

Kudos to Campus Journalists! (Op-Ed)

By Thomas J. Madden, Chairman and CEO, [Transmedia Group](#)

I'm reading a news story this morning headlined "Colleges and Campus Papers Square Off Over Sexual Assaults" on the front page of *The New York Times*.

The story is about a confidential informant tipping off the University of Kentucky's campus newspaper that an associate professor of entomology had been accused by groping students and after an investigation, the college had permitted him to leave quietly.



On the trail of the story, the student paper, *The Kentucky Kernel*, requested files from the university and that started a battle between the university and the student newspaper resulting in the university suing *The Kernel*. Good for the *Kernel*! It takes me back to a time before I went over to "the dark side" as my fellow journalists would say when I

went into [PR](#).

First, back in the 1970s, I was still a hard-driving, dogged reporter at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* boldly chasing story after story no matter where it took me, which sometimes was into some bad neighborhoods and onto some of the meanest streets in North Philadelphia rife at the time with racial tension and gang violence that typically rises out of the despondency caused by poverty.

I was risking my health, my marriage and sometimes even my life covering corruption, riots and cop killings in the City of sometimes not so brotherly love. But I loved it.

Then one night I was covering a protest rally I got cold-cocked. "That's it," I told my wife that night through two broken front teeth. "Time for a career change." And I accepted an offer to become an associate professor of journalism at Loyola University in sultry "Big Easy," the city of crawfish *etouffee* and mile high ice cream pie, New Orleans.

Part of my assignment was to serve as advisor to the college newspaper, *The Maroon*. And that assignment is what the *NY Times* story reminded me of for it landed me square in the middle of a battle between campus journalists and the strict Jesuits who ran the Catholic University located next to Tulane University from where I had cross-over students in my journalism classes.

Just as campus journalists at *The Kernel* were on the trail of an alleged sexual groper in Kentucky, my journalism students were investigating what appeared to be a growing problem of alcohol binge drinking on the New Orleans campus. Fresh from covering hard news, I of course encouraged the investigative journalism to the dismay of Jesuits who urged me to counsel my student journalists to back off and cover more uplifting subjects. I disagreed and eventually just like the alleged groper in Kentucky, I was asked to leave Loyola quietly.

And that's when I turned thankfully to the dark side. I went into the PR business in New York City, eventually becoming the head of PR Planning at American Broadcasting Companies and later Vice President, Assistant to the President, of NBC before starting my own PR firm, TransMedia Group (www.transmediagroup.com), now located in sunny Boca Raton, FL where the dark side has become a lot brighter.

About the Author: *Thomas Madden is CEO of TransMedia Group, one of the largest independent PR firms in Florida, where it currently operates. The firm's clients have included AT&T, American Red Cross, City of New York, GL Homes, Jordache Enterprises, McCormick and Schmick's, Rexall Sundown, Stanley Steemer.*

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