. The class also attracted many varsity athletes, some of them on the basketball team. Rather than facing disciplinary action, two players accused of cheating withdrew from the university that September so that they wouldn't risk losing a year of athletic eligibility (Pérez-Peña, 2013).

“We got a tip for an anonymous reader saying that there was a disciplinary review. We started looking into it, but didn’t get any traction,” she said. The Crimson was the first news outlet to name the class that was the subject of the cheating scandal, as the administration first put out a statement explaining what happened with the scandal, but only referred to the class as “an undergraduate class” (R. Robbins, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

However, Robbins said national news sources focused on a narrative of the Government 1310 class being an “easy A” and being poorly organized, which is how the students cheated. That was a narrative the Crimson resisted. Robbins said this was because the exam explicitly had instructions on the front saying students could not collaborate in any form, listing the ways students could not collaborate. “Using the excuse that cheating was explicitly encouraged, we did not pursue,” Robbins said.

Former Crimson President Ben Samuels said he was in charge of managing business content and news content. As the scandal unfolded, and it became clear that the story was going to be pretty big, he said he became more and more involved in the coverage. He said it wasn’t hard for his staff to be objective in their coverage (B. Samuels, personal communication, February 18, 2014). But as the scandal progressed, Samuels said it became apparent to him that there were a couple students involved who worked at the Crimson. “I was the only person who knew that and made sure they weren’t compromised or involved in the reporting,” he said.

However, the Crimson did look into how the scandal would affect Harvard athletics. Robbins said the Government 1310 class was notorious for being an “athlete class.” The newspaper wrote a number of stories about how the expected suspensions

because of the cheating would impact these teams. This was met with some backlash – as Robbins said some athletes reached out who were very upset, including some sources.

Samuels said the naming of the athletes was a point of contention for the newspaper. Off the record, the Crimson learned two co-captains of the basketball team were involved in the scandal. For a period of time, the student reporters dealt with an internal struggle of publishing the basketball players' names, and what the notability or public figure status was of Harvard college basketball captain. However, the national outlet Sports Illustrated published the names about 12 hours before the Crimson had planned on doing it, Samuels said. "Once the names were out there, there was no reservation for us to put the names in," he said.

Getting sources was both easy and difficult, Robbins said. "In some ways, people were willing to talk to the Globe and the New York Times because they thought their message would be heard and they would have a higher platform, a bigger megaphone," she said. However, the Crimson reporters also had friends of friends who helped them get sourcing that the Times and the Globe didn't have. Being the college newspaper, Robbins said the Crimson assumed a familiarity with their readers and didn't go through great pains to describe, for instance, how the administrative board worked. The national stories would go into great detail about how the process works, she said.

The Crimson tried to focus more on how the scandal would affect the school going forward, Samuels said. Specifically, they tried to report on how it would impact classroom learning, student life and the relationship the administration would have with the faculty. The Globe and much of the national media just focused on the fact that there was a massive cheating scandal at one of the most prestigious schools in the nation.

## Chapter 2

### Local and national newspapers deal with scandal

#### The shooting that shook the nation

##### LOCAL

At the Roanoke Times, it all boiled down to one word: responsibility. When news of the shooting broke, the staff made a decision early on to be responsible. Mark Morrison, who was the Roanoke Times New River Valley bureau chief, said the staff realized early on that the national media would come into town for a week and then leave. The bureau is about a 10-minute drive from the Virginia Tech campus (M. Morrison, personal communication, December 19, 2013).

The Roanoke Times would be there forever, so their relationships and sources with the community and readers were a top priority, he said. “We were careful not to kind of misbehave and get in with the media pack mentality,” Morrison said. “We were very careful how we approached people and reported the story.” Morrison said the national outlets tended to be aggressive in their reporting, which put off many sources – including students, families, Virginia Tech official and law enforcement. The national outlets also reported many things that weren’t true or were based on rumors, he said. The Roanoke Times made the decision not to re-report what other news organizations were reporting and, consequently, avoided publishing information that ended up not being correct or accurate, Morrison said.

However, the aggressiveness of the national media sometimes put the paper at a disadvantage. Donna Banks, the former Roanoke Times features and general assignment reporter, said the national media shut down most of the bureau's contacts (D. Banks, personal communication, December 20, 2013). She said she had "never felt so alienated." Sometimes, the public would associate them with the national media and refuse to talk to them, just because they were "part of the media," she said. Banks said it got to be a mindset for people, to hate the media. Greg Esposito, the former higher education reporter for the Roanoke Times, said he received many lectures from sources about being part of the insensitive media (G. Esposito, personal communication, December 23, 2013). "One student said, 'Why don't you just go home?'" I said 'This is my home.' " Esposito said. "There was a knee jerk reaction."

But being located only 10 minutes award from campus proved to be a tremendous advantage for the local newspaper. One of the bureau's photographers by chance was able to take pictures of police and first responders were taking students out of the building who had been shot. He was able to get off campus and back to bureau in a matter of minutes. Those were the pictures the Roanoke Times posted immediately that were shown across the world, Morrison said. "We were the first, and the only media outlet that got any pictures of students who had been shot and wounded taken out [of the building]," he said.

Much like the Collegiate Times, the Roanoke Times utilized social media in their reporting. Initially, Morrison said students were willing to talk to them via Facebook. In 2007, when the shooting occurred, Facebook was not open to everyone – a ".edu" address was required for users. The Roanoke Times had a number of reporters who had ".edu"

email address because they had taken classes at the university. Subsequently, they were able to link up with students through Facebook and interview them, Morrison said. But unlike the Collegiate Times, the Roanoke Times was able to support their website. The Roanoke Times managed to open up an additional pipeline so their website could handle the immense amount of traffic, Morrison said.

Looking back, Morrison said he thinks the paper's biggest downfall was not understand the evolving 24-hour news cycle that the national media had been conditioned to understand. The day of the shooting, April 16, 2007, the Roanoke Times had people working furiously until 11 p.m. or midnight – just so they were able to meet their deadlines. Then the reporters got started again at 8 a.m. on April 17, the next morning, Morrison said. “A lot happened on that campus between late that night on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>,” he said. “Students were up all night and that’s when they did their talking to the national media.” In retrospect, Morrison said he wished he sent home the reporters who had worked all day at midnight, and then brought in another wave of reporters to take over the night/early morning shift starting at 10 p.m. That way, the national media would not have bested the local paper when getting sources. “We learned that lesson after the first day and planned accordingly to make sure there were shifts,” Morrison said.

But unlike the national media, the Roanoke Times stuck with the story for years after it broke. Banks said, “We had a special interest in covering not just the sensationalized parts...other outlets did sensationalize it. We really went into looking at the people involved as members of our community and got more of the emotional aspects.” For example, she said there was a wedding taking place on the Virginia Tech

campus five days after the shooting, which the Roanoke Times covered. Banks attributed it to the local paper's knowledge of the community and alumni base. "The national outlets certainly wouldn't have had that kind of interest," she said. Esposito seconded Banks' statements, and said the Roanoke Times focused on the shooting in a different way. "We focused a lot on the impact that things had on the community because we understood the community and had a much more nuanced version of events," he said. The Roanoke Times tried to present more context to the story. Esposito wrote a longer piece the year after the shooting detailing the lives of a family who lost their daughter in the shooting. Esposito said no other news organization had anything like it.

### **NATIONAL**

At the Washington Post, it is arguable that it received much more recognition because of the prestige of its name. In 2008, the Post won a Pulitzer Prize in the breaking news category for its coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting. Eleven bylined reporters and 50 other journalists, more than half on the Post's Metro staff, and staff members of the paper's Web site contributed to the coverage (Kurtz, 2008).

Tom Jackman, one of the lead reporters for the Washington Post, said the newspaper had the advantage of more resources and more people. Though he said the Collegiate Times did an excellent job, the Post had the benefit of "researchers" – or people whose job it was to provide research and background for reporters – sitting on computers with databases (T. Jackman, personal communication, December 20, 2013). That was an advantage that most places didn't have, he said. Then the Post brought in a wave of seasoned reporters to take over the story. However, the post only had about five or six reporters stationed at Virginia Tech, Jackman said.

This wasn't the first time the Post had taken on a story like this. "We had a lot of experience covering a giant international breaking crime stories, just five years earlier," Jackman said. The editor who oversaw the shooting coverage had also overseen the Post's coverage of the Washington, D.C., sniper a couple years earlier. When the Virginia Tech shooting broke, the Post reporters knew what to do.

But Jackman said his only regret was the speed at which the Post relayed the story to their readers. "I think we were slow in the Virginia Tech shooting...The info dribbled out the first day and for the first several hours, no one knew the scope of what had gone on," he said. When the shooting broke in 2007, the Post wasn't as "adept" to getting its information online quickly and making sure it was accurate, Jackman said. At that time, he said the Post was still slow in its approach to breaking news on the web, just because it wasn't as experienced at it. The Post also had a difficult time getting sources initially. "It was real difficult because it was a competition with the media of the world," Jackman said.

The Virginia-based newspaper USA Today used the then-new technology of Twitter to report the details of the shooting. Doug Stanglin led the initial coverage of the shooting as an editor for the former USA Today breaking news blog, "On Deadline." He said an intern had been monitoring tweets from students at Virginia Tech, which it used to get in touch with people to ask them what they were seeing (D. Stanglin, personal communication, January 6, 2014). But Stanglin said the Collegiate Times did become a source or part of the stories they wrote. He said this was considered "normal practice" in a breaking news situation.

## **A college's 'catastrophic failures'**

### **LOCAL**

Much like the Daily Collegian, Mike Dawson of the Centre Daily Times knew something big was about to happen on Nov. 4, 2011. After the Harrisburg Patriot News broke that Sandusky would be arrested, Dawson said he went to the magistrate's office where the charges had been filed (M. Dawson, personal communication, January 6, 2014). Dawson said he had a good relationship with the judge, Leslie Dutchcot, but that day, Dutchcot refused to speak to him.

Since Dawson had only been working at the CDT for five months, he didn't have an extensive repertoire of Penn State source built up. Regardless, he said it was difficult to get sources. "Once you talked to people once, you were done. You were lucky they even took your call," he said. Anne Danahy, the former Penn State reporter for the CDT, said getting in touch with sources was difficult because the university went into a "lockdown mode."

But the CDT did put a unique spin on its coverage, Dawson said. "We were covering it from the community's standpoint. It was something you couldn't get on CNN," he said. For example, the CDT heavily reported on Sandusky's local charity, The Second Mile, the local, downtown mural with paintings of Paterno and Sandusky, and on the Penn State creamery's then-ice cream flavors – Sandusky Blitz and Peachy Paterno. "It may not have gotten much traction in Florida or California, but here, it's for the people at Penn State." Danahy said she thought the CDT did a better job at trying to be less sensational than other outlets. "I think the national media was kind of parachuting in," she said. "They weren't going to be there when the whole thing was over and their

audience is different.” For example, reporters from all across the country were chasing down Sandusky’s victims, she said (A. Danahy, personal communication, January 22, 2014). The victims weren’t identified publically, but Danahy said it didn’t take a whole lot for the public to figure out who they were. She said the CDT didn’t do that.

Though many of the CDT’s readers were pro-Joe Paterno, Dawson said he thought the CDT wrote as objectively as it could. “I like to say that we wrote everything we did based on the facts at the time,” he said. “It’s not secret that Joe Paterno is and was a part of this community. Associating him with this would elicit a lot of different reactions.” Danahy said the newspaper got complaints asking why the CDT ran Sandusky’s picture on the front page.

### NATIONAL

Kevin Johnson, of USA Today, arrived in State College shortly after the grand jury presentment was released on Nov. 5, 2011. But getting sources for his stories was difficult, he said. However, as an experienced reporter, he was able to take the grand jury presentment and turn it into a “road map” of sorts, leading him to people he could talk to and places he could go (K. Johnson, personal communication, October 11, 2013). “I felt like while I was starting from scratch, it could have been a lot worse,” Johnson said. “There were so many details related in the grand jury report that it helped me figure out who I needed to talk to.”

But to this day, Johnson still questions where the national media was when the story first broke. The story never got any traction from the outside media, which he said he regrets. “If you have people like Joe Paterno going before the grand jury, my God, we should have been in there digging that up,” Johnson said. “Especially since it was

happening at a time where he was being lauded for his career at Penn State, which I find kind of remarkable.”

To Johnson’s advantage, USA Today gave him the time he needed to work on a larger, long form piece about how one of the Sandusky victim’s school handled his complaints. He was given the opportunity to research it while working on other stories. “If we were shuttling different people in and out of the story, we wouldn’t have that continuity of coverage,” he said.

Jenna Johnson, a higher education reporter at the Washington Post, said she began covering the scandal on Monday – two days after Sandusky was arrested. That was one big difference between the Post and the college newspaper – many times, when Johnson shows up to a collegiate story, the student newspaper is already a few days into its coverage and way ahead (J. Johnson, personal communication, December 16, 2013). “The big difference is The Daily Collegian was on every little bit of that story, filing dozens of stories a day on their website and then putting out the paper,” Johnson said. “Whereas when we come in, we are taking a look at all the little things that had been done and figuring out what the bigger picture story was and the bigger message.” Since student journalists have a grasp on their universities’ system, she said a lot of national newspapers will call the student newspaper and “feel them out.”

Though Joe Drape, a reporter for the New York Times, was from a national outlet, he said he had minimal problems reporting on the Sandusky scandal. Drape was sent to Penn State during Sandusky’s trial, and wrote the final verdict story (J. Drape, personal communication, December 17, 2013). He said there had always been a good relationship between the New York Times and Penn State Athletics, because the New

York area doesn't really have a huge college football team to follow. Penn State had always been its unofficial home team, he said. "Everybody is sort of steeped in Penn State knowledge and needs to be," Drape said.

Getting sources was not difficult because the Times knew the "lay of the land" and had many colleagues at Penn State, such as professors, Drape said. Many local citizens were more inclined to talk to the New York Times because of its name and prestige. "We were the New York Times, it's like Apple, it's a certain brand," Drape said. "...They knew what we stood for, and we have a veteran staff who had done this before. All of those things work to your advantage." He also said there was a "collective resource gathering" between staff members at the Times, with 30 years more experience than the student newspaper. "We do this full time, [student reporters] are trying to get through college," Drape said.

However, Drape said the Times did have a need for the college and local newspapers at some point. He said the Times often goes to the college paper to try to hire people to cover for the Times reporters if they have to go somewhere. "You use them A, as a guide post to keep up, and B, where to look and who they know," he said. Though the Times won't lift journalists from the local papers, he said they read them for context and to find out what they missed.

### **Academic dishonesty on an Ivy scale**

#### **LOCAL**

Not surprisingly, O'Ryan Johnson, of the Boston Herald, said he heard about the Harvard cheating scandal from the Harvard Crimson.

“Something like that is more likely to originate from a student source,” Johnson said. “They are talking to their friends instead of calling the Boston Herald.”

Out of every news outlet, he said he thought the Crimson covered the story the best. Johnson said he initially called one of the student reporters and talked to him about what he found (O. Johnson, personal communication, December 11, 2013). The Harvard administration was reluctant to talk to the Herald, as with many local and national outlets, he said. “The student newspaper kind of continued to lead the rest of the media as far as coverage. They had access to the people it most affected,” Johnson said. “We would go out to Harvard and just try to talk to kids, but it was easy for security to try and spot us and kick us out.”

Apart from talking to the student journalists, Johnson said the Herald did not use any of the information in the Crimson stories. At some points, the Herald was forced to rely on Associated Press content, as it was a challenging story, he said. “We may use [student content] if it really turns out to be the only source of information on a really big national story, but honestly I think for it to be a really big national story, law enforcement would have to be involved,” he said. Once law enforcement gets involved, Johnson said the Herald is able to do more than the student newspaper – not because they are better reporters, but because they have a lot more experience and resources.

### NATIONAL

Mary Carmichael, the former higher education reporter at the Boston Globe, received an email in late August 2012 from Harvard press representatives saying they wanted to discuss something “very sensitive” with her. After an hour-long meeting, she was made aware of the scandal (M. Carmichael, personal communication, October 30,

2013). However, Carmichael said she was not told what the course was or how many were in the course. “I didn’t have as many student sources as the Crimson,” she said. “I accepted that I knew the Crimson will break what it is.”

After the Crimson broke the course name, Carmichael said it was a matter of watching the scandal unfold. The only thing the Globe sourced from the Crimson was the identity of the course – even though Carmichael said she was able to get independent sources verifying it. But the Crimson broke it, so the Globe thought it was right to give them credit. However, the day the story broke, she said she received an email from an anonymous student with a lot of reporters copied, including the Crimson and other national news outlets. The student knew about the course and was talking about the quality of the teaching of the course. The email was written in a kind of conspiratorial tone, but Carmichael said she thought it was worth following up on. She said she thinks it was only herself and one other reporter who followed up on that source, who she then used successfully as an anonymous source in her stories.

The Crimson did have many more student sources, though, Carmichael said. “The Crimson had a lot more resources to put toward it. It was the story of the year for them...It was not the story of the year for the Globe,” she said. She said she also wishes The Globe would have done a more in depth look at the scandal. The Globe has a magazine meant for longer form stories. “It would have been nice to step back and say, ‘What does this really mean? Is this more than just a scandal? What does it mean about culture of education at Harvard? What does it mean that lots of kids thought that was OK?’ ” Carmichael said. She said there should have been a longform magazine article answering these questions, and looking into whether an honor code was ever put in place.

But what the Globe did well was not dropping the story, because it “could have done that as a metropolitan newspaper,” she said.

Richard Pérez-Peña, of the New York Times, said he began covering the scandal in August of 2012, when Harvard put out a statement revealing the existence of a scandal. He said he didn’t think anyone in the national media had tipped to it at the point (R. Pérez-Peña, personal communication, December 19, 2013). But right after the scandal broke, Pérez-Peña said the Times was one of the first to report the story with input from accused students saying this was a product of how the class ran, how the professor handled things, etc. “I don’t remember if we had any of that stuff before the Crimson or at the same time of the Crimson, but on that aspect of the story, we were ahead of the curve,” he said.

Though Pérez-Peña said he never took anybody else’s work and repeated it, he said there might have been one of two instances where he linked to things the Crimson reported that Harvard confirmed was true. He said he thinks he also may have linked to a Boston Globe story or two. “The problem is, this was not a top priority story for us,” Pérez-Peña said. “For the Crimson, it was. They probably threw multiple people at it every day. We had me on it occasionally, on top of a lot of other stuff.” However, he said the Times had one other story that they thought was ahead of the curve: looking at cheating in general at universities across the country.

Looking back, Pérez-Peña said the one piece that is still missing is that no one has gotten an interview with the Government 1310 professor. Mainly, he said he wants to know if the college agrees with the students that the professor was to blame for the scandal. “The last time we did something on it, we reported that [the professor’s] not

coming back, which hints at an answer, but isn't an answer," he said. "If I had had more time to devote to this story, I think that would have been my main thing. The college's report that they put out on what happened did not address the culpability of the professor and teaching fellows at all, and I thought that was unfortunate."

## Chapter 3

### CONCLUSION

Many different aspects must be considered when comparing collegiate, local and national newspapers. It is incredibly difficult to choose one type of newspaper that is better at covering a college story than the others. However, the best way to compare is to identify each outlet's strengths and weaknesses. While college newspapers may excel in one area, national newspapers may excel in another. But national newspapers aren't necessarily the strongest on these breaking collegiate stories of crisis and scandal.

#### **The first reports**

After examining the times each news outlet posted their initial reports, it was concluded that, usually, the local newspapers were the fastest in putting information about each crisis/scandal on their websites.

In the Virginia Tech shooting crisis, the local Roanoke Times was the first to post a report just before 9 a.m. on April 16 – the morning of the shooting. Then came the student's Collegiate Times, posting their first update at 9:47 a.m. The Washington Post managed to post about 15 minutes later at around 10 a.m., but the New York Times first posted two hours later, at 11:51 a.m., followed by USA Today at 12:48 p.m.

During the Jerry Sandusky scandal, the local news source led the pack again. The Patriot-News broke the story at 2:26 p.m. on Nov. 4, 2011. However, they had first reported the story in March of that year. The local Centre Daily Times and the student-run Daily Collegian posted their updates around 4 p.m. on Nov. 4 – and both had posted

articles in March summarizing the Patriot-News' work. The national newspapers – the Washington Post and the New York Times – did not compile their own story until the following day.

Finally, in the Harvard cheating scandal, the collegiate Harvard Crimson was the first to post their story at about 3 p.m. on Aug. 30, 2012, which is when the university's embargo on the story lifted. The Boston Globe and the New York Times also published a story on the scandal on Aug. 30, 2012, but the time was unclear. However, both newspapers did cite the Crimson in the stories. The local Boston Herald also published a story on Aug. 30, 2012 as well, but the timing is unclear.

With the exception of the Harvard Crimson, who knew about the story in advance, the local papers were more efficient at posting their stories online and getting information out the fastest. This can be attributed to local reporter's lack of other activities, such as classes or other national stories – as stated in the introduction. However, college newspapers were not far behind in posting initial stories, and usually managed to provide more initial details than their professional counterparts.

### **Virginia Tech shooting conclusions**

In general – or at least for the first week – the student-run Collegiate Times was leagues ahead of the other news outlets. When the story first broke, the Collegiate Times knew all of the names of the students who were killed because of their knowledge, and use, of social media. Facebook was a platform only offered to college students, so the Collegiate Times was one of the only news outlets to have direct access to personal student conversations.

Dan Reimold, a college journalism scholar who runs the well-known blog “College Media Matters”, studied newspaper’s coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting and spoke with multiple Collegiate Times staff members. He said the Collegiate Times was the first innovative and intensive, real time campus journalism reporting feat. “They were quicker, and for the most part, more accurate at providing better information and a wider swath of revealing information,” Reimold said. “Again and again, everything you would see was ‘According to the Collegiate Times’ ” (D. Reimold, personal communication, January 6, 2014). Reimold also said the newspaper was the first to release the documents related to the shooting on its website.

The local Roanoke Times also excelled in their knowledge of the area and ties to the community – much like the Collegiate Times. However, they focused more on the community as a whole in addition to the student population. As Donna Banks, of the Roanoke Times, said, the newspaper covered a wedding taking place on the Virginia Tech campus five days after the shooting, which the national media didn’t have the interest or knowledge for. However, the local newspaper fell behind on some leads because they weren’t as aggressive as the national outlets – mainly to keep up their source and local relationships.

While the national papers lacked the sources and knowledge of the area, they surpassed the smaller newspapers with their resources and highly trained staff. While slow initially, national newspapers found their footing later on in the weeks and months to follow. The Pulitzer Prize the national Washington Post won for their coverage of the shooting demonstrates this.

### **Sandusky conclusions**

The idea of the campus crisis and scandal is a category of news that always excites Reimold, because he said it “crystalizes what’s fantastic about college media and bleeds into the advantages they have.” He said the perfect example of this was the Daily Collegian’s coverage of the Sandusky scandal, and after countless interviews with Collegian staff members, he said they brought an insiders perspective to the proceedings – one that outside media lacked.

After analyzing countless newspaper, Reimold said he found the Collegian and the local Centre Daily Times were the “lead dogs.” “The outside media was nipping at the heels. They were able to get big exclusives every once in awhile, but otherwise did not have access to campus sources,” he said (D. Reimold, personal communication, January 6, 2014). It is also worth noting that the other local paper, the Patriot-News, won a Pulitzer prize for their coverage of the scandal, beating out other national sources.

While the national media did do many things better – such as ESPN and the New York Times getting exclusive interviews with Sandusky – he said the tone was more negative toward Penn State. “There was almost a gleeful stomping over the body is how I described it. There was a perverse excitement coursing through some of the tone of the coverage that you would see,” Reimold said. As someone who has read “every word” of the Collegian’s coverage, Reimold said it was very even-handed and didn’t sensationalize.

In this case, the national media was able to get more exclusives than the local and collegiate newspapers – a trend still shown today. While ESPN and the New York Times were able to get exclusive interviews with Sandusky at the time the scandal broke, Dottie

Sandusky – Jerry’s husband – is still giving interviews to CNN and the Today Show today. When big scandals break such as the Sandusky case, they key players tend to flock to a national audience to get their message out. Joe Drape, of the New York Times, said the national newspaper simply had more resources and “30 years on the college newspaper collectively.” “We do this full time, [student journalists] are trying to get through college,” Drape said.

### **Harvard cheating scandal conclusions**

Unlike the other case studies, here was one where the student newspaper actually broke the story. The Harvard Crimson was tipped off by students way before the local and national papers knew anything about it. They continued to stay on top of the story and continually broke information.

Unlike the Virginia Tech shooting and the Sandusky scandal, the Harvard scandal did not have the draw to pull in a national audience. As Mary Carmichael, of the Boston Globe, said, it was the story of the year for the Crimson, but not for anyone else. Though the New York Times didn’t break anything, they did nationalize the story. Richard Pérez-Peña, of the New York Times, said after the Harvard scandal broke, they wrote a bigger story on cheating in general at universities across the country – one that the local Boston Herald or even the Harvard Crimson might not have had the resources to do.

### **Parting thoughts**

This analysis has proven there is a need and a chosen niche for collegiate, local and national newspapers. There are strengths and weaknesses in all of the outlets, but when a calamity hits a college campus, each has a unique approach to coverage.

In the end, it can be harder on college journalists to succeed because they lack the prestige a national newspaper has. Washington Post reporter Julie Zauzmer, and former Harvard Crimson managing editor, said it has been easier for her to obtain sources when she gives the Washington Post's name (J. Zauzmer, personal communication, January 31, 2014). As a college reporter, Zauzmer said she saw public relations people at Harvard as people who would stand in her way. Even though she's only been in professional, national journalism for a few months, her view has changed. Now, she said they are schedulers who actually set up an interview with the people she wants to talk to. "Hey, I didn't change as a reporter, and I'm not much better than I was a year or two ago," she said. "All that changed is now I say I'm from the Washington Post instead of the Harvard Crimson." But the fact that college reporters tend to do so much with so little help is remarkable. There is an advantage to knowing the campus and being there first, Zauzmer said.

In the end, though, national newspapers seem to – at least initially – rely on college newspapers. Drape, of the New York Times, said when scandals and crisis occur, national newspapers usually go to the college paper and either try to hire a student journalist to help them out, or talk to them to get a feel of the campus. He said college papers are also used as guideposts to keep up and to help national, outside journalists figure out where to look and who/what the college paper knows. The local papers don't get as much attention because national outlets aren't looking to lift reporters from them, but they are definitely reading them, Drape said

Drape said it's a give and take – the national media help the college newspapers in the long run because it's a continuing a part of college reporters' education – they get to see what national news outlets do and how they do it.

“College newspapers can help you see if it passes the smell test,” Drape said.

“They are very valuable resources.”

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Belculfine, L. (2011). The Fall of Giants [Editorial]. *The Daily Collegian*. Retrieved from <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/opinion/editorials>.
- Holody, K., Park, S. & Zhang, X. (2012). Race in Media Coverage of School Shootings: A Parallel Application of Framing Theory and Attribute Agenda Setting. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89(3), 475-494.
- Kurtz, H. (2008). The Post Wins 6 Pulitzer Prizes. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.
- Pérez-Peña, R. (2013). Students Disciplined in Harvard Scandal. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>.
- Ricchiardi, S. (2007). Hometown Horror. *American Journalism Review*, 29(3), 12-13.
- Ritter, C. (2007). Shooting Shocks Campus. *The Collegiate Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.collegiatetimes.com/news>.
- Robbins, R. (2012). Harvard Investigates “Unprecedented” Academic Dishonesty Case. *The Harvard Crimson*. Retrieved from <http://www.thecrimson.com>.
- Solomon, G. (2011). Slow to React. *American Journalism Review*, 33(3), 28-51.

## **ACADEMIC VITA**

Kristin Stoller  
301 S. Pugh Street  
Apartment 611  
State College, Pa. 16801  
kstoller77@gmail.com

---

### **Education**

**The Pennsylvania State University** – Class of 2014

B.A. Journalism, College of Communications

Minors: Theatre, College of Arts and Architecture

French, College of the Liberal Arts

Schreyer Honors College

### **Honors and Awards**

**The Hearst Journalism Awards Program**

-Placed seventh out of 148 in the Feature Writing category for a story on Newtown, Conn., one year later.

**Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence Award**

-Won third place in the General News Reporting category.

### **Association Memberships/Activities**

**The Daily Collegian**

-Served as the managing editor, metro editor, police/fire/courts reporter, municipal government reporter and greets reporter during her time at the independent daily student newspaper.

## **Professional Experience**

### **The New Haven Register** - Freelancer (May–June 2013)

-Wrote about a variety of local issues, including the six-month anniversary of the Newtown, Conn. shootings.

### **USA TODAY** - Freelancer (Winter 2012/13) and Content Intern (Summer 2011)

-Covered the aftermath and vigils of the elementary school shooting in Newtown, Conn.

-Wrote the Tuesday Business Travel page for the major national daily.

### **The Hartford Courant** - News Intern (Summer 2012)

-Covered and wrote stories relating to the town of Enfield and feature stories about Hartford and other Connecticut towns.