DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS

Alumni & Friends

FALL 2007

Alumni Survey Results

Thank you for your prompt and informative responses to the alumni survey last fall. More than 600 people responded, and from the comments, we learned that our alumni value the dedication of the Comm Arts faculty and the quality of the education they received as majors in the Department. Many stressed the positive impact their education has had on their lives, both with regard to specialized knowledge and critical thinking. Alumni gave high marks to their overall experience as a Comm Arts major, the effectiveness of the education, and the usefulness of the skills and knowledge gained. The responses also directed our attention to two areas most in need of improvement: course availability and facilities. We very much appreciate the time so many of you took to share your opinions with us as we strive to keep our major second to none.

Faculty News

Congratulations to Professor Kelley Conway and Professor Susan Zaeske on their recent promotions to associate and full professor, respectively.

Alumni News

Greenbergs Offer Internship Award

The Communications Industry Summer Internship Award, created this year by Edward (MA ’76) and Janet (BA ’73, MS ’75) Greenberg, offers financial assistance to a Communication Arts student who is completing a summer internship with a business or non-profit organization in the fields of media communication or entertainment, located in Los Angeles or New York City. Knowing that internship experiences guide students professionally and assist them in securing employment after graduation, the Greenbergs established the fund as a way to help students link their passion for the industry to their career options. They specified Los Angeles or New York City as a way to encourage students to explore the unique richness of the communications and entertainment environments in these cities and to help students develop contacts for securing a position upon graduation. In addition, Ed and Janet hope this real-world experience will give students the opportunity to examine their passion for media outside the classroom.

After interning at Columbia Pictures in Los Angeles last summer, Andrew Parkhurst, the first recipient of the award, is certain he will return to

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In any given year, Communication Arts majors earn academic credit for over 70 professional internships which come to the Department through the goodwill of our alumni and supporters. Paid or unpaid, in the summer or during the academic year, these internships cover a wide variety of professional experiences and conditions across the country. Whatever the variables in the appointments, they all have one important thing in common: they are consistently praised by the students who have held them as the source of invaluable professional experience.

Communication Arts majors explore concepts and develop critical and analytical skills through a curriculum rooted in the best traditions of the liberal arts education. Internships allow students to apply these skills in a professional setting and to learn about career options. Our majors’ interests are as diverse as those of our alumni. You will find our students ready to respond to constituent concerns for a public official, analyze market data for a publisher, plan a special event for a non-profit or edit in a video production facility.

These opportunities and many others are offered to our students by alumni and friends of Communication Arts. We are grateful to all the alumni who have contacted us about internships and we would particularly like to thank those who have dedicated a position to our students in highly competitive internship programs: Deborah Schindler (BA ’77), Ben Karlin (BA ’93), and Kelly Kahl (BS ’89). I hope anyone reading this newsletter who might be able to provide a new Communication Arts internship will visit the internship section of our Web site (http://commarts.wisc.edu/Under/internships_resources.php) or contact our Undergraduate Advisor Mary Rossa (merossa@wisc.edu).

Through the special generosity of several alumni, we are now also able to provide stipends to a handful of our Communication Arts interns. The stipends defray travel costs and living expenses, an important consideration for students applying for positions outside the Madison area. In August, Madison’s The Capital Times featured an article on UW internships which stressed the importance of such stipends and noted that Communication Arts was particularly fortunate to be able to support eight students. The thanks of the Department go to those alumni whose gifts or fundraising efforts made this possible: Kelly Kahl (BS ’89), George (BA ’80) and Pamela Hamel, members of the Hollywood Badgers alumni group, and the friends and family of Kevin Anderson (BS ’98).

Thanks also to Edward (MA ’76) and Janet Greenberg (BA ’73, MS ’75) for establishing the Communication Industry Summer Internship Award. I hope you will read the story in this issue about Ed and Janet and their generosity and consider how important such stipends can be for our students.

Anyone who would like to provide financial support for our student interns may consider making a gift through the UW Foundation. Please feel free to contact our Director of Development Anne Lucke (Anne.Lucke@uwfoundation.wisc.edu or 608–262–6242).

We have talented students who are ready to work hard. Thanks are in order for everyone who has, will, or might provide them the chance to do so.

Vance Kepley, Jr. (PhD ’78)
**Group-Wise**

Groups are part of our everyday life and although we regularly participate in group decisions, we rarely pay attention to the type of information being discussed within the group. Did you realize, for example, that groups have a tendency to discuss information known to all group members at the expense of unique information? As Professor Lyn Van Swol points out, “by only talking about known to all group members at the expense have a tendency to discuss information already known by the others. The known information establishes a common ground with other group members.

The structure of the group can also enhance the exchange of new information. Van Swol notes, “I have found that one way to make group members more open to unique information from others is to put the presenter of the unique information in the role of an advisor. When people view someone as advising them, rather than just another group member, they are more open to hearing new, unique information, and actually prefer to get a fresh viewpoint.”

Establishing common ground and assigning an advisor are key factors for effective group decision-making. These are just a few of the practical lessons students will learn with the recent addition of Professor Van Swol to our faculty.

**Hamel Family Professor**

Our first Hamel Family Professor is Sabine Gruffat. This year, Professor Gruffat will introduce our students to the emerging field of digital media by offering courses in interactive multimedia, two-dimensional computer animation, and three-dimensional computer animation.

In the classroom, Gruffat emphasizes creativity, exploration, experimentation, and collaboration. She attributes her hands-on, perspective-changing instructional style to both her professional and personal experiences. Like many professors, her teaching methods have been enhanced through discussions with colleagues and the advancements in technology. She also credits her unusual personal background with shaping her individual style. Gruffat elaborates with a reference to the various geographical locations she has lived throughout her life, “To adapt to living in several countries from childhood to the present—including France, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Hong Kong and, now, the United States—I feel my identity consistently shifted relative to context, enabling me to suspend judgment (cultural and otherwise), and to openly greet and consider diverse attitudes.

The experience of being the foreigner, or ‘other’ in most situations, is one I cherish and draw upon, and hence welcome and encourage in other artists and students.”

Professor Gruffat is a native English and French speaker, who is also fluent in Spanish, and moderately versed in Thai. We are excited to welcome her to the Midwest.

**Comm Arts Classes Hit the Road**

“It definitely changed my life,” said Communication Arts major Njoki Kamuiru about Journey to the South, a civil rights study and service trip she embarked upon during spring break. This was one of two experiential education courses in which Communication Arts majors, graduate students, and faculty played major roles this past year. The second such class, devoted to the study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) history, hit the road in June to meet with activists from the LGBT civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

The trip South brought to life what students were studying in the classroom with Professor Susan Zaeske (BA ’89, MA ’92, PhD ’97) in CA 378, The Rhetoric of African American Discourse. The class traveled to Chicago, Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, Birmingham, Selma, the Mississippi delta, and Memphis. During the nine-day trip, students met with veterans of the civil rights movement, some of whom were leaders in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), others of whom were “foot soldiers” who had marched on Bloody Sunday, and yet others who as children defied snarling dogs and pummeling fire hoses in the present—including France, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Hong Kong and, now, the United States—I feel my identity consistently shifted relative to context, enabling me to suspend judgment (cultural and otherwise), and to openly greet and consider diverse attitudes.

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**Hamel Family Digital Media Lab**

On September 28, 2007, the Communication Arts Department celebrated the opening of the Hamel Family Digital Media Lab. This newly constructed, state-of-the-art classroom space is located on the third floor of Vilas Hall adjacent to the Instructional Media Center. At the reception, George (BA ’80) and Pam Hamel toured the new facility that bears their name in honor of their generous support of the Department. They marveled at the variety of student animation projects already in progress.

Comm Arts students are gaining hands-on production skills while creating digital and interactive media projects in the lab’s specialized computer workstations. New media has been integrated into traditional media production practice, challenging students to develop fresh questions while using the tools of new technology. Several new communication arts courses will be introduced this year and existing courses, such as editing and post-production sound, are being transformed by the opportunities the Hamel Family Lab provides. Comm Arts students were thrilled to find this brand new cutting-edge facility awaiting them when they returned to campus this fall.

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work in the entertainment industry upon graduation. He writes, “My internship at Columbia Pictures this summer has certainly meant a great deal to me, both as a student of film and as someone whose future lies in the industry. I have met some fantastic people. I feel that I have learned much from the experience and I have become more confident that I can be successful in this competitive environment.”

Ed and Janet, who contribute philanthropically in many different ways, note, “We can think of nothing more valuable than helping worthy students find and develop their passion. This gives us a very warm feeling and we believe that other alumni might very well benefit in the same way should they choose to help students in this way.”

Birmingham. The group also toured museums, visited sites where historic events occurred, and attended services at historic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. While in Selma, students did their best to give back to the community by cleaning a city park and cataloging hundreds of historical artifacts at the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute.

In June, Comm Arts and Women’s Studies graduate student Amy Barber, Professor Zaeske, and several Comm Arts majors made history by studying history. Theirs was the first class at UW–Madison — and, perhaps, anywhere — to employ the experiential education format to study LGBT history. They met with pioneers in the LGBT civil rights movement in Cleveland, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City. In Washington, D.C., the class visited the offices of the Human Rights Campaign, where they spoke with David Stacy (BA ‘90), who serves as a senior public policy advocate. In New York City, the class focused on the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, a several-day clash in which police officers fought gay and transgender people protesting police entrapment of LGBT citizens. There the group also met with Elliott Imse (BA ‘05), a communications research associate at the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD).

Barber, who supervised the video taping of the trip, stressed the significance of the course. “At the broadest level, very little gay and lesbian history is available to students in our libraries, our news media, or our classrooms. As we created this much-needed course on the topic . . . we created an environment in which history came alive.”