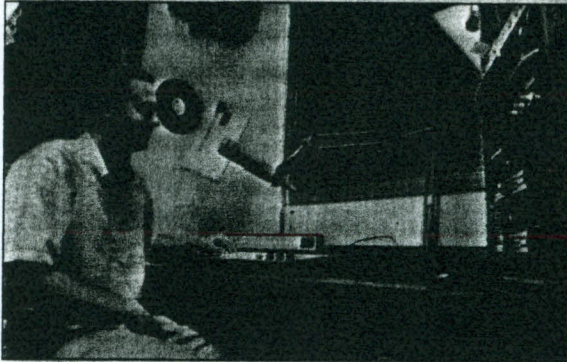


W.Va. college radio thrives despite nationwide decline



By Mackenzie Mays
Staff writer

West Virginia University's student radio station, U92 FM, will soon celebrate its 30th anniversary, while Marshall University's station, The Cutting Edge, recently rang in 50 years.

But some college radio stations across the country aren't

singing — or playing — the same song.

In recent years, some colleges — including Vanderbilt University in Tennessee and Rice University in Texas — have sold their radio licenses, labeling them as unnecessary programs, upsetting some aspiring broadcasters and listeners alike.

"It's definitely a concern — es-

pecially for universities that are state-funded. There are some tough decisions being made all over the country right now," said Greg Weston, general manager of College Broadcasters Inc. in Hummelstown, Pa.

"College radio stations have to do a better job at selling their value to administrators to make sure they can't claim

they're irrelevant like they have in the past."

Weston said despite a misperception that radio is dying among young audiences, he hopes college administrators realize the value of the programs.

"Hopefully, administrators are doing their research and can cut

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West Virginia State University communications student Scott Waggener works as the music and sports director at the school's 106.7 FM.

KENNY KEMP | Sunday Gazette-Mail

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In the hype and realize nothing you can get in a bomb that will compare to transferable real world skills get at the station," he said. Sometimes all administration see is from a financial point view."

Scott Waggener, a junior communications major at West Virginia State University and the music and sports director at the

school's 106.7 FM, said his experience at the station is invaluable.

"Since I became involved, I've gotten to do things I would've never had the chance to do otherwise. I spend a lot of hours here," he said. "It's already paying off — just having the experience of being on air and being held accountable for what you say can teach you a lot."

In Morgantown, WVU-FM — better known as U92 — spent about \$600,000 to pay three full-time employees and 150 student

workers over the past school year, in addition to equipment and other expenses, according to Sabrina Cave, assistant vice president for Student Affairs Communications.

"This is a very modest budget for an important communication resource for our university community. In addition, it is a hands-on training ground and laboratory for students," Cave said.

U92 Program Director Matt Fouty said he doesn't think WVU would ever sell the radio station because of Morgantown's

small market, the thought of "what if?" has crossed his mind.

"I've been hearing about a lot of college stations selling for some time now. If it ever happened here, it would impact a lot of people — we have over 200 volunteers," he said. "It's not just a hotbed for music that doesn't exist otherwise in our region, it's a great opportunity."

"When students work here, they leave feeling confident talking to a lot of different people about a lot of different things."

This past school year, Marshall's WMUL-FM won 107

awards, including being named Outstanding News Operation and Best Sports Play-By-Play by the West Virginia Associated Press Broadcasters Association.

The station operates on a \$126,800 budget with most of the funding going toward equipment, according to WMUL's faculty manager, Charles Bailey. The station employs only one paid worker.

Bailey said most college stations that decide to sell are located in larger cities than Huntington, but if it ever came to

that, students wouldn't be the only ones to suffer.

"I think Huntington would be a poor place if WMUL went away. We provide music that's not available commercially, and we cover all of Marshall sports in addition to hosting newscasts. It's not merely campus news — it's a great asset to the community," he said. "I think our students have proved their value, and they've been rewarded for that."

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