MEDIA LITERACY & DISINFORMATION TRAINING SEMINAR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE MEDIA LITERACY & DISINFORMATION TRAINING SEMINAR, SPONSORED BY THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN MEXICO CITY AND HOSTED BY OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY, SUCCESSFULLY BROUGHT TOGETHER 15 DIVERSE MEXICAN PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS FOR AN INTENSIVE, THREE-WEEK PROGRAM AIMED AT COMBATING DIS/MISINFORMATION.

Key Program Highlights:

1. **Comprehensive Curriculum:** The program featured a two-week online course with 12 modules, followed by a one-week on-site seminar at OSU in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

2. **Expert-Led Content:** 17 lectures and 8 expert interviews provided cutting-edge insights into media literacy and disinformation.

3. **Hands-On Learning:** 5 workshops and 2 guest panels offered practical skills and real-world perspectives.

4. **Cultural Immersion:** 7 cultural activities fostered cross-cultural understanding and networking.

5. **Collaborative Projects:** 4 public service announcement projects were developed, addressing real-world misinformation challenges in Mexico.

Outcomes and Impact:

- Participants reported significant improvements in their understanding of media literacy and ability to combat misinformation.
- The program fostered strong networks among participants and with OSU faculty.
- Post-project outcomes include media coverage in 4 notable outlets and the initiation of 2 transnational collaborations.
- Participants expressed high confidence in their ability to share knowledge and implement strategies in their communities.

Future Directions:

- Recommendations for future iterations include extending cultural interactions, enhancing technical skills training, and including diverse disciplines in discussions on dis/misinformation (e.g., psychology, political science, data science, etc.).
- The program's success suggests the potential for expansion and adaptation to address misinformation challenges in other regions.

Overall, the Media Literacy & Disinformation Training Seminar at OSU has demonstrated its effectiveness in equipping participants with critical skills and knowledge, while also fostering lasting international partnerships in the fight against misinformation.

ONLINE PROGRAM CONTENT SUMMARY

The online portion of the program provided a comprehensive foundation in media literacy and dis/misinformation, preparing participants for the in-person seminar. It consisted of 12 modules covering various aspects of the topic, from basic concepts to advanced strategies for combating misinformation. The content was delivered through a mix of lectures, expert interviews, and interactive discussion boards, ensuring a diverse and engaging learning experience.

12 MODULES

The online course content featured twelve modules to orient and prepare participants for conversations and future group project work on the subject of dis/misinformation:

1. Bienvendio, Comenzando con el Curso!
2. Media and Information Literacy 101
3. The Anatomy of False Information
4. The Psychology of Dis/Misinformation
5. Dis/Misinformation and Social Media
6. Platforms, Policymakers & Case Studies
7. Fact-Checking and Verification Techniques
8. AI & Dis/Misinformation
9. Creating a Resilient Information Ecosystem
10. Preparing for the In-Person Seminar on Campus!
11. Group Project Dis/Misinformation PSA Pitch
12. Photos/Videos and Resources.

Several modules were devoted to welcoming and preparing participants for success in navigating the online course content and the in-person seminar as well as outlining expectations for the group project presentations (viz., modules 1, 10, 11 & 12). The remaining eight modules featured in-depth content on dis/misinformation designed to guide participants through base terminology and concepts all the way through conversations on sophisticated nuances in how dis/misinformation disrupts community networks and impacts physiological coherence, and how to build resiliency against it.

17 LECTURES

The lecture content within each module was led by faculty experts in the School of Media & Strategic Communications (SMSC) and the English Language and Intercultural Center (ELIC) and shot in the College of Arts and Sciences Studio to enhance product value and ease of watching. All lectures were closed-captioned to assist participants whose primary language was not English in accessing the content. Each lecture was curated with state-of-the-field knowledge covering a wide range of topics aforementioned in the modules section. The specific lecture titles are listed below:

- Introduction to Dis/Misinformation: Parts 1 & 2
- What is Critical Thinking?
- What is Media Literacy?
- Eight Critical Thinking Strategies
- Introduction to Propaganda
- History of Propaganda
- Propaganda Tactics
- Misinformation and Indigenous Languages
- How We Create Emotions to Make Sense of Stimuli
- How Dis/Misinformation Hijacks Our Emotions
- Micro-targeting and Emotional Triggers
- Misinformation Effect
- Heart Rate Variability: Attuning to Biological Feedback when Consuming Media
- AI & Dis/Misinformation
- Creating a Resilient Information Ecosystem: Parts 1 & 2

8 EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Participants learned from leading experts in the study of mis- and disinformation with truly global perspectives. Each expert interview, led by an SMSC faculty member, provided an engaging exchange format with insightful commentary from the experts. Three experts had expertise in mis- and disinformation in Latin American or Spanish language contexts. The other five brought global perspectives with expertise in identification elements, the rapid spread of dis/misinformation, algorithmic challenges and opportunities, and policy.

Masato Kajimoto, Ph.D., Journalism & Media Studies Centre, U. of Hong Kong: *Features of Dis- & Misinformation*

Charo Sádaba Chalezquer, Ph.D., U. de Navarra: *Dis- & Misinformation Among Youth and the Elderly*

Michael Mosser, Ph.D., Global (Dis)Information Lab, U. of Texas at Austin: *Dis/Misinformation in the Era of Globalization*

Alanna Dvorak, M.A., Poynter Institute: *The Importance of Fact Checking*

Trinna Leong, M.S., JomCheck: *The Role of Platforms and Policymakers in Mitigating Dis/Misinformation*

Esteban Ponce de Léon, Digital Forensic Research Lab, Atlantic Council: *The Digital Forensics of Misinformation in Latin America*

Dymples Leong, Centre of Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies: *Algorithms & Social Media Networks*

Sebastian Valenzuela, Ph.D., Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile: *Dis/Misinformation in Latin America*

135 DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS

The program team utilized the Padlet platform to host four video-based conversations with 135 individual posts from participants and instructors.

1. **Introductions:** Participants were asked to discuss their interests in the program, their backgrounds, and what they hoped to learn. The conversation generated 36 posts.
2. **The Paradox of Information Abundance and Misinformation:** Participants were asked to discuss the information conundrum faced by citizens in modernity, namely that the rise in information access has accelerated the rise in false and misleading content. The conversation generated 34 posts.
3. **Platforms and Policymakers:** Participants were asked to discuss how the balance between government regulation and self-regulation by social media platforms might impact the effectiveness of combating disinformation. The conversation generated 33 posts.
4. **Building a Resilient Information Environment:** Participants were asked to discuss the biggest challenges they are facing in strengthening their community's news and information ecosystem. The conversation generated 32 posts.

COURSE ANALYTICS

Analytic features in the learning management system, Canvas, allow for a more detailed description of how students accessed the available course content. Though no formal assignments or participation requirements were mandated to students, page views and other course analytics demonstrate the amount of viewership the content received.

- The total number of page views for course content was 1479, with an average of 99 page views per participant over the three weeks.
- The course content was accessed 785 unique times, with an average of 52 unique files, links, and module contents accessed per participant over the three weeks.

SITE VISIT PROGRAM CONTENT SUMMARY

The on-site portion of the program at Oklahoma State University offered participants a hands-on, immersive experience in applying the knowledge gained from the online modules. It featured workshops, guest panels, group projects, and cultural activities designed to deepen understanding and foster collaboration among participants. This blend of academic and practical experiences provided a well-rounded approach to addressing the challenges of misinformation in real-world contexts.

5 WORKSHOPS

The site visit portion of the program featured five workshops designed to build group collaboration among the participants. In these workshops, the students developed original public service announcement projects, integrating novel concepts and strategies related to countering dis/misinformation.

Workshop topics included:

- Introduction to Mis- and Disinformation Public Service Announcement (PSA) Project
- Evaluating Online Sources
- Creating Counter-Messaging Campaigns
- Group project check-ins
- Recognizing the Biological Impacts of Emotionally Charged Media Content

2 PANELS WITH 9 GUEST SPEAKERS

The site visit portion of the program featured two expert panels with regional journalists and public relations professionals discussing the challenges of dis/misinformation in a professional context and the strategies they employ to meet and combat these challenges. The panels and guest speakers are detailed below.

Panel 1: Sourcing and Verifying Information
- **Clifton Adcock**, Senior Reporter, Oklahoma nonprofit newspaper The Frontier
- **Brett Dawson**, Media Advisor, O'Colly Media Group, OSU's student news organization
- **Rachel Hubbard**, Executive Director, KOSU Public Radio Oklahoma

Panel 2: Misinformation and Crisis Communication
- **Amanda Clinton**, Principal/Owner, A.R. Clinton
- **Brittany Harlow,** Founder and Director, Verified News Network
- **Taylor Ketchum**, Vice President, Jones PR
- **Lance Lantham**, Chief Communications Officer, Oklahoma State University
- **Sheila Moore**, Principal/Owner, sixPR
- **Sam Powell**, Senior Account Manager, sixPR

4 PARTICIPANT-DEVELOPED PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA) PROJECTS

Truth with Roots: Take a Breath Before You Share
Project design focused on informing indigenous communities in Chiapas on best practice strategies in assessing information before you share it. The project proposed partnering with local teachers and community leaders to disseminate the campaign messages.

ALVuelo
Project design focused on providing fact-checked content in everyday language for working-class Mexicans. Recognizing the time constraints that may prevent working-class laborers from verifying news content, ALVuelo is a curation hub and fact-checking service partnered with larger fact-checking institutions to orient citizens to the major news items of the day with quality information. The service also provides links to broad coverage of a given topic, should the user wish to further explore the information on their own.

PICAPORTEALTRAMITE.ORG
The project design targeted Mexican audiences who might be potential victims of fraud when attempting to obtain official documents for travel or identity verification. The campaign used the call to action "Fácil y seguro, entra a picaporter.org" and identified several partners, including the American Chamber of Commerce of México,

Fundacíon Solidaridad Mexicano Americana, and Secretaría de Economía to build a comprehensive portal and message strategy to prevent online victimization.

#LaVerdadDeTikTok: The Algorithm Doesn't Care About You
The project targeted a broad audience of TikTok users across Mexico, using humor to create awareness that social media algorithms are not designed to provide truthful information to users. Using the phrase, "The algorithm doesn't care about truth, but we should!" and with a call to action to check information across multiple sources, this campaign was voted first place by participants and faculty judges.

7 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The site visit portion of the program also featured a number of formal and informal events designed to strengthen interpersonal networks between participants, faculty, and OSU students, as well as expose participants to daily life in the southwestern United States.

1. **Network Meet and Greet**: Introductions to OSU faculty and students at the Wes Watkins Center
2. **Campus Tour**: With OSU Global students and SMSC professors, participants toured landmarks across the OSU campus.
3. **Visit to Mexican Consulate, Oklahoma City**: With Consulate Endurne Nerea and staff, participants were guided through the growing links between Oklahoma and Mexico, engaged on the purpose of the consulate in Oklahoma City and given a facilities tour.
4. **Visit to Bricktown and Chisom Creek, Oklahoma City**: With OSU faculty, participants walked historic Bricktown and enjoyed pizza at Empire Slice House and ice cream at Chisom Creek.
5. **Movie Night**: With OSU faculty, participants watched the documentary film, *FAKE: Searching for Truth in the Age of Misinformation.*
6. **Coffee with the Cooleys**: Participants were invited to the home of Drs. Asya and Skye Cooley for a late-night discussion on misinformation and global politics over coffee and scones.
7. **Visit to Stonecloud Brewery**: With OSU faculty, participants were invited for an evening of refreshments at Stonecould Brewery in Stillwater, Oklahoma to discuss networking and building future iterations of the training seminar.

1 CAPSTONE PRESENTATION

The program concluded with OSU Global Dean Randy Kluver speaking to participants about the importance of dis/misinformation training and the necessary partnerships between the US and Mexico to further and protect democracy on the North American continent. Each participant was awarded a certificate of completion in recognition of their work in the program. The team members from the highest peer-rated PSA were also awarded MESA Challenge coins in recognition of their excellence.

POST-ASSESSMENT SUMMARIES

Post-program assessments, including focus groups and individual interviews, revealed overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants. Key themes that emerged included the program's transformative impact on participants' understanding of misinformation, the value of diverse perspectives within the cohort, and the practical applicability of skills learned. Suggestions for improvement centered around extending the program duration, increasing interaction with American students, and incorporating more technical skills. Overall, participants felt better equipped to combat misinformation in their personal and professional lives, indicating the program's success in achieving its objectives.

1 FOCUS GROUP

Immediately after the Capstone Presentation, participants took part in a post-assessment focus group designed to draw out program highlights, weak points, and areas of improvement from their perspectives. Summaries of the key themes discussed by participants are presented for each question asked in the post-assessment.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PROGRAM TO A FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE?

Participants consistently described the program as a transformative and enriching experience that brought together a diverse group of Mexicans to tackle the pressing issues of misinformation in modernity. They emphasized the program's comprehensive nature, combining online learning with in-person workshops at Oklahoma State University, as being a unique and powerful learning experience.

One participant encapsulated the experience: "*It was awesome... now I can see like, wow, we're all Mexicans, but we all have different perspectives and ideas of what Mexico is. And it's very, very, very interesting and important to address all of these issues.*" Another described the program as a "*three-week seminar where 15 Mexicans were chosen with different contexts, ages, professions... where we got a great course prepared by amazing teachers and [heard from] experts who are looking for tools for us to bring home and try to reproduce them in our daily lives.*"

The participants highlighted the program's impact beyond individual growth, emphasizing its potential for broader societal change. One participant noted, "*It was life-changing... the connections you make here, the people you meet, having the chance to be at another university out of your country and [absorbing] all of these different contexts. It's very enriching.*"

WAS THIS PROGRAM RELEVANT TO YOUR ACADEMIC OR PROFESSIONAL GOALS?

Participants unanimously agreed that the program was highly **relevant** to their academic and professional pursuits. They particularly valued the **practical** tools and methodologies taught for verifying information and combating disinformation, seeing immediate applications in their respective fields.

One participant mentioned the program's potential impact on their research: "*I might add something about misinformation and human security… maybe a chapter of my dissertation… I took a lot of notes of things that I want to use not only on the radio but… also in my practice as a professor and as an academic.*" Another participant working as an academic in digital media noted, "*I will incorporate a lot of new things I learned in this seminar. As I told you, I run [a related lab] in my university, and I will definitely talk to my colleagues that we have to take different approaches.*"

The program's relevance extended beyond the journalism and communication fields. A participant involved in policy work stated, "*This semester I'm going to work in policies that can combine all these strategies. Because you guys gave me a lot of material from TikTok to communities and webpages and [strategies] used in misinforming people…as well as… all these different points of view. It will help me a lot… all the materials [and] mixed methodologies allowed me to perceive more angles, not only regarding the issue [but] regarding more topics, like Indigenous communities or marginalized communities, and how the deepfakes [work].*" Comments like these highlight the program's broad applicability across various sectors dealing with information integrity and the spread of misinformation across platforms.

DID YOU HAVE ENOUGH OPPORTUNITIES TO GET TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW PARTICIPANTS?

While participants felt they bonded quickly due to their shared cultural background, there were mixed responses regarding the opportunities to get to know each other. Many appreciated the organic connections formed, but some suggested more structured networking opportunities and an additional site visit day without as much formal programming as the rest of the week.

Several participants noted the program's intentional design to build networks among participants. One respondent explained, "*The logistics were very smart... when you took us, for example, to Oklahoma City to take a walk and we were walking, we were talking to each other... that makes it way easier, you know, to talk, to joke, to be friends*." Other participants noted the importance of the dorm design in allowing team collaboration as well as working together on the PSA project allowing them to collaboratively bond.

Most participants appreciated their seminar colleagues' diversity and found interaction with colleagues from different regions, industries, and career stages very valuable. When asked If they would have preferred to work with a group that was more homogeneous, one respondent stated, "*I think having a diverse group was way better because, I mean, this is also how the world works. We're going out to the world and we're not finding people that think just like us. So having this arrangement of getting to know people who are different in their careers, in their day-to-day, or even the ways that they think, it's like an approach of how the future will be. And to be honest, it was really, really rich because... having journalists, having lawyers, having experts in transparency made us aware of this problem in several ways, [providing] a complete view of the problem, and, as a result, better solutions.*"

However, some participants suggested improvements. One recommendation was: "*Maybe having like a little chat before starting the program and saying, 'We chose you because you were this, you have these tools, these abilities,' and then starting to work with that*." This suggests a desire for more structured introductions to each participant's background and skills at the outset of the program to help create a broader vision of the network they are building. While the online discussion board served as a format for introductions, participants wanted to know more about their collective cohort and why they were each chosen.

Another participant added, "*For me, it wasn't enough time... Like getting here, we did, like, a brief presentation of who we are, and that was okay, but I would really like to... know the profile of everyone.*"

Overall, participants wanted more time to spend interpersonally, with several wishing for an extra day of the program that incorporated a sporting event and downtime from the rapid pace and demands of the typical daily project schedule.

IF YOU HAD BEEN IN CHARGE OF PLANNING THIS PROGRAM, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD CHANGE, ADD, OR REMOVE?

Participants offered several suggestions for improving the program. Future iterations of the program should consider **extending the duration** of the program. Additionally, the online component can be Improved by **reducing** the watch time for pre-recorded interviews (currently, roughly an hour per interview) and **hosting live events** where participants can stream in and ask questions, making the experience more **interactive** and inviting prior program alumni to attend to promote networking.

The most common recommendation for improvement was to extend the duration, especially the in-person component. One participant noted, "*I think if it was a bit longer, maybe even seven days would have been great. Like having one day just for the project, like the whole day for the project and stuff*."

Another key suggestion was to increase interaction with American students. A participant expressed, "*I would like to have more time and, a lot of more social connections with American students. I would like to spend time, you know, like with you [professors], for example, I would like to be more in touch with the American students, with people of my age, too.*"

Some participants also suggested improvements to the online component of the program. One participant recommended, "*I would change the [expert interview] Zoom sessions. It [would be better] live [than] to record and see the one-hour recording of these experts, because it was pretty interesting.*" This indicates a preference for live, interactive sessions over pre-recorded interviews.

There were also suggestions to include program participants and/or panelists with backgrounds in areas such as psychology, political science, and data sciences.

WHAT ACTIVITY OR ASSIGNMENT DID YOU FIND MOST VALUABLE?

Participants found the **practical**, **skill-building** nature of the program most valuable. The **cultural experiences**, such as the trip to Oklahoma City, were also mentioned as valuable components of the program, providing context and opportunities for **informal networking**.

The panel discussions emerged as a clear favorite. One participant enthusiastically stated, "*One of the best parts of the program*," while another added, "*They were amazing*." The diversity and expertise of the panelists were particularly appreciated.

Participants also valued the hands-on workshops and group projects. One participant noted, "*For example, today we were having this class in the morning with [professor] Skye [about] being aware of something that goes beyond just this social level or the academic level. Which how [can] you do this? You use this method. And being aware and having this knowledge of something that can connect with people outside my group is very, very important because it's a way that allows me to connect with the people I want to reach. There are parents of kids and kids that are not really interested in information or disinformation. They just want to go through their lives. And it's a breakthrough because I want to incorporate it in schools and daily living. So it was a huge model for me.*"

WHAT ACTIVITY OR ASSIGNMENT WAS LEAST VALUABLE?

Interestingly, **no specific activities** were mentioned as least valuable. However, as noted earlier, some participants found the **recorded online interviews** less engaging than potential live sessions. Some also mentioned that they would have appreciated **more time for group project work**, indicating that while the project experiences were valuable, time allocation could be improved.

DO YOU FEEL EQUIPPED TO ACTUALLY COLLABORATE WITH ONE ANOTHER, TO DEVELOP AND LAUNCH YOUR CAMPAIGN PLANS?

Participants' comments throughout the post-assessment discussion suggested a high level of **engagement** and **readiness to collaborate**. Many expressed **enthusiasm** about **applying what they learned** and **working together** in the future.

One participant noted, "*I see here that everybody is looking at how to use this for their communities or social environment and more social projection of what they are.*" Comments like this suggest that participants feel equipped and motivated to collaborate with one another on their campaign plans.

IF YOU COULD CHANGE SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THIS PROGRAM, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

In addition to earlier suggestions about program **duration, structure, and more diverse skill sets** among participants and/or panelists, some participants also expressed a desire for more interaction with the program instructors. Future iterations of the program should feature an **informal panel event** with the program instructors at a cultural venue, such as OSU's Research on Tap Series, where professors take questions on topics of interest from audience members at a local brewery.

As one participant noted, "*I also really miss having a panel with [the instructors] because I have a lot of questions... I missed [not having a] panel with you guys.*"

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Participants expressed deep appreciation for the diversity of the group, the cultural experiences provided, and the strong sense of community formed among their cohort.

One participant summed up the experience: "*It was fun, it was entertainment, it was rich. But I think it was really useful because all the amount of information that we received from you and your classes was creative, [it] was not boring.*" Another put it this way: "*I think all of you guys are really great. I love the topics and the conversations in the kitchen and in the class. And I think it will be a really remarkable memory for me in the future.*"

13 INDIVIDUAL POST-PROGRAM INTERVIEWS

The week immediately following the program, individual participants were contacted to take part in an exit interview designed to draw out program experiences, participation motivations, expectations, program impacts, and areas of improvement from their perspectives. Summaries of the key themes discussed by participants are presented for each question asked in the post-program interview.

WHAT THREE WORDS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE?

The participants consistently described their experience in positive terms, emphasizing the program's **educational value** and **personal impact**. Common themes included **knowledge acquisition**, **personal growth**, and **networking opportunities**.

Words like "*useful*," "*enriching*," "*critical*," "*awareness*," and "*connections*" were frequently mentioned. One participant summed up their experience as "Amazing, journey, friends," highlighting both the educational and social aspects of the program. Another participant described it as "*Helpful, important and engaging,*" reinforcing the program's perceived value and impact. The responses consistently reflected a very positive experience.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND WHY DID YOU SIGN UP TO PARTICIPATE?

Participants learned about the program through various channels, including **university communications**, **social media**, and **personal recommendations**. Many were drawn to the program due to its **relevance** to their academic or professional interests, particularly in areas such as journalism, international relations, and combating misinformation. One participant noted, "*I decided to participate because I believe that information is a key to change inequality,*" highlighting the program's perceived importance in addressing broader societal issues.

DID THIS PROGRAM MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

Overall, the program **not only met but often exceeded** participants' expectations. The consistently positive responses to this question indicate that the program was **well-designed** and **executed**, delivering **value** across multiple dimensions – from knowledge and skills acquisition to networking and personal growth opportunities. The responses indicate a **high level of satisfaction** with various aspects of the program, from its content to its structure and networking opportunities.

Many participants expressed that the experience surpassed their anticipations. One enthusiastically stated, "*Yes, absolutely. I mean, I was not expecting anything, to be honest, but it was just incredible since day one. And it was, it was just amazing.*" This response suggests that the program delivered value beyond the participant's initial expectations.

Another participant noted, "*Definitely. I think it has surpassed my expectations.*" They further elaborated on specific areas where the program exceeded expectations: "*I had the expectation of strategies and questions that we can ask ourselves to question the information that we get and discern. But I think it exceeded [my expectations] in how this program allowed us to connect with each other, not only with my colleagues but also with the professors.*" This response highlights that while participants expected to gain the practical skills offered, the program's ability to foster connections and create a collaborative learning environment was an unexpected and highly valued aspect.

Some participants noted that their expectations evolved as they engaged with the program. For instance, one participant said, "*I think [at first] I was a little bit lost about how this is going to end or how I [fit] the main purpose of this seminar. But after all that we did and all that we learned, I'm very happy with the results.*" This suggests that even when participants were initially uncertain about how the program's scope or objectives fit their skill sets, the actual experience proved to be highly satisfactory.

OVERALL, WOULD YOU SAY THIS PROGRAM IMPACTED YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF MEDIA LITERACY AND MISINFORMATION?

Participants unanimously agreed that the program **significantly impacted** their **understanding** and **awareness** of media literacy and misinformation. Many reported a **transformative** experience in how they approach information consumption and dissemination.

One participant highlighted the program's impact on their critical thinking skills: "*Definitely. Yes, definitely. The most important part of this program, in my experience, is that it helped me identify how my emotions are hijacked because of the information that I'm consuming. And in order to be aware, I need to identify that*." This response reveals a deep understanding of the psychological aspects of misinformation, suggesting the program went beyond surface-level instruction.

Another participant noted the program's impact on their professional perspective: "*Yeah, totally. I wasn't [aware] that there exist tools that could help me to know if a video was true, if an image was, fake, if something was altered*." This indicates that the program provided practical tools that participants found immediately applicable to their lives.

The program also broadened participants' understanding of the scope of misinformation issues. One participant shared, "*I didn't have a vision of how misinformation can have even a health impact on the population and how it can really influence public opinion about, for example, politics*." This suggests that the program successfully contextualized misinformation within broader societal issues and allowed participants a marco vantage to contextual misinformation challenges and solutions.

AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM, DO YOU FEEL BETTER EQUIPPED TO TEACH OTHERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY OR MISINFORMATION?

Participants generally expressed **high levels of confidence** in their ability to share their new knowledge with others. Many felt **empowered** to become **advocates** for media literacy in their communities. Their responses indicate that the program not only imparted **knowledge** but also **inspired participants** to become **active promoters** of media literacy in their personal and professional spheres.

One participant rated their confidence as 11 out of 10, demonstrating enthusiasm and readiness to share their knowledge. "*I want to work on policies that help teenagers mostly to understand misinformation and to generate a critical thinking, But I [also] want to share it too with my family and with my local [community], with my close friends and with people that now believe that I have the power to understand information.*" Another participant stated, "*I actually, maybe will develop a course, a mini course, with my own students.*"

One participant provided a more measured but still highly positive response: "*Maybe I would say nine [on a scale to ten] because one can always improve,*" showing both confidence and an awareness of the ongoing nature of learning in this field.

DO YOU THINK YOU WILL DO ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE BECAUSE OF THIS PROGRAM?

The program appears to have had a **significant impact** on participants' professional outlooks and practices. Many reported plans to **incorporate** their new knowledge into their work in **meaningful** ways. Some participants saw the program as a **catalyst** for **expanding** their professional focus. Overall, the program inspired participants to consider **broader applications** of media literacy in their professional lives.

One participant shared, "*We are making some changes and adaptions to our research and labor here in the university... I didn't know, for example, that there is a disinformation lab at the University of Texas. So I already sent an email and said, hey, we also have an observatory here in Mexico. I want to partner with you and do some research.*" This suggests that the program's impact extends beyond individual participants to potentially influence institutional practices.

Another comment noted, "*I have more cases, more examples to teach my students. I also teach communication and your knowledge [to] students.*" This indicates that the program provided practical, real-world examples that participants found valuable for their professional practice.

DO YOU THINK YOUR TEAM WILL CONTINUE TO WORK ON AND EVENTUALLY LAUNCH THE CAMPAIGN YOU PITCHED DURING THE PROGRAM?

Responses to this question revealed a mix of **enthusiasm** and **pragmatism**. While many participants expressed a desire to **continue their projects**, they also acknowledged **potential challenges**. These responses indicate that while the program successfully inspired project ideas, the long-term implementation of these projects may require **additional support or structure**. Future iterations of the project might consider ways of funding the winning PSA team to implement the project campaign.

One participant expressed optimism tinged with uncertainty: "*Yeah, we would love to do that. That's why I want to go to Chiapas with my colleague Andrea. She's the teacher there. But I think we need more tools to understand how to talk to the people we want to target*." This response shows both commitment to the project and an awareness of the need for further development.

Another participant noted ongoing discussions about project continuation: "*Yeah, we have been talking about it. And even with some people from other teams that are interested in this project*." This suggests that the program fostered collaborations that might extend beyond the original team structures.

However, some participants were more cautious in their assessments. One stated, "*I would like to think that. Yes, but I'm not sure*," citing geographical distance between team members as a potential challenge.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE?

This open-ended question elicited a range of thoughtful responses, often focusing on suggestions for **program improvement** or highlighting particularly **impactful aspects** of the experience. Future iterations of the program should **offer hands-on approaches** to **integrating data and software** in combating dis/misinformation as well as more **planned time** for PSA project work.

Several participants emphasized the value of the connections they formed. One noted, "*I realized while I was there that only me and [another participant], we were the only ones from a public university.*" This observation led to a suggestion for more diverse recruitment in future cohorts, highlighting the importance of including participants from both public and private institutions.

Another participant suggested enhancing the technical skills component of the program: "*Probably some more technical skills will be better for the next cohort.*" They specifically mentioned "*using sources like computing resources, such as libraries, Python, R or, or more technical skills that [support] better research.*"

Some participants also commented on the program's structure and duration. One mentioned, "*Making a little bit longer [would be helpful.] At times it felt a little tight, like we didn't have maybe enough time for the campaign.*"

POST-PROJECT OUTCOMES

The program has already yielded a number of notable outcomes, garnering **media coverage** in several prominent outlets, building **cross-university collaborations**, **strengthening ties** between OSU and the Mexican consulate in Oklahoma City, and **initiating academic partnerships**.

4 Instances of Media Coverage

- Mindehdahl, P. (August 5, 2024). OSU welcomes young professionals from Mexico to learn about media literacy. *News and Media*, Oklahoma State University.
- The Counselor. (August 9, 2024). Against disinformation. *Mundo Ejecutivo.*
- Radio Universidad. (2024). Interview with Diana Acosta on US Embassy in Mexico's Training Seminar in Media Literacy & Disinformation at Oklahoma State University. *Periodismo y Poder*. XHRU-FM 105.3 FM and XHERU-FM 106.9 FM. Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua. Chihuahua, Mexico.
- Williams, H. (Forthcoming). OSU Global, Oklahoma State University.

2 Planned Transnational Collaborations

- **Collaborative course build between OSU and Universidad de Comlia:** The course, Citizen Branding, is in design with the Center for Online Integrated Learning (COIL) and will be co-taught by professors from both universities as an online asynchronous course in Spring 2025. Plans for student exchange in Spring 2026 are in the discussion phase.
- **Collaborative discussions between OSU and the Instituto Esatal de Transparencia, Accesso a la Informacion Publica y Proteccion de Datos Personales (INAIP)** in Yucatán to develop a media literacy campaign on the topic of disinformation as it pertains to activities of university teachers and students.

CONCLUSIONS

The Media Literacy & Disinformation Training Seminar demonstrated significant success in equipping participants with the knowledge, skills, and networks necessary to combat dis/misinformation in their respective fields and communities. The program's blend of online and in-person learning, coupled with its focus on both theoretical understanding and practical application, proved highly effective.

Key strengths included the diverse cohort of participants, the quality of expert speakers and panelists, and the real-world applicability of the content. The program's impact extended beyond individual growth, fostering a sense of community among participants and inspiring them to become active promoters of media literacy in their personal and professional spheres.

Areas for potential improvement have been identified, and future iterations of the program should consider the following adjustments:

- **Extended Duration:** Consider increasing the in-person component from five to six days, allowing more time for group project work and cultural integration. Alternatively, consider lightening the programming load of the current five-day schedule for more cultural activities and PSA work.
- **Enhanced Technical Skills:** Incorporate hands-on training in data analysis and software tools used in combating disinformation, such as Python and R programming.
- **Live Online Sessions:** Replace pre-recorded expert interviews with live, interactive sessions to increase engagement and allow for real-time Q&A.
- **Structured Networking:** Implement a more formal introduction process at the beginning of the program to help participants understand each other's backgrounds and skills.
- **Increased Local Interaction:** Facilitate more opportunities for participants to engage with American students, possibly through joint workshops, shared discussion boards, or social events.
- **Diverse Recruitment:** Ensure a balance of participants from both public and private institutions to maintain a wide range of perspectives.
- **Instructor Panel:** Include an informal panel event with program instructors, similar to OSU's Research on Tap Series, to allow for more in-depth discussion.
- **Project Implementation Support:** Consider ways to fund the winning PSA team to implement their campaign, providing direct real-world application of the skills learned.
- **Interdisciplinary Expansion:** Include panelists or participants from fields such as psychology, political science, and data sciences to broaden the scope of discussions.
- **Alumni Involvement:** Invite program alumni to participate in future iterations, fostering ongoing networking and knowledge sharing.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback, the participants' enthusiasm for applying their new knowledge, and the tangible post-project outcomes suggest that the program has achieved significant impact with potential for long-term influence. The media coverage demonstrates a commitment to growing public awareness of the program's importance.

Furthermore, the initiation of transnational collaborations, such as the collaborative course build between Oklahoma State University and Universidad de Comlia, and discussions with the Instituto Esatal de Transparencia in Yucatan, showcase the program's potential for fostering lasting international partnerships in combating disinformation.

By implementing the suggested adjustments and building on these early successes, future iterations can further enhance the program's effectiveness in combating misinformation across Mexico and potentially beyond. The program's model of combining intensive training with cross-cultural exchange and fostering international collaborations offers a promising approach to addressing the global challenge of misinformation, with potential for adaptation and expansion to other regions and contexts.

ABOUT OUR TEAM

THE 2024 TRAINING SEMINAR TO COMBAT DISINFORMATION WAS A JOINT PROJECT OF OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF MEDIA & STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, OSU GLOBAL, ELIC, AND OSU MEXICO, MADE POSSIBLE BY FUNDING FROM THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN MEXICO CITY.

The School of Media & Strategic Communications (SMSC) at Oklahoma State University stands at the forefront of academic excellence in journalism, mass media, and strategic communications. Our cutting-edge, transdisciplinary research addresses global challenges in digital media ecosystems, data-driven journalism, crisis communication, media effects, and cross-cultural communication. Four SMSC faculty collaborated to create and present the 2024 Training Seminar:
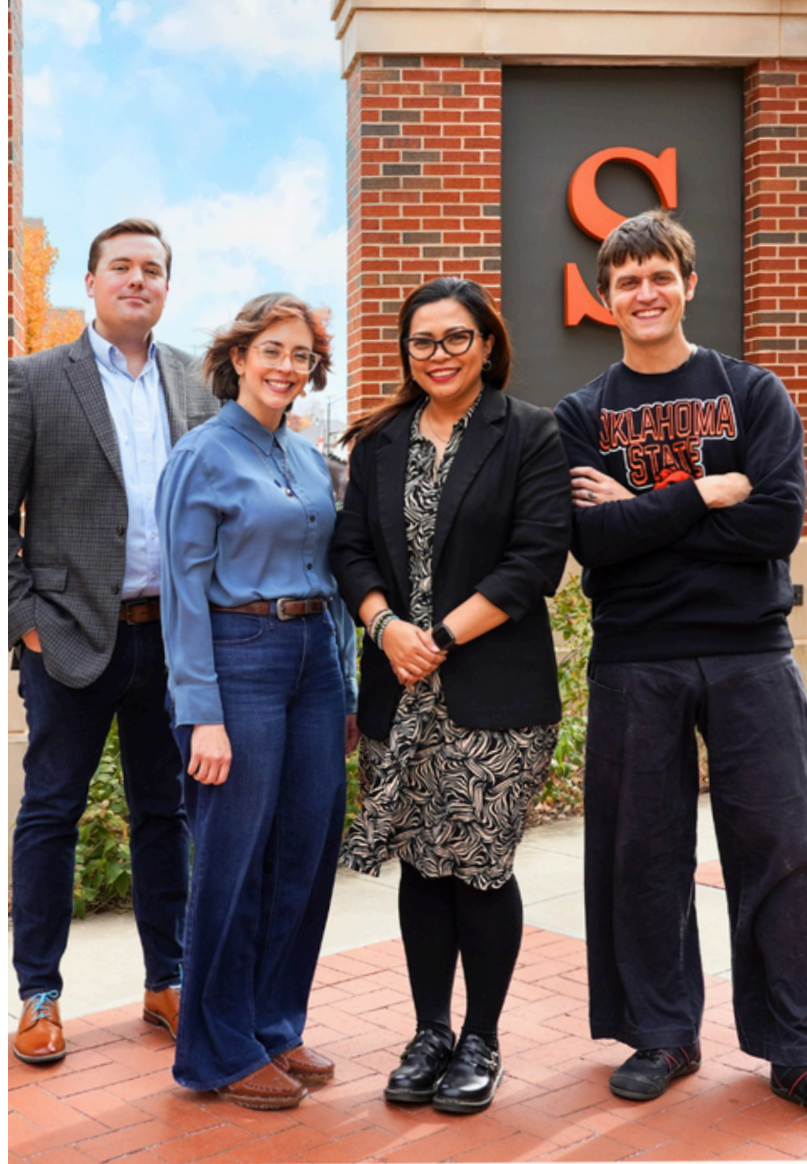
From left: Andrew M. Abernathy, Rosemary Avance, Nuurrianti Jalli and Skye Cooley

Skye Cooley, Ph.D., is a methodological and project design expert with interests in media and applied outcomes for partner organizations. He is co-founder of the MESA research group (mesagroup.okstate.edu).

Andrew M. Abernathy, Ed.D., is a qualitative researcher with expertise in teaching and learning. media literacy, and image repair communication. His award-winning research focuses on equity-oriented remediation approaches in journalism and mass communication, and his current research interests include the use of generative AI in creative and classroom contexts.

Rosemary Avance, Ph.D., is an expert in community, strategic communication, and identity. A College of Arts and Sciences Equity Advocates Fellow and a 2022-2023 Center for the Humanities Digital Humanities Research Fellow, Avance's interdisciplinary research focuses on the interplay between social dynamics, communication technologies, and identity formation across diverse domains.

Nuurrianti Jalli, **Ph.D.**, is a communication strategist and subject expert for renowned organizations including the Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Brookings Institution. Her research interests include media and democracy, propaganda and mis/disinfo studies, media tech policies, media and information literacy, and media and information warfare.

Emily Boersma, Ph.D., is a Director of the English Language and Intercultural Center (ELIC) at OSU Global. OSU Global is the university's strategic and administrative center for global engagement. It collaborates with various departments to develop high-impact international experiences and projects for students, faculty, staff, and the Stillwater community. OSU Global is home to the English Language and Intercultural Center (ELIC), which provides immersive English language programs to support students throughout their education.

OSU Global reaffirmed its commitment to global partnership in 2023 with the opening of OSU Mexico, housed at Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP) in Puebla, Mexico. OSU Mexico is a ground-breaking example of OSU's commitment to global engagement.

Emily Boersma

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