Alumni Focus—Times Three

Doris Thomas (M.A., 1990) is a perfect example of the places a Communication degree can take a person. Ms. Thomas works for Commonwealth Health Corporation (CHC), the parent company of south central Kentucky’s largest hospital, and has been employed there for 26 years. She is currently Vice President of Marketing, Community Outreach and Development, and also the corporate spokesperson. Ms. Thomas has spent much of her life in the field of Communication and wouldn’t have it any other way.

She received both her B.A. and M.A. from WKU’s Department of Communication. One of her favorite classes at WKU, and one that she notes as having helped her in her career, was Crisis Communication taught by Dr. Larry Winn. One of the biggest benefits of WKU’s Communication program, according to Ms. Thomas, is the fact that it is very diverse.

After completing her master’s degree in 1990, Ms. Thomas taught Business and Professional Speaking for the department. Ms. Thomas enjoyed teaching the class and getting to know the students and hopes to do that again in the future when she has more time. Ms. Thomas enjoyed her time at WKU and spoke so highly of the department that her daughter, Kathryn, followed in her footsteps and became a graduate of the program. Upon graduation, Kathryn went on to law school and now has her own law firm in Glasgow, Kentucky.

~ Ashleigh Miller, Student
- Cont’d on page 3

If You Build It, They Will Come

Upon her arrival to the Department of Communication in the summer of 2011, Dr. Helen Sterk asked Professor Charlotte Elder to take charge of revamping the department’s recruitment and retention efforts. With a friendly faculty, enthusiastic students, and one of the highest graduation rates on campus, the Department of Communication has a lot to offer WKU students. However, the department recently graduated two of the largest classes the department has seen in December 2010 and Spring 2011, so recruitment is vital.

To keep up with student preferences, the department’s recruitment plan is going viral. The department has created a Facebook page and has updated its web page to allow students easier access to information about departmental policies and events. Other flashier, recruitment efforts are also being implemented. For example,
Professor Elder developed a “candy teaser” to be eye-catching and humorous. For this effort, “Big Red” chewing gum was placed on a card that read, “Big Red wants you to major in Communication!” “Airheads” were accompanied by the statement “Don’t be an Airhead, major in Communication!” and the “Now or Later” teaser stated, “A degree in Communication can help you Now and Later.” The department also participated in the Academic Advising and Retention Center’s Major Discovery Event during the Fall semester.

Efforts are also being taken to promote the benefits of pairing the Communication Studies major with some of the majors that recently have been added at WKU, for example Popular Culture Studies. These new majors are very attractive and exciting to incoming freshman, and can be enhanced with a strong communication foundation.

Professor Elder seems confident the faculty, staff, and students will work hard to ensure the department’s success stating, “Students comment about feeling welcomed, encouraged, and challenged by the faculty in our department. The Department of Communication faculty needs to continue to not only reach out to students but we also need to focus on our research so we are current and fresh.”

- Feceix Perrone, Student
Alumni Focus... (cont’d from page 1)

A Masters in Communication Can Lead to a Life of Yum!

Kasey Mathes (B.A. 2009, M.A. 2011) works for Yum! Brands, Inc. in Louisville, Kentucky as an Associate Account Manager on the Creative Services team. She has been with Yum! since mid January, having been offered the job one month prior to her graduation from WKU with a Master or Arts in Communication. Ms. Mathes also received her undergraduate degree in Broadcast Journalism with a minor in Marketing at WKU. Ms. Mathes is a prime example of how a background in communication can lead to various opportunities for students even straight out of college.

Ms. Mathes describes a Communication degree as something that is invaluable. She notes that she wakes up each day knowing she will use what she has learned not once that day, but with every interaction she has. When asked how her degree has been beneficial in her current job, Ms. Mathes replied, “I use my degree on a daily basis as I am the communication liaison between clients and art directors and often have to coach our clients on the most effective way to communicate employee programs through established branding and creativity.”

Ms. Mathes enjoys her career at Yum! and describes the most exciting part of her job as having the ability to shape the perception of the global audience. When asked what courses were beneficial to her job, Ms. Mathes listed Corporate and Organizational Advocacy, noting that she frequently acts as an advocate on her clients’ behalf when it comes to the actual branding/creativity of a project. She also works very closely with advocacy groups in the community on behalf of the organization. Other classes/areas of concentration that Ms. Mathes draws from in her career are Employee Communication, Persuasion, and Crisis Management. Lastly, Ms. Mathes asserted, “The best advice I have to give current students is to become involved in your program. Whether it is taking the time to build rapport with your professors, becoming an active member in a student organization, or taking on a Graduate Assistantship, WKU will become your biggest advocate when you leave The Hill. Making the effort while you are in the program will lead you to great opportunity and provide you with a life-long network of connections across the nation (Professors know everyone).”

~ Katie Beth Harmon, Student

A True Example of Success: Wade Pierce

With a degree in Corporate and Organizational Communication and a minor in Political Science, Wade Pierce (B.A. 2011) possessed the qualities necessary to be successful in the hospitality business. During Mr. Pierce’s college career, he stayed active in Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society, Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity, College Republicans, and Student Government Association. When asked about his time at WKU he responded, “I found that communicating and studying the way people interact in a business setting was very interesting to me. I decided that by becoming a Communication major, I would be able to learn valuable skills that I could adapt in the business world.”

After graduating in May, he quickly found a position at Holiday Inn-University Plaza in Bowling Green, Ky. as Assistant Front Office Manager. He was first introduced to Holiday Inn during his summer internship. Success in his internship helped him land his current position. As Assistant Front Office Manager, Mr. Pierce has implemented the skills and knowledge he gained as a student at Western Kentucky University into his everyday life in the professional world.

According to Mr. Pierce, the courses that were offered in the Department of Communication gave him the ability to think creatively when solving problems in the business structure. Also, he found it helpful that the courses focused on interactions among all cultures and racial backgrounds. This prepared him for the variety of interactions he faces everyday in the hospitality business. With a great job straight out of College, Mr. Pierce plans to further his education with a Masters in Business Administration while continuing his career at Holiday Inn.

~ Nick Miller, Student
Alumnus of the Year Sam Ford Speaks to Students

Sam Ford’s resume of accomplishments features many more entries than he has experienced birthdays. The 2005 WKU graduate whose list of four majors begins with Communication Studies has been honored for varied achievements from an equally diverse assortment of organizations.

His most significant in the city he and his family call home—Bowling Green—is being named 2011 Alumnus of the Year by the WKU Department of Communication.

A reception was held in his honor Nov. 16 in the Fine Arts Center, hosted by the Department of Communication. Faculty, students and friends gathered to pay their respects and to hear comments from a young man who already has become well-known and respected on a much wider scope.

Department Head Helen Sterk, who introduced him to those gathered, said the award is for “his brilliance, tenacity, curiosity and creativity in using his Communication degree.”

Ford demonstrated his communication skills as he talked about his life, his interests, his motivation, and his decision to live in Bowling Green. “Sam, his wife and family chose to live in Bowling Green when they could have chosen to live anywhere,” Dr. Sterk noted. Ford, who married his childhood sweetheart before they left Ohio County High School for WKU, said his wife works for the University of Southern California.

Sam is currently Director of Digital Strategy with Peppercom Strategic Communications, flying out of Nashville when the job calls for work that needs to be performed in person rather than online. He has extensive electronic skills, however, evidenced by his recently being named Social Media Innovator of the Year by the Bulldog Reporter, publisher of the Daily Dog online trade journal, which is the public relations industry’s largest circulation publication.

After piling up majors in Communication Studies, Journalism, Mass Communication and English along with two minors in four years at WKU, he earned his masters degree at MIT. He teaches and consults with the Comparative Media Studies program at MIT and the Popular Culture program at WKU.

Ford’s wide array of interests is demonstrated in the books he has co-authored, Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Society and The Survival of Soap Opera: Transformation for a New Media Era. He has also been a wrestling promoter and has even wrestled professionally himself, even though he is not built like Hulk Hogan. His first venture into marketing words came as a middle school student as “community correspondent” for the Ohio County newspaper. He later wrote columns for the newspaper which earned him Kentucky Press Association awards.


Dr. Sterk said, “I love that about him—his career shows how people who do Communication Studies are among the luckiest in the world—they can study virtually anything!”

—Jim Turner, Instructor
Dr. J. Ann Selzer will also present at two additional events:

Thursday, February 2, 2012—4:00 p.m.—Russell Miller Theatre

“Why a Communication Major Matters in Your Career”

Friday, February 3, 2012—noon—Faculty House

“Women and Business Give and Take”
Additional Upcoming Events

Monday, February 27, 2012
Mittie Carey will present “Mission (IM)possible: Rhetorical Situation and the Hybridized Freedom Faith Discourse of Prathia L. Hall (1962—1965)” in FAC 156 at 7:00 p.m.

Monday, April 1, 2012
Dr. Joseph Walther will present several topics:
“Digging Deeper in the Social Information Processing Theory of Computer-Mediated Communication” at 10:00 a.m.
“(Mis)Attributions in Virtual Groups” at 12:30 p.m.
“Social Influence in Social Media: Implicit Persuasion in Facebook, YouTube, Amazon, and Elsewhere” in Russell Miller Theatre at 7:00 p.m.

Hilltoppers Communicate State Wide

Western Kentucky University’s students and faculty are making a big impact on the Kentucky Communication Association. Dr. Holly Payne, Associate Professor of Communication is now President of the association. She recently finished her term as First Vice President where she planned, coordinated, and oversaw the running of its Fall 2011 conference.

The Kentucky Communication Association, more commonly known as KCA, is a professional higher education/academic organization for professors, instructors, and graduate students in Kentucky. Its members come together to share their teaching and research to help strengthen the communication discipline at collegiate institutions across the state.

Of the role of KCA in the lives of students and faculty, Dr. Payne said, “These conferences present an opportunity to share academic work and to learn from others. This networking opportunity strengthens our ties across the state and keeps us informed of the initiatives and innovations at other institutions.”

This year, Dr. Jennifer Mize Smith won KCA’s Excellence in the Art of Teaching Award, and graduate student Ashley Miller won the Michael S. Shelton Top Graduate Student Paper award. Dr. Jennifer Mize Smith, Dr. Holly Payne, and Dr. Blair Thompson also presented on a panel which focused on weaving communication theory into a variety of classes. Graduate students Wei Huang and Katie Payne also presented papers. Dr. Helen Sterk, Dr. Donna Renaud, Mr. Gary Hughes, and Mr. Clint Haynes also attended the convention this year.

~Lindsay Heath, Student
Recent Communication Studies graduate, Madeline Gannon, (B.A., December 2011) journeyed all the way to St. Stephen’s Green in Dublin Ireland for 47 days during June 2011 for an exciting internship opportunity with Residence Member’s Club – Restaurant 41. The knowledge gained in her Communication courses assisted her during her excursion.

“Learning about Intercultural Communication in my classes prepared me for dealing with the cultural differences I dealt with in Ireland. Also, learning about Organizational Communication helped my transition into the professional atmosphere,” says Ms. Gannon about how well the Department of Communication prepared her for life beyond the classroom. She noted that several departmental courses played a role in her success. For example, she credited the department’s course in Organizational Communication with advancing the communication skills she needed to flourish in the workplace, and the Intercultural Communication with teaching her how to interact in with people from different cultures, backgrounds, and values. Ms. Gannon also credited Communication Foundations for preparing her for her journey. Doing her internship she found herself able to apply a variety of communication theories she learned in WKU classrooms to unclear communications she found herself in during her internship process. She was able to apply the concepts in the workplace, and in general, everyday life. Having this knowledge made it easier for her to fit in and surpass the expectations of her manager. Some of her tasks included: social media research, contacting potential members, planning for a marketing event, managing social media for Residence Members Club, and speech writing.

Ms. Gannon offers the following advice to current departmental majors about internships: “Do what interests you the most. I chose to do an internship abroad because I wanted to travel, but I was able to learn so much more about communication (especially intercultural communication) than if I had participated in a program in the states.”

Ms. Gannon is currently participating in the Professional Internship Program with the Walt Disney Company. She plans to begin a Communication master’s degree program next fall.
**Lambda Pi Eta (ΛΗΗ)**

It was a busy fall semester for Lambda Pi Eta, which was established on campus in 2005 by Dr. Ellen Bonaguro. We have continued to grow; fall recruitment brought 10 new members to our chapter. To be eligible for an invitation, students must have 60 credit hours completed, including 12 hours of communication study, have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a 3.25 GPA in the Communication discipline. Students must also be in good standing with the university.

The semester started off with LPH’s participation in the Steamer Seafood Bash, an Alumni Association tailgate event held before the WKU vs. Navy game on September 10th. LPH volunteers were on hand to help the alumni staff with set up and cleanup.

On November 16th, LPH held a fundraiser with the help of Stakz Frozen Yogurt here in Bowling Green. 20% of the day’s sales was donated to the chapter.

From November 17th to the 21st, officers Felix Perrone, Ashleigh Miller and Becca Schaefer attended the National Communication Association convention in New Orleans, LA. The convention provided these students with an opportunity to network with communication scholars and attend various sessions of interest. They also attended the LPH business meeting to gain insight into how other LPH chapters operate and to get ideas for events to implement at WKU. NCA proved to be an exciting opportunity for these students.

In preparation for travel to NCA, fund-raising coordinator Katie Beth Harmon solicited donations from local businesses. Several generous monetary donations were made, and LPH received several donations for gift baskets for a future gift basket raffle.

With this exciting semester coming to a close, LPH looks forward to an equally exciting Spring semester and new year.

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**Communication Organization for Graduate Students (COGS)**

The Communication Organization for Graduate Students (COGS) had a wonderful fall 2011 semester. We hosted sessions to enhance interviewing skills and to polish resumes/CVs. COGS also elected new officers for 2012—Jessica Paulsen, president, Ryan Cummings, vice president, and Ian Brandon, secretary. We held our last meeting at Lost River Pizza to wish everyone good luck on final exams and to congratulate the December graduates. We have a full spring 2012 semester planned and are looking forward to welcoming the new students into the program!
Fall 2011
Student Workers

Rachel Clark
Madeline Gannon
Bethany Hughes

Kimberly Cooper
Missy Meige
Mattie Russell
Three students had papers accepted for presentation at the Kentucky Communication Association (KCA) annual convention in September 2011:

Wei Huang

"Organizational Identification and Communication: An Application to Overseas China Education Foundation" from Dr. Ishii’s Applied Organizational Communication Course.

Ashley Miller

“Student Affairs Administrators’ Expression Management Strategies: An Exploration of Administrators’ Communication with Students” from Dr. Blair Thompson’s Qualitative Research Methods course. This paper won the Michael S. Shelton Top Graduate Student Paper award.

Katie Payne

“Group Communication Dynamics in Discover College” from Dr. Kumi Ishii’s Applied Organizational Communication course.

Kasey Mathes

“UNTHINK What You Thought about KFC: Burke’s Concept of Identification Applied to the UNTHINK Campaign.” This paper won the Dan Millar Award for Top Paper in the Public Relations Division.

“Shoes for Tomorrow: Compliance Gaining Strategies Identified in Pre-Inception of TOMS’ One for One Movement” was also presented by Kasey Mathes.

Amanda Grego

“A Sweet Surprise: An Analysis of The Corn Refiners Association’s Image Restoration Strategies”
Becoming Part of the Hill Again…

While her academic journey began at WKU back in 1979 as a graduate student, in July 2011 Dr. Helen Sterk made her way back to the Hill joining the Communication Department again as Department Head and Professor. Dr. Sterk has brought new energy as well as a new vision to the communication department. Her vision is for the communication department to, “Become a leading American Communication Department with International Reach.” She comes to WKU with the experience needed to guide department faculty, staff, and students on this journey.

In 1974, Dr. Sterk graduated from Calvin College with a B.A. in Speech and started her career as a high school teacher. After following her husband to WKU in 1979, she went back to school and graduated with a M.A. in Speech and Theatre in 1979. Dr. Sterk went on to complete her educational journey with a Ph.D. in Rhetorical Studies from the University of Iowa in 1986. Throughout her career, Dr. Sterk has made her way from Marquette University all the way to Toronto, Canada as a successful professor. In the spring of 2011, Dr. Sterk was a visiting communication professor in Pohang, South Korea.

While being a professor is a big part of Dr. Sterk’s life, she is also well known as a researcher and author. Her main research focus is rhetoric by and about women. Her research topics have included mother/daughter communication, romance novels, birthing experiences, and lingerie advertising.

As an author, Dr. Sterk has written several books and book chapters. In 2009, she published *Gender, Culture, and Physicality: Paradoxes and Taboos* with Annelies Knoppers.

Her most recent book is *Mothers and Daughters: Connections across Cultures*, which was co-authored with Alice Deakins and Rebecca Lockridge; which, will be out later this year. Dr. Sterk gives two communication recommendations for mothers dealing with daughters. 1. Never criticize your daughters; they get enough of that from the world they live in. 2. Always encourage them in everything they do.

*While research matters to Dr. Sterk, her primary professional pleasure is contributing to the quality and value of the communication program at Western Kentucky University.*

- Brittany Jones, Student
Ellen Bonaguro, Ph.D.

Ellen Bonaguro received the National Academic Advising Association Outstanding Advising Award.

Cecile Garmon, Ph.D.

Cecile Garmon presented “Ubuntu: Leadership Communication Development through Worldview Creation” at International Leadership Association in London, United Kingdom in October 2011. She was invited to present at several lectures: Communication Workshop for the Glasgow B & PW young leaders training program on September 13, 2011, Workshop on Communication to the Kentucky State B & PW Executive Committee at Barren River Lodge on November 18, 2011, and “Lincoln’s Leadership and Communication Style” during Helms Library series on December 6, 2011.

Kumi Ishii, Ph.D.

Kumi Ishii hosted Japanese Traditional Dance and Music Education Tour in Van Meter Hall in November, 2011.

Carl L. Kell, Ph.D.

Carl Kell participated in an international conference for communication consultants in Istanbul, Turkey, in November, 2011. He was also invited to lecture on “Dealing with Delightful People” at the Lions club on December 13, 2011, and “Let’s Talk Business: A Communication Primer for the 21st Century” during ‘The Last Lecture’ series at WKU on December 6, 2011.

Holly Payne, Ph.D.


Donna Renaud, Ed.D.

Donna Renaud completed the doctoral program at WKU in Fall 2011. Her dissertation, “An Analysis of Burmese and Iraqi Resettlement Location and Assimilation in a Midsized City: Implications for Educational and Other Community Leaders” (MS #1016) has been posted in Dissertations http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/diss/17

Jennifer Mize Smith, Ph.D.

Jennifer Mize Smith received the Top Teaching Award at Kentucky Communication Association annual meeting. She held the office of Marketing Director and Executive Council member for Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) in 2011. In addition, she presented a paper "Learning to Give: Faith and Family as Sources of Philanthropic Identity.” at the National Communication Association (NCA) in New Orleans, Louisiana held November 2011. She also presented a paper “Systems Theory in Organizational and Small Group Contexts” at Kentucky Communication Association (KCA) at Lake Barkely, Kentucky in September 2011.

Helen Sterk, Ph.D.

Helen Sterk served on the Executive Board of the Association of Communication Administrators. She presented conference papers “Performing Wisdom” at Organization for the Study of Communication, Language and Gender at Evanston, Illinois in October 2011, and “Women’s Voice: Progress and Obstacles” at National Communication Associate (NCA) at New Orleans, Louisiana in November 2011.

Blair Thompson, Ph.D.

Blair Thompson served as Officer for Instructional Development Division Nominating Committee of the National Communication Association, Secretary for Basic Course interest group for Central States Communication Association, and Vice-president for Professional Development interest group for Central States Communication Association. He also presented “Positives and Negatives of Similarity and Difference: Applying Relational Dialectics in Interpersonal Relationships” at the Kentucky Communication Association in Lake Barkely, Kentucky in September 2011, and "Student Academic Support: A Validity Test" at National Communication Association (NCA) in New Orleans, Louisiana during November 2011.
Student Events

Homecoming Parade

Dr. Carl Kell, Laura Ringer, Cody Ray Moore, Jordan Boggs

Congratulations!
Homecoming Queen
& 2nd Runner-Up

Dr. Donna Renaud

Graduation

Dr. Donna Renaud

Congratulations!
from the
Department of Communication

Ashleigh Miller
2011 Homecoming Queen
Communication Studies major

Whitney Churchman
Homecoming Queen 2nd Runner-Up
Communication Studies major
CommuniQuotes

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Communication works for those who work at it.

John Powell

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

George Bernard Shaw