

Elena Sassower, Director
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)
www.judgewatch.org
914-421-1200
February 17, 2023

Dear Ms. Sassower:

This letter is written in response to the records request you made to The Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism (the “College”) via e-mails dated December 29th and 30th, 2022, pursuant to the New York Freedom of Information Law (“FOIL”).

Specifically, you requested:

- (1) records reflecting the date on which the News Integrity Initiative, [publicly announced by CUNY J-School on April 3, 2017](#) and further elaborated upon by [Professor Jeff Jarvis’ April 4, 2017 blog](#), was [eliminated as “a stand-alone entity” and “refocus\[ed\]” to “improving diversity, equity, and inclusion \(DEI\) practices in the news business”](#) – and, additionally, the person who proposed same; the reasons therefor; the persons who approved it; and CUNY J-School’s public announcement about the change;
- (2) records reflecting whether the News Integrity Initiative received further funding during its existence as a “stand-alone entity”, over and beyond the initial \$14 million from philanthropists and other private funders.
- (3) records as to the amount of funding the New Integrity Initiative expended during its existence as a “stand-alone entity” – and how much remained when it was eliminated and “refocus[ed]”.
- (4) records as to whether the “applied research and projects” funded by the News Integrity Initiative pertaining to “getting media to listen to the public” -- the objective highlighted by [Professor Jarvis’ April 4, 2017 blog](#), thereafter phrased as [“inclusive civic discourse”](#), [“inclusive community conversations”](#), [“inclusive civic dialogue”](#) – was inclusive of members of the public who were not merely the “audience” or “consumers” of media, but who had direct, first-hand interaction with its journalists, editors, publishers, and owners,

and who had filed complaints with them and lawsuits against them pertaining to their news reporting and editorializing;

- (5) records reflecting the names of the J-School professors engaged in scholarship of press performance – and whether such scholarship has included:
 - (a) examination of complaints filed by members of the public with the press pertaining to its news reporting and editorializing – and how they are handled.
 - (b) examination of lawsuits filed by members of the public against the press pertaining to its news reporting and editorializing – and how they are handled.
 - (c) qualitative assessment of press reporting and editorializing on New York City and New York State governance and whether it enables citizens to intelligently vote in elections – and for which offices;
 - (d) qualitative assessment of whether philanthropically and publicly-funded non-profit press, such as [The City](#), [Gothamist](#), [WNYC](#), [Gotham Gazette](#), [City Limits](#), [New York Focus](#), [Investigative Post](#), [Rochester Beacon](#), [Pro Publica](#) are, in fact, non-partisan, as they implicitly and explicitly purport themselves to be, and operating within the parameters of their §501(c)(3) tax-exempt status;
 - (e) critical examination of such “legacy” press as the [New York Times](#), [New York Daily News](#), [New York Post](#), [Newsday](#), [Gannett](#), [Albany Times Union](#), [Buffalo News](#), [Syracuse Post-Standard](#) – and such other press as [The New York Law Journal](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), [City Journal](#), [Bloomberg](#), [Crains New York Business](#), [Politico](#) – with respect to reporting on non-partisan, public integrity, and constitutional issues pertaining to New York State and New York City governance – and the records, in office, of incumbent public officers.
- (6) records reflecting who are the professors teaching legal journalism and reporting on the courts – and why the J-School has no concentration in this area.
- (7) records reflecting who are the professors teaching state governance – and why the J-School has no concentration in this area, in contrast to its concentration in “urban reporting” – and why, seemingly, it offers not a single course on New York State governance.
- (8) records with contact information for the members of the “CUNY Journalism Council” of which the J-School is “an originator and active partner” and consisting of “the directors and interested faculty of all undergraduate journalism programs across CUNY”, or, alternatively, contact information for CUNY’s “14 undergraduate journalism programs”, with which the J-School is involved, referred to the 2019 [“Self-Study Report for Accreditation in Journalism and Mass Communications”](#) (at pp. 28, 52, 127, 130-1);

(9) records as to who put a block on e-mail from elena@judgewatch.org, resulting in the bounce-back of the below November 17th e-mail, thereafter successfully re-sent, an hour later, from elenaruth@aol.com.

The College has conducted a comprehensive search and has provided the following responses:

Responses to Request #1, #2, #3, #4, #6 (first part) #8 are documented within Attachment "A" and PDF Labeled "Choi Email" attached.

Documents responsive to Request #5, #6 (second part), #7 and its subdivisions do not exist.

With respect to Requests #9, the College has located documents responsive to your request, however, they are exempt from disclosure under FOIL § 87.2(a) as they include advise from Counsel.

If you disagree with any ruling made in connection with this request, you can appeal to the General Counsel and Sr. Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs, Mr. Derek Davis, at the CUNY Central Office located at 205 East 42nd Street, New York, New York 10017.

Sincerely,

Richard R. White
General Counsel
The Craig Newmark School of Journalism

Attachment A

1. "Records reflecting the date on which the News Integrity Initiative, publicly announced by CUNY J-School on April 3, 2017 and further elaborated upon by Professor Jeff Jarvis' April 4, 2017 blog, was eliminated as "a stand-alone entity" and "refocus[ed]" to "improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices in the news business" – and, additionally, the person who proposed same; the reasons therefor; the persons who approved it; and CUNY J-School's public announcement about the change".

Response: Said records are published on the Newmark School of Journalism website: https://www.journalism.cuny.edu/search/?q_as=news%20integrity%20initiative

2. "Records reflecting whether the News Integrity Initiative received further funding during its existence as a "stand-alone entity", over and beyond the initial \$14 million from philanthropists [sic] .and other private funders".

Response: No such records exist beyond the initial funding of \$13.8 million received.

3. "Records as to the amount of funding the New Integrity Initiative expended during its existence as a "stand-alone entity" – and how much remained when it was eliminated and "refocus[ed]".

Response: At the completion of the News Integrity Initiative the remaining balance was approximately \$122 thousand dollars.

4. "Records as to whether the "applied research and projects" funded by the News Integrity Initiative pertaining to "getting media to listen to the public" -- the objective highlighted by Professor Jarvis' April 4, 2017 blog, thereafter phrased as "inclusive civic discourse", "inclusive community conversations", "inclusive civic dialogue" – was inclusive of members of the public who were not merely the "audience" or "consumers" of media, but who had direct, first-hand interaction with its journalists, editors, publishers, and owners, and who had filed complaints with them and lawsuits against them pertaining to their news reporting and editorializing;".

Response: Please see attached email dated Nov 3, 2020, from Jennifer Choi with the final update.

6. "Records reflecting who are the professors teaching legal journalism and reporting on the courts – and why the J-School has no concentration in this area;"

Response: <https://www.journalism.cuny.edu/faculty-staff-directory/?filters=841>

- 8 “Records with contact information for the members of the “CUNY Journalism Council” of which the J-School is “an originator and active partner” and consisting of “the directors and interested faculty of all undergraduate journalism programs across CUNY”, or, alternatively, contact information for CUNY’s “14 undergraduate journalism programs”, with which the J-School is involved, referred to the 2019 “Self-Study Report for Accreditation in Journalism and Mass Communications” (at pp. 28, 52, 127, 130-1);

Response: See below the links to the members of the CUNY Journalism Council:

Hunter - <https://fm.hunter.cuny.edu/journalism/>

City College - <https://www.cuny.edu/journalism>

John Jay - <https://jjay.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2014-2015/2014-2015-Undergraduate-Bulletin/Programs-of-Study/Journalism/Journalism-Minor>

BMCC - <https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/academics/departments/english/requirements/>

Kingsborough CC - <https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/academicdepartments/english/journalism.html>

Queens - <https://www.qc.cuny.edu/admissions/programs-journalism/>

Lehman - <https://www.lehman.edu/academics/arts-humanities/jct/>

York - <https://www.york.cuny.edu/english/program-courses/journalism-program>

Baruch - <https://weissman.baruch.cuny.edu/weissman-academic-departments/journalism-and-the-writing-professions/>

Brooklyn College

- <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/academics/schools/mediaarts/departments/trem/majors.php>

CSI - <https://www.csi.cuny.edu/academics-and-research/departments-programs/media-culture>

SPS - <https://sps.cuny.edu/academics/undergraduate/bachelor-arts-communication-and-media-ba>

LaGuardia CC - <https://www.laguardia.edu/journalism/>