



Everything Jersey

Rowan University one of three colleges to partner with NJTV network

Published: Sunday, December 18, 2011, 4:00 AM



By **Carly Q. Romalino/Gloucester County Times**

Rowan University and three other New Jersey colleges have signed on as "content bureaus" with NJTV in a move that network executives say will help provide viewers with more local content while granting students the opportunity to gain broadcasting experience.

Rowan University, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, William Paterson University and Brookdale Community College in Monmouth County signed contracts with the network earlier this month.

NJTV's general manager John Servidio said more colleges in the state could be on board as content bureaus through 2012.

"There are another half dozen more schools that are about to sign," said Servidio, whose network plans to continue contacting New Jersey colleges and universities to participate. "Eventually, we want to contact all the schools."

Talks with Glassboro-based Rowan University began in the summer, according to Dr. Lorin Basden Arnold, dean of the College of Communications. The contract was signed in early December, and the network-college partnership with Rowan kicks off at the start of the Spring semester.

Bozorth Hall, Rowan's communications building, will house office space for NJTV's reporters working on stories in the area to put together and file content.

NJTV is also set to outfit the school's TV studio with equipment that will allow network broadcasters based at a Montclair State University studio to interview experts in the Glassboro studio.

"If there is a political figure or an expert, or even a Rowan faculty member that has expertise in a certain area that [NJTV] can use for shows, they can do that remotely," Arnold said.

The agreement with NJTV also includes student involvement in news gathering and content, according to the dean. Arnold expects students studying radio, television, film, and broadcast journalism to be called out into the field to take "B-roll," or background, footage to be shown on air during newscasts.

Other assignments could be doled out to students, and there could be a chance for students to generate and report on stories that will air.

"They'll get to learn a lot in day-to-day practice," said Servidio.

While Rowan could gain some state-wide exposure through the partnership, Arnold said the "student experience was the primary motivator" to get the agreement off the ground.

"We felt like it was too valuable an opportunity for them to pass up, and it opens the door for future partnerships or extending our partnership," Arnold said. "It's going to be exciting to see how it plays out and what other possibilities are available."

While college students in New Jersey stand to benefit, Assemblyman John Burzichelli, who has opposed NJTV's replacement of the former New Jersey Network from the beginning, thinks the network-college partnerships are a "stop gap measure" to patch holes in state-specific news content.

"New Jersey is void of a reliable, professionally run news-gathering organization that focuses on New Jersey," said Burzichelli, D-3 of Paulsboro. "That is why NJN was founded 40 years ago, and that is needed even more now because electronic media is so important.

"I still think we are way behind from where we were," he added.

The assemblyman said NJTV's product is not going to be what New Jersey viewers are accustomed to nor at the standard that they expect.

Since NJN went dark on June 30 and NJTV went live in July, the network has come under fire for missing Gov. Chris Christie's announcement that he would not run for president and, instead, airing a children's cartoon. Many national TV stations, as well as local ones, did broadcast the New Jersey governor's news conference.

In a state that is sandwiched between two big-time news markets — New York City and Philadelphia — Burzichelli maintains that New Jersey needs highly professional and experienced news gatherers.

"It's a good thing that the students have a chance to be involved. But to have students — essentially, free labor — as the backbone of a news-gathering organization means it's not necessarily going to be high-end," Burzichelli said.

"Someone learning the trade is much different from someone who knows the trade."

While students will be a part of the news-gathering process, Servidio said the network will not be "putting anything on the air that hasn't reached a certain level" of quality.

"The students aren't solely giving us content," Servidio said. "We have four reporters in the field every day. The students are complementing our repertoire of professional, seasoned journalists."

However, the network will be "very open to any idea or stories they [the students] have that are worthwhile," Servidio added.

"It's like getting hundreds of reporters out in the field that we can't afford to have," he said.

While Servidio envisions the partnerships expanding to other schools in the state, Arnold sees Rowan discussing the network partnership as a credit-bearing experience for the students. Until then, she said, broadcasting majors will be involved on a volunteer basis only.

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