

Workshop Focuses on Watchdog Journalism

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rrivet@tulane.edu

As newsrooms across the country continue to slash their budgets, the future of investigative journalism is increasingly open to speculation. Against this backdrop, the Tulane Department of Communication hosted a workshop on ethnic media watchdog reporting.



New Orleans journalists Lee Zurik, left, of WVUE-TV, and Gordon Russell, center, of *The Times-Picayune*, talk at the journalism workshop. At right is Doug Haddix of Investigative Reporters and Editors. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

The Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) organization presented the workshop. The non-profit organization is dedicated to improving the quality of investigative reporting. According to one estimate, there are currently more than 3,000 ethnic media outlets in the United States serving 51 million adults.

Doug Haddix, IRE's training director, commended the small group in attendance for not giving up on journalism and recognizing the importance of investigative work.

"I'm glad to see you here," Haddix said. "I'm glad to see you're not buying the doom

and gloom about our industry. It's still important work we're doing."

Students and working press gathered Saturday and Sunday (Jan. 23â€“24) to hear sessions on requesting official records, covering immigration issues and holding officials accountable in the ongoing rebuilding of New Orleans.

Speakers included investigative journalists from across the country, as well as two prominent reporters from the New Orleans area ? WVUE Fox 8's Lee Zurik and *Times-Picayune* city editor Gordon Russell.

Russell and Zurik fielded questions from the attendees about how they navigate city hall bureaucracy and develop sources. When asked how journalism was changing, both agreed that newsroom budget-cutting would not lead to the demise of investigative reporting.

"I think the future of journalism is in the longer, investigative, enterprise journalism," Russell said.

Zurik said it was "refreshing" to be recognized by members of the public after the airing of a series of investigative stories he did on the city-run New Orleans Affordable Homeownership Corp.

"People didn't recognize me because I was on TV," Zurik said. "They recognized me because they were paying attention to the story."

That investigation earned Zurik the Peabody Award, the Dupont Award and an IRE Gold Medal.