



College of Letters & Science
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



VilasVoice

Fall 2019 | For Alumni and Friends of the Department of Communication Arts

Learning How to Help Media Help Children

Communication Science
graduate student

Maura Snyder conducts
research in a Vilas Hall lab.

Page 3



INSIDE
VILAS

2 Collaboration
and Community

4 Vilas
Climate

5 Alumni
Survey

6 Faculty
Updates

7 Changes in
the College

VilasVoice

is the alumni newsletter of the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, 821 University Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

Email
info@commarts.wisc.edu

Website
commarts.wisc.edu

Department Chair
Professor Kelley Conway

Newsletter Editor
Michael Trevis (BA'10)

Contributing Writers
Joanne Cantor
Beth Horstmeier
Marie-Louise Mares
Mary Rossa (BS'86, MA'90)

Donor Contact
Marit Barkve
UW Foundation
608-308-5341
marit.barkve@supportuw.org

Online Giving
commarts.wisc.edu/giving

Design
Danielle Lawry
University Marketing

Production Editor
Jenny Klaila (BA'00)
University Marketing

This newsletter was printed through gift funds administered by the UW Foundation. © 2019 Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System

The University of Wisconsin is an equal-opportunity and affirmative-action educator and employer. We promote excellence through diversity in all programs.

Front page banner photos: All by iStock Photo except third from left by University Communications.

Chair's Voice

Collaboration and Community



Here in Vilas Hall, we are grateful for collaboration and community.

The ambitious survey conducted last year by our alumni board, Communication Arts Partners (CAPS), is teaching us more about our alumni community. It has provided insights into what you value most about your education and your preferences for staying connected with us. The results of the survey are included in this issue. Thank you, CAPS director Scott Broetzmann and Emeritus Professor Joanne Cantor, for your expert design and analysis of the survey.

Collaboration was certainly necessary after a water pipe in a stairwell of the sixth floor ruptured and caused extensive flooding throughout Vilas Hall in February. We were forced to move the department's operations to the third floor for the spring semester. Other departments were generous in helping us find temporary office space for faculty, staff, and graduate students. Working with the Registrar, we relocated classes and screenings to the Chazen Museum and beyond. Recovery efforts continued throughout the spring semester as we discarded soggy books and furniture, catalogued the losses, and ordered replacement items. The flood caused profound disruption in the life of our department, but we worked together to solve each problem. In late May, we returned to the sixth floor, exhausted, but reminded of the strength of our community.

Your generosity during the inaugural "Day of the Badger" bolstered our spirits during such a challenging semester. The University set aside a day to celebrate Badger nation and you came through! Our Day of the Badger numbers were among the highest in the College. Your gifts are supporting student internships, graduate student research, and equipment. Thank you.

The generosity of our alumni is matched by the commitment of our faculty. Professor Stephen Lucas retired after teaching in the Department for 47 years and Professor J.J. Murphy retired after 38 years in our classrooms. We feel their absence keenly. On the bright side, we were joined by Professor Allison Prasch, a scholar of presidential rhetoric, and Professor Jason Kido Lopez, an authority on ethics, sports, and media. Professor Lillie Williamson, an expert on health communication and the African American community, will join our faculty in January. Our tradition of excellent teaching, research, and community outreach, combined with our ethos of collaboration and community, will carry us forward.

Kelley Conway, Chair
Communication Arts Partners Professor
Department of Communication Arts

Learning How to Help Media Help Children

How do families use media to help their children? And when young children watch shows like *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, what do they learn? Given the program's mix of human and animal characters, fantasy and reality, education and "just for fun," how do they interpret the content? These are the types of questions being studied by graduate students working with Communication Science Professor Louise Mares.

AnneMarie McClain's research with African American parents looks at the ways in which they use media content to help their child understand their racial/ethnic identity, but also the ways in which they report helping their children deal with stereotypes and hurtful or scary content. "Prior research has mostly focused on how African American parents talk to their kids about race, but hasn't really considered media as part of those discussions," says McClain.

Fellow graduate students Alanna Peebles and Maura Snyder are focusing on educational TV content for pre-schoolers. Peebles' dissertation examines what kids learn initially and then apply one week later, after watching prosocial and science-related episodes. If a television program promotes sharing, will children understand and retain the concept? In particular, she's testing whether short inserts at the beginning of the episode can help kids get it right. Snyder spent months sitting with children, showing them pairs of characters, such as an animated sheep versus a live action human, and asking them which would be best for learning about things like why humans have tongues, or how bees make honey, or how to take turns.

"My grad students are a source of inspiration, fun, and joy. I couldn't do the work I do without them, both in a very practical sense, but also in an intellectual, collaborative sense," Mares says. "And together, we depend on the community. We couldn't do this work without all the preschools and parents and children who agree to participate."



Communication Science graduate students Maura Snyder, Alanna Peebles, and AnneMarie McClain with Professor Louise Mares

That makes it all the more valuable that they found a resource right in their own department. Beth Horstmeier, the Communication Arts Graduate Coordinator, connected the team with Kids' Safari, the preschool her sister founded and ran for years before she passed away. In the past few years, hundreds of children there have sat and played and watched and sung their way through research sessions. "It's invaluable to have this resource, and it's really lovely to think of the connection with Beth's sister," Mares comments. "We're all working together to figure out how to help children, and how media can play a role."

W ALL WAYS FORWARD

To continue our history of looking forward we need to advance in all directions. Your gift to Communication Arts will support internships, scholarships, facilities improvements, student travel, faculty research, and curriculum updates.

Help move us forward at allways-forward.org/giveto/communicationarts



Recalling the Vilas Hall Flood of 2019

In the final days of January this year, the polar vortex descended upon Madison, Wisconsin. Subzero temperatures and windchills as low as -45-degrees Fahrenheit pummeled Vilas Hall for three days, causing a water pipe in a stairwell of the sixth floor to burst, flooding at least 75,000 gallons of water throughout the building on Sunday, February 3.

Now, after recovering throughout spring semester, returning to normal operations in the summer, and finally locating Professor Jeff Smith on his makeshift raft in the depths of Vilas Hall, the faculty of Communication Arts reflect on that trying time.

Jenell Johnson (Professor of Rhetoric, Politics, and Culture): I was at home when I got the call that Vilas was flooding. I rushed to my car to go help, but then I remembered it was February in Wisconsin. The snowplow had buried the end of my driveway in four feet of snow.

Jeff Smith (Professor of Film): When I opened my office on the sixth floor, the flood waters rushed out in a torrential wave. I grabbed hold of my desk as it swept by. I only had time to secure one item, my prized Wilson volleyball.

Lyn Van Swol (Professor of Communication Science): It was terrible—water permeated everything. Our books, our papers, our computers. We nearly lost valuable research. Plus, we couldn't find Jeff.

Kelley Conway (Department Chair): We knew things were bad when the president of the Hoofers Sailing Club called asking if they could use the "newly repurposed Vilas Aquatics Recreational Facility" to do some winter training.

Stephen Lucas (Professor Emeritus, retired May 2019): While removing hundreds of waterlogged books from my office for hours on end, I had but one thought, "I should've retired last year."

Jeff Smith: My desk drifted to the second floor. Using wood planks from Wisconsin Public Television's scene shop, Wilson and I were able to rig my desk into a serviceable vessel.

Jenell Johnson: I was about to call FEMA for aid, but we received word that the College of Letters & Science was sending help; SERVPRO was on the way.

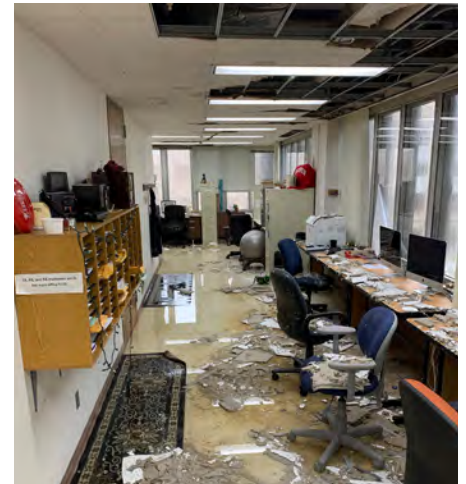
Jeremy Morris (Professor of Media and Cultural Studies): SERVPRO was amazing. But they deployed a ventilation apparatus with enormous tubes to dry out the building. It reminded me of the ending of Spielberg's *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*. It gave me the creeps.

Jeff Smith: Eventually I was stranded in the boiler room of Vilas Hall. It was dark and resources were scarce, but Wilson was with me so I didn't lose hope.

Lyn Van Swol: I think it was April when someone asked if anyone knew where Jeff was.

Jeremy Morris: It's a little embarrassing, but it took us until July to find him. No one thought to check the basement.

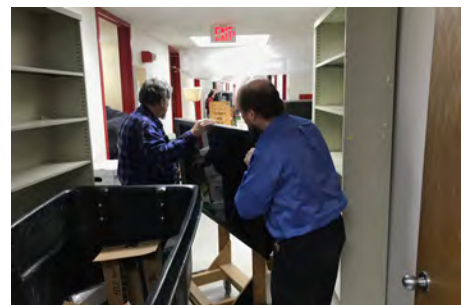
Author's note: while this piece makes light of a serious situation, it would be unjust not to thank all those who helped the Department get back on its feet: Senior Facilities Engineer Zhaleh Noubari from Facilities Planning and Management, Assistant Dean Chris Bruhn and his personnel from the College of Letters & Science, the entire SERVPRO Industries cleaning team, Department Chair Kelley Conway, Computer Media Specialist Peter Sengstock, and Faculty Associate Erik Gunneson of Communication Arts, and all of the faculty, staff, and graduate students who worked together to make a difficult time go as smoothly as possible.



The School of Journalism and Mass Communication on the fifth floor was hit the hardest, as ceiling tiles collapsed under the flooding water.

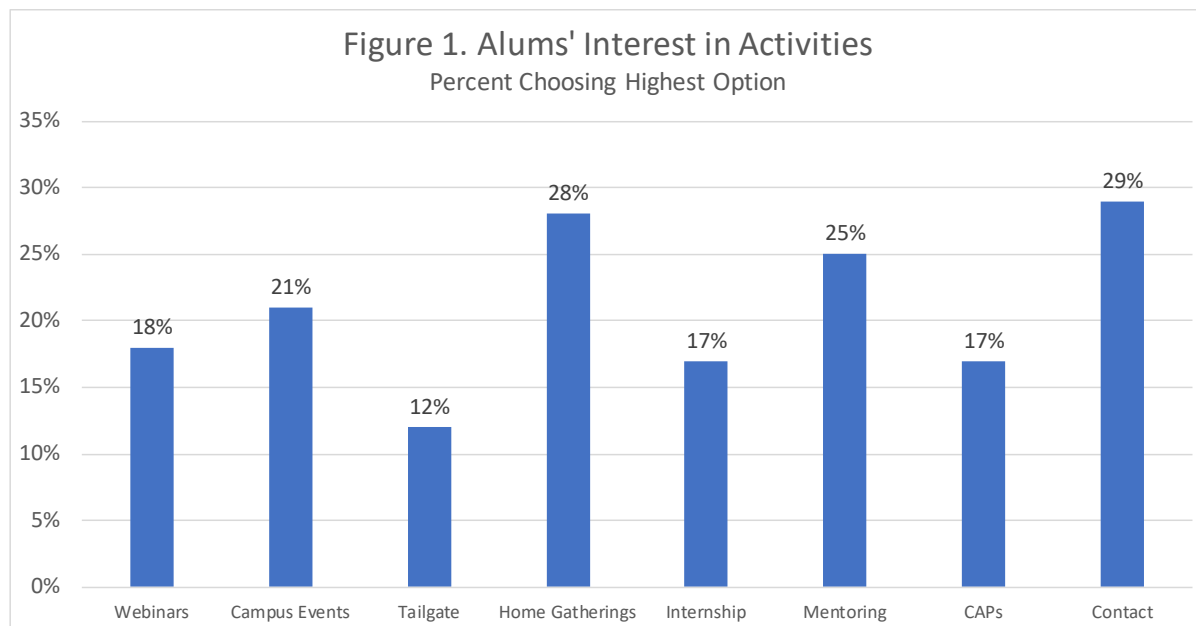


Large machines pumped super dry, 3% humidity air into the building for several weeks to dry out plaster and prevent the formation of mold.



It took months of moving, cleaning, and renovating to regain access to the fifth and sixth floors and other sections of Vilas Hall.

Getting to Know Our Alums



In 2018, Communication Arts Partners (CAPS) Board member Scott Broetzmann developed a survey of you, our alums, and received 1,258 responses. A major purpose of the survey was to explore your current interest in becoming more closely engaged with the department and to understand how your undergraduate experience has influenced your current desire to connect with us.

One set of questions provided a list of possible activities and asked you to rate your interest in each one. The activities involved attending events (such as webinars, on-campus events involving faculty or distinguished alumni, or football tailgates); participating in alumni gatherings in your home communities; helping current students (through providing internships or serving as mentors); becoming a CAPS board member; or being contacted by one of us about how to become more involved.

The data suggested that there is greatest interest in being contacted (29% of respondents), in attending alumni gatherings in your home communities (28%), and in providing career mentoring (25%).

The survey also had a series of questions asking you to rate the quality

of your undergraduate experience here. Two groups of questions emerged from factor analysis: Academic items, those focusing on issues like the quality of teaching, curriculum, and resources; and Relational & Guidance items, like advising, friendships, internships, and student associations.

We conducted regression analyses to explore the extent to which these two factors predicted current interest in the various activities we proposed. Regression allows us to look at the contribution of each factor (in this case, the Academic items or the Relational items) to a dependent variable (in this case, interest in activities), over and above the other factors. We included graduation cohort as a third predictor, to control for the fact that recent graduates showed more interest in all activities than graduates from earlier cohorts.

In brief, more favorable scores on the Academic factor significantly and positively predicted interest in six of the seven activities: faculty webinars, on-campus events, tailgates, home alumni gatherings, joining CAPS, and willingness to be contacted. The Relational & Guidance factor significantly and posi-

tively predicted interest in two activities: attending a tailgate and providing career mentoring (which was not significantly predicted by the Academic factor).

We believe this knowledge will be extremely helpful to us in our efforts to promote alumni engagement. The survey results helped us understand the value of organizing events such as the following:

- In October we held a mentoring event on campus called Comm Arts at Work, in which 40 alumni volunteers from different career communities met with undergraduates to discuss how a Comm Arts degree can lead to success in their fields.
- In the coming year, our faculty members are planning to participate in several Founders' Day events in local communities around the country, with some form of add-on activity geared to our alums.

The survey also helps us recognize the importance of supporting both the academic and relational aspects of the undergraduate experience.

CAPS plans to continue to use survey research to determine how we can support both the Department and you by improving our connections.

Faculty Departures and Arrivals



Professors Stephen Lucas, J.J. Murphy, Allison Prash, Jason Kido Lopez, and Lillie Williamson

Faculty who have shaped the life of a department for decades ultimately retire, and, over time, new faculty arrive with their own interests and skills. Even with this understanding, it is with no small amount of sadness that we announce two pillars of our faculty, Professors Stephen Lucas and J.J. Murphy, have retired.

Stephen Lucas, Evjue-Bascom Professor in the Humanities, retired in May after teaching in the Department for 47 years. For perspective, Lucas arrived a mere two years after the Department of Speech renamed itself the Department of Communication Arts in 1970. Lucas's research on historical American political rhetoric and public address has been vital to the field and garnered many awards, including a Pulitzer Prize nomination for his book *Portents of Rebellion: Rhetoric and Revolution in Philadelphia, 1765-1776*, and a Golden Anniversary Monograph Award from the National Communication Association for his study *The Rhetorical Ancestry of the Declaration of Independence*. Lucas's teaching is as celebrated as his research. Over the years, his course CA 100 – Introduction to Speech Composition has helped tens of thousands of students become better public speakers and writers. Lucas's textbook, *The Art of Public Speaking*, is now in its thirteenth edition and has been adopted by universities around the globe. Lucas is notably a

pioneer of English public-speaking education in China, where he has visited, lectured, and trained countless instructors and students over the last eighteen years.

J.J. Murphy taught in the Department for 38 years before retiring last December. He is one of the most important American avant-garde filmmakers to emerge in the 1970s, and his films *Sky Blue Water Light Sign* (1972) and *Print Generation* (1974) are screened in prestigious museums and festivals to this day. Upon his arrival in 1980, Murphy expanded media production in Communication Arts, creating and teaching courses that have trained our students to flourish as filmmakers. To date, our alumni have received countless award nominations and won Emmys, Golden Globes, and Peabody Awards. Murphy is also a scholar of independent American cinema. His books include *You and Me and Memento and Fargo: How Independent Screenplays Work*, *The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol*, and *Rewriting Indie Cinema: Improvisation, Psychodrama, and the Screenplay*. In 2016, he was named the Hamel Family Distinguished Chair in Communication Arts. He is currently writing a book about the work of Sean Baker.

While Lucas and Murphy are irreplaceable, we are excited to have new faculty join our ranks. Assistant Professor Allison Prash started this

semester, bringing her focus on US presidential rhetoric, public address, and foreign policy to the Department. She is currently completing a book manuscript tentatively titled *The Global Rhetorical Presidency: Cold War Rhetoric on the World Stage*. Assistant Professor Jason Kido Lopez first taught in the department as a Visiting Assistant Professor before moving to the tenure track this fall. His research examines sports media and ethics from a critical and cultural perspective, and he is currently working on a manuscript analyzing games around games, such as fantasy sports, sports betting, and sports video games. In January, Assistant Professor Lillie Williamson will join the Department after earning her PhD from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She specializes in the effects communication has on racial health inequities, especially for African Americans. Her dissertation is titled "Using a Communication Approach to Understand the Antecedents of Medical Mistrust: Testing the Ecological Medical Mistrust Antecedents (EMMA) Model."

Undoubtedly, Professors Prash, Lopez, and Williamson will bring their insights and expertise to the Department, helping it grow in new and exciting ways. We look forward to the positive impact they will have on the Communication Arts community.

From the Dean's Desk

Changes in the College

PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS



Fall semester is in full swing at UW–Madison. Students are streaming up and down Bascom Hill, (which is currently being “unzipped” to replace aging infrastructure). Here in the College of Letters & Science, we welcomed 4,887 new students and 54 outstanding new faculty. In September, we launched the School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences (CDIS) as the College’s fourth division. We are also looking forward to the opening of the Hamel Music Center, a new building funded entirely by donors. It is an exciting time to be a part of the College of Letters & Science here at UW–Madison!

As I assume my role as interim dean of L&S, I am reminded of what drew me here in the first place: research excellence, the chance to teach and mentor great students, the lively interchange of ideas, and the opportunity to share research and knowledge for the betterment of all. L&S is an exceptional place. I intend to work hard this year to ensure that it is an inclusive and welcoming environment for all, including those from underrepresented communities and our first-generation students.

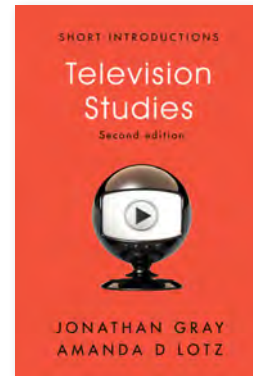
The College is positioned well for the future, thanks to the tremendous leadership of our former dean and new provost, John Karl Scholz. I know you will join me in congratulating Karl on his new position, as well as thanking him for his time as dean.

As alumni, you play a critical role in our success. I look forward to sharing our story with you and hearing from you, as well. Thank you for your support and advocacy on behalf of your department and the College of Letters & Science.

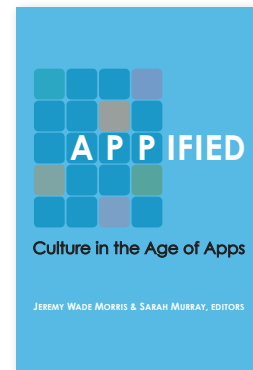
On, Wisconsin!

Eric M. Wilcots
Interim Dean, College of Letters & Science
MaryC. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy

Professors' Voices



Jonathan Gray
Television Studies (2nd Edition)
Co-authored with Amanda D. Lotz



Jeremy Morris
Appified: Culture in the Age of Apps
Edited with Sarah Murray



J.J. Murphy
Rewriting Indie Cinema: Improvisation, Psychodrama, and the Screenplay

Giving Matters

Day of the Badger Success



On April 9, UW–Madison held the inaugural “Day of the Badger” campus-wide fundraising campaign, and thanks to our generous alumni we raised nearly \$41,000! The donations have already made a tremendous impact for our students: we purchased a new fleet of video cameras and wireless microphone systems for our media production courses, significantly expanded our funding of summer internships for our undergraduate majors, and supported summer research travel for our graduate students. Your gifts help our Department thrive and we cannot thank you enough! We hope you will join us again for the next Day of the Badger on April 6–7, 2020.



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Department of Communication Arts
University of Wisconsin-Madison
821 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Madison, WI
Permit No. 658

STAY CONNECTED!



Follow @uwcommarts on Twitter



Follow @uwcommarts on Instagram



Like the UW-Madison Department of
Communication Arts on Facebook



Join the University of Wisconsin-Madison
Communication Arts Group on LinkedIn

We want to hear from you!

Send us your update:
info@commarts.wisc.edu

Please update your contact information in the
Alumni Directory by calling (888) WIS-ALUM
(947-2586) or email your changes to
AlumniChanges@uwalumni.com

An aerial view of the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus on an autumn day.

