

August 6, 2019

Connect.  
Collaborate.  
Communicate.

# The WKU Communicator

## DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Past and present came together for the Department of Communication as we celebrated 50 years of contributing to the Hill. To honor the anniversary, the department sponsored a week of celebration, leading up to a banquet for students and alumni.

Over one hundred students and alumni convened in the Augenstein Alumni Center Ballroom. Throughout the evening, the department honored its past and looked toward its future. Past department heads, alumni, and current student leadership were recognized. The highlight of the event came when Dr. Randall Capps, founding department head for the Department of Communication, spoke about the department's origins and purpose.

As guests mingled with one another and ate a delicious meal, photos of past and present faculty, staff, and students moved across the screens. At one point in the night, the guests were given an opportunity to test their knowledge of the department by playing a round of trivia. A video was also shown of current students and faculty wishing the department a happy 50<sup>th</sup>!

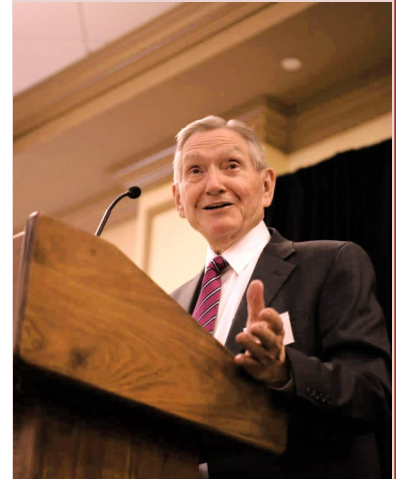
Later in the evening, Dr. Timothy Caboni, WKU's President and alumnus of our master's program, shared through video his desire to celebrate the rich history of the department with those in attendance.

Overall, it was a beautiful celebration! Dr. Sterk summed it up, "Only every now and again an organization gets the chance to celebrate its beginning and development, and we have the rare opportunity tonight to celebrate our successes."

Not only was it a memorable night for those who had been with the department for years, but it was also a meaningful night for current students, as they were able to interact with past students and current professors. Ryan Linton, a junior in the department and president of Western Kentucky's chapter of IABC, said, "The dinner was an incredible opportunity to interact with faculty in a way that I hadn't been able to prior. I had real conversations with professors of mine that helped create bonds outside of teacher-student and to also hear some awesome stories from our faculty."

The night was a hit as the past and present came together and looked forward to the future of the Department of Communication. Here's to another exciting fifty years!

By Kimber Morris



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## UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

**Emily Adkins**, a senior Honors Communication Studies student observed how often and consistently, almost obsessively, other honors students communicate with their parents despite being in college and living on their own. It brought her to wonder about the communication effects of helicopter parenting. So, with the help of Dr. Holly Payne Faculty-Undergraduate Student Engagement (FUSE) grant, designed to help undergraduates such as herself get more experience with academic research with the guidance of a faculty member – she conducted research. In a survey of 182 students taking Colonnade courses, she asked the question, “What is the relationship between warm and cold conformity, conversation orientation, and helicopter parenting?” Dr. Payne and Emily found that helicopter parenting involves more elements of “cold conformity” where parents struggle to control the actions and decisions of their children and limits to personal autonomy, as opposed to “warm conformity” which refers to conformity of family values and feelings of togetherness. They presented the research at the National Communication Association Convention in Salt Lake City in November, and Emily presented at the WKU Undergraduate Research Conference. They hope to continue their analysis as they work toward publication.



**Francis Wilson**, a 23-year-old Honors student with a self-designed major in “Digital Storytelling,” a combination of photojournalism, communication, and political theory, is studying the widely unstudied world of young politicians, candidates between the ages of 18 and 23. Just a year ago, he was looking for something tangible he could do in his education, then he found research, which has been a great outlet for him to look at things creatively, talking to people, teasing interesting questions about politics and community. Since then, he has taken advantage of many fantastic opportunities and connections in order to study politically active youth across the United States such as the organizer for the March for Our Lives. He also had the opportunity to shadow Latin-American candidate, Manuel Chavez, as he ran for City Council in Costa Mesa, California. With the help of Honors and Communication Department funding, he has been able to travel across the States until graduation this May. In the future, he aspires to partner with newspapers and, eventually, work on a book.

**Marley Wallace, Haley Baker, Hailee Smith, and Olivia Goff** conducted research with the PRSA foundation for the Bateman competition. These seniors were given clients and target audiences in order to ultimately craft a project that created a more diverse field of Public Relations at the Bowling Green High School. They worked with English, journalism, and newswriting students and evaluated their current understanding of Public Relations and diversity. When they found that these students thought PR Professionals were people pleasers or party planners, these WKU seniors went to work. By the end of their project, in the follow up survey, 85% defined PR Professionals as “A person who represents an organization to create working relationships.” In the pre-campaign survey, only 49% chose that option. They submitted their project and results to the PRSSA Bateman Competition, an international group with chapters at almost every university in the country, in March and, as of writing this, they should be hearing back any day now about the results of the competition.

By AC Chan



## KEEPING IT REAL IN REALITY: HOW TO ESTABLISH AND USE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND



WKU brushed with celebrity in September 2018 when alumnus Santos Lopez came and left his mark. Lopez, Executive Producer for Discovery and Executive Director of HGTV shows *Brother v. Brother*, *Hometown*, *Flipping the Block* and more, shared with students the importance of creating and maintaining a personal brand and how properly and effectively to use that brand in interviews and their chosen careers.

In his campus-wide evening presentation, Lopez held a Skype interview with *Hometown* hosts, Ben and Erin Napier, to share with students the experience of having a TV show and how their personal brand plays into that. Along with the Skype interview, Lopez also coordinated a prerecorded video message with *Property Brothers* stars Jonathan and Drew Scott saying hello and wishing all students well in their future careers.

While visiting WKU, Lopez paid went to three communication classes – Organizational Communication, Popular Culture, and User Experience – to meet students and answer their questions. Lopez assisted the department in creating promotional content, as well, starring in a video with Dr. Helen Sterk and Big Red to get students excited for the new things coming for the department.

Instructor Gayle Allison organized Lopez’ visit, including media appearances. Local news stations also featured Lopez on their stations. He was a guest on “View From the Hill” with Amy Bingham and the 11:30 WBKO Mid-day Live show with Laura Rogers.

This event was followed by a reception where faculty and select students could converse with Lopez and ask further questions.

By Kenna Haywood

## EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATION

The Department of Communication houses many outstanding students and professors. In order to honor them, the department hosted a mini-conference in coordination with its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary festivities. The mini-conference showcased fantastic work from students and faculty alike, revealing our department's talent.

A first ever Juried Show enabled students to showcase their work and their achievements, including essays, campaigns, advertisements, and videos. Students, faculty, and alumni were able to walk through the show and check out the show pieces. Katie Fischer, assistant manager of Imagewest, our full-service advertising and public relations agency, said this was a "very important and unique opportunity for students," and she hopes that the Juried Show can become "a semesterly or yearly event that students can be excited about participating in."

The mini-conference sessions began with "Never Underestimate an Intern," in which the Imagewest team talked about different campaigns that they have been able to work with. Two sessions at one o'clock included: "JUMPstart your Master's Degree," a session that included current JUMP (Junior Undergraduate Master's Program) students, such as Katy Kirkpatrick and her study on whether couples within the communication discipline actively use communication theories in their relationship, and "Public Relations Community Engagement," in which Public Relations students highlighted their work.

At two o'clock, the first session displayed student-faculty research, such as Dr. Payne and Emily Adkins's work studying helicopter parenting and its effects on communication. The second session featured the Imagewest team explaining how media can be used to advertise and achieve greater reach for your target audience. Dr. Angela Jerome, a professor in the Department, believes this "gave students a broad picture of what can be done with degrees in communication, advertising, and public relations" and "allowed faculty from the newly merged department to see, and appreciate, each other's work."

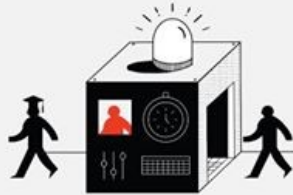
At three, emeritus faculty from the department – Drs. Carl Kell, Randall Capps, Judith Hoover, and Larry Winn – were interviewed by Renee Shaw, KET's Public Affairs Managing Producer and Moderator. In this session, emeritus faculty shared behind-the-scenes stories of the department's history and their take on how communication has been and will continue to be an important discipline for study.

As this mini-conference becomes an annual event, we can continue celebrating academic excellence within our department.

By Kimber Morris

### GRADUATION TRANSFORMATION

MARCH 22



FREE AD + COMM + PR CONFERENCE  
WORKSHOPS | PROJECTS | PRESENTATIONS

## SCALING COMMON SENSE

Common sense. Who has it? How can we obtain it? When and where should it be used? What is the value of common sense?

As a part of the Department of Communication's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration week, Dr. John Lyne, a Western alumnus, took the stage in Gary Ransdell Hall to speak to a nearly full auditorium of students and faculty about common sense. The lecture was the most recent installment of the Carl L. and Mary Anne Kell Distinguished Lectures in Communication series, and it discussed the value and rarity of true common sense in modern decision-making situations.

Dr. Lyne's areas of professional research lie in studying the ways that rhetorical patterns (and how they are used in various circumstances) influence individuals. "Common sense is a term we use to characterize certain kinds of situated judgements. I am particularly interested in how our language choices can facilitate 'common sense' judgements in unfamiliar circumstances," says Dr. Lyne. He spoke on a slice of his observations pertaining to common sense during this lecture.

Dr. Lyne used a good deal of audience interactivity, which was well received by all. "[He] really listened to the answers [to the questions he posed], incorporating them into the rest of the lecture. His quality as a teacher shone through," said Dr. Helen Sterk, Head of the Department of Communication. When asked what his favorite part of his lecture experience was, Dr. Lyne replied, "I appreciated the interaction with students and faculty alike, as well as the positive feedback I received." He concluded, "It's always good to visit my alma mater, to walk around its beautiful campus, and especially to check out the interesting activities in the Department of Communication!"

Dr. John Lyne graduated from Western Kentucky University in 1971 with degrees in both Communication and Philosophy. During his time here, he was heavily involved in quite a few campus activities, including being on the debate team, serving in student government, and writing opinion columns for the school newspaper.

He went on to receive his Ph.D. in Communication Studies with a minor in Philosophy from the University of Wisconsin in 1978. Currently, he is a professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh. He is also the founder, sponsor, and recurring celebrity judge for the John Lyne Speech Contest, held once a semester for selected outstanding public speaking students currently in a Fundamentals of Public Speaking and Communication class at Western Kentucky University.

By Abby North





## JURIED SHOW WINNERS

### BEST OF SHOW

Caroline Farley, Mackenzie Duvall,  
Courtney McDonald, & Sam Flick

Baker Wright

### 1st PLACE

#### JUDGE'S CHOICE

##### Event Campaign

Tatum Brandt, Jordan Bodenhamer,  
Katie Fischer, Josie Shriver, & Kapri  
Beck

##### Videography

Katie Babbage & Steven Hunter

##### Speech

Francis Wilson

##### Public Relations Campaign

Hannah Chua, Sarah Starkey, Katie  
Fischer, & Taylor Brantley

##### Article

Sarah Starkey

##### Website

Sam Flick

##### Presentation

Sam Flick

##### Digital Advertisement

Baker Wright

##### Press Release

Olivia Peebles

##### Social Media

Josie Shriver, Katie Fischer, Tatum  
Brandt, & Jordan Bodenhamer

##### Branding

Sam Flick

##### Research Project

Sam Barnett, Becca Buckner, Katie  
Fischer, Katie Vogel, Jordan Sandwith,  
& Meqhim Almeqhim

##### Crisis Communication

Courtney McDonald & Mary Mercurio

##### Print Advertisement

Baker Wright

## BRINGING POP TO THE HILL

Pop Culture is everywhere. According to Marcel Danesi, "...It is a form of culture that appeals to our corporeal selves, challenging traditional morals and aesthetic pretentiousness while entertaining us with its earthiness" (Danesi, 2017, pp.1-2). Pop Culture has and will stay relevant. Especially with the help of social media, pop culture's influence increases in people's everyday lives.

Here at Western Kentucky University, Popular Culture Studies made its debut fall semester of 2018. The Communication Department's Pop Culture Studies major, one of only two in the country, is led by Dr. Joseph Hoffswell. Dr. Hoffswell teaches communication, and now teaches and advises for Pop Culture.

However, Pop Culture will no longer be a major for incoming students; it is only available to those who have declared it as of spring 2018. Due to declining numbers of enrollment for the past five years and course work depending on particular courses that were not offered, the decision to do away with the major was made. The situation did remove some courses, but did not take away the Pop Culture Club, nor other Pop courses.

This removal is unfortunate since pop culture has become a powerful force when it comes to communication. In order to see how pop culture can impact people, the Pop 201 class attended the Lexington Comic and Toy Convention on March 22. This type of convention consists of people and events that focus on comic books, toys, TV shows, etc. People go dressed up as their favorite fictional character (usually from a comic book) and go to panels, buy merchandise, and have meet and greets with celebrities.

These conventions, held across the world, bring different types of pop culture fans together. Each floor of the convention had its own purpose. There were meet and greets on the arena's basketball court, rooms full of toys and art in which artists could sell their own work, a floor with interview panels, and a floor devoted entirely to cosplay. Partaking in the conventions is a way for fans to express themselves, and it is important to them and their individuality.

Along with these conventions, pop culture itself gives people individuality because people form what their likes and dislikes are, and from that they start to figure out who they are.

By Rachel Coomes

## DR. HOFFSWELL LOVES POP CULTURE

The Pop Culture Studies major, belonging to the Communication Department, is led by Dr. Joseph Hoffswell. Dr. Hoffswell teaches communication, and now teaches and advises for Pop Culture.

I sat down with Dr. Hoffswell and discussed his background and opinions of Pop Culture. When asked if he has always been interested in pop culture, Hoffswell responded, "Yes, since a very young age. My dad bought a Nintendo Entertainment System when I was like three, I think? From then, I started playing video games, I got into comic books, action figures, and what not. Collecting for me became a thing because my dad collected as well." A collection of Funko POPS! can be seen taking up one wall in his office.

I asked when he started going to conventions. Hoffswell chuckled and stated, "Last semester in POP 201. I saw an opportunity to go through the school and expose students to the conventions, so I took it. Now it's something that's probably going to be a regular part of my life. I did not go to them previously because when you are a Ph.D. graduate student with a family, you don't really have forty or fifty dollars to throw to conventions."

When I inquired how he got into the position of the Pop Culture Studies director, Hoffswell responded, "Last year there was a job call mainly focusing on digital media, but I learned once I had the interview on campus that a third of my time would be dedicated to running the Pop Culture major. The way I ended my presentation, I talked about how I would contribute to the various areas to the Communication Department." Dr. Hoffswell's presentation was successful, making him the Pop Culture director.

After that, I asked him how he felt about Pop Culture Studies not being an active major anymore. Hoffswell responded with, "I mean, I'm not happy about it, to be honest. I understand that having less than twenty people in a major isn't great, but it's interdisciplinary. This program has gotten positive attention from employers because it has piqued curiosity and interest. I have clear evidence from alumni that the Pop Culture degree has helped them become employed after graduating. Taking away something that can potentially guarantee students employment; I don't think is a wise decision."

In response, I asked how the study of Pop Culture can stay alive at Western Kentucky. Hoffswell said, "We can continue to do it through creating classes and encouraging students to take courses focused on Pop Culture. I also want to propose communication classes that will focus on digital media that focuses on Pop Culture such as discussing YouTube stars, streamers, etc. because that is a part of our digital media landscape." The world and its workplace seems like it is evolving. Jobs are being created that were not here twenty, ten, even five years ago.

While the Popular Culture Studies major is no longer an enrollment option for students, the Communication Department is proud to still have Dr. Hoffswell and his vision for teaching others about present and future popular forms of communication.

By Rachel Coomes



## EXPLORING THE LINK - DR. KUMI ISHII'S RESEARCH

Dr. Kumi Ishii, a faculty member in the Department of Communication since fall of 2005, strives to intertwine her passion for communication with her passion for the Japanese culture. She does this by researching topics that pique her interest, being the advisor for the WKU Japanese Culture Club, and teaching courses in Intercultural Communication. Dr. Ishii recently released a couple publications and is currently working on three research projects.

One of Dr. Ishii's research projects involves how communication plays a role in trust building among members in multinational organizations. Her research is being conducted among American and Japanese employees of Japanese multinational organizations located in the Bowling Green area.

She is also working on research regarding how computer-based receptionists affect job applicants' attraction to the organization. Dr. Ishii has looked at how multiple organizations are replacing human receptionists with a computer check-in system because of a shortage of staff and the desire to allocate funds elsewhere. She states she is "interested in this alteration brought by technology in the reception, which is the



first place of the organization to which job applicants visit."

Another piece of research that Dr. Ishii is examining is about librarians' identification. She is interested in learning how internal communication and external communication play a role in the development of their identification. To conduct this study, she visited Harvard University this summer and interviewed multiple librarians from the campus.

One of Dr. Ishii's most recent publications includes research done with Mary Madison Lyons (a graduate student) and Sabrina

Carr (an undergraduate student). Their research studied media richness theory and its application to recent communication technologies.

When asked why she chose to research these certain topics, Dr. Ishii explained that her research starts with her curiosity through observations in her daily life and also through casual conversations with people who share their work life with her.

Finally, I questioned what Dr. Ishii's favorite publication or research topic was. Her answer was that she enjoys all her research, but if she had to choose one, it would have to be her master's thesis, which was about employee satisfaction with email communication. She stated this was her first piece of research and her success with it led her to pursue her study of communication and her career in academia.

The Department of Communication is happy to have Dr. Ishii working on these different research projects and looks forward to what she will work on next.

By Mackenzie Mills

## CAPE REVIEW AFFECTS DEPARTMENT

This fall, the Department of Communication will be taking a hit. The major in Popular Culture Studies – a program that pairs well as a double major and is vital to understanding communication in our present culture – as well as a few other programs in the department will no longer be offered as of the Fall 2019 semester.

The Department of Communication is committed to helping students develop a critical understanding of communication as a central feature of human life. Part of this commitment includes helping people to improve relationships, to analyze social and cultural problems, and to develop effective messages for diverse audiences.

In May, the Board of Regents approved the recommendations made by the CAPE (Comprehensive Academic Program Evaluation) committee. According to the Herald (2019), out of the 380 academic programs, 209 will be maintained, 55 programs will be transformed, 15 programs will grow, and 101 programs will be suspended.

Like every other department on campus, the Department of Communication will be affected. The undergraduate major in Popular Culture Studies and certificate in Political Communication will be suspended along with the graduate minor in Communication. On a positive note, instead of being suspended, the master's certificate, Communicating in Healthcare, and undergraduate minors in Digital Advertising and Communication Studies will be transformed.

More positives in this situation are that students enrolled before the fall semester begins may continue in the program until they have completed it, and according to WKU's website (2019), administration does not foresee any faculty being cut as result of the CAPE review.

At the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year former Provost, Terry Ballman, along with her staff members, Doug McElroy and Merrill Price, met with the academic college leadership to discuss the Comprehensive Academic Program Evaluation that the University would be undergoing. Since that first meeting on August 29, 2018, the administration held a total of 20 meetings where they met with department heads and deans all focusing on how to change WKU's academic programs for the better.

According to WKU's website (2019), the CAPE is a part of a larger strategic plan for WKU titled *Climbing to Greater Heights* that will guide the University through the next decade. The goal of the CAPE reviews is to offer sustainable academic programs that will be both intellectually stimulating and beneficial to students. The CAPE review comes at a time when the University has been dealing with a decrease in high school students and international students as well as reduced state funding.

By Robert Lewis

## WKU DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

At the WKU Department of Communication, we believe that communication is key to a better self, a better life, a and better future! Our purpose is to provide others with the skills necessary to understand and improve communication in real-life situations.



## JOHN LYNE SPEECH CONTEST WINNERS

1st PLACE

SPRING 2019

Kynlee Stevenson

Lauren Varner

FALL 2018

Brent Smith

Oliver Talmadge

Connect.  
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Department of Communication  
Fine Arts Center, 130  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, KY 42101

Phone: 270-745-3296

Fax: 270-745-3441

E-mail: [comm.student@wku.edu](mailto:comm.student@wku.edu)



## A WORD FROM OUR DEPARTMENT HEAD: COMMUNICATION'S BIG YEAR

Last year, the Department of Communication engaged in big meaning-making events. The biggest was that we celebrated 50 years of being a department, years which included comings and goings of programs in Theatre, Broadcasting, Forensics, Advertising, and Public Relations. At the heart remained studying communication and making effective messages for audiences. Dr. Randy Capps, department founder, reminded us in his anniversary speech that this is where we come from and where we are going.

Student learning grounds the department. Students carry the legacy forward. What they learn in courses such as Small Group, Advertising in a Digital World, Legal and Ethical Foundations of Strategic Communication, Introduction to Popular Culture, International Public Relations, or Organizational Communication underlie student work in internships, Imagewest, Capstone, International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), Comm Ambassadors, Ad Fed, and the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). Learning enhances doing, or it is not really learning at all.

Our commitment to project-based learning led to the transformation of Imagewest's manager position from staff to faculty. Kara Williams Glenn, who earned her M.F.A. with honors the summer of 2019, joins the faculty in the fall as a Professional-in-Residence. Professor Glenn's assignment includes managing Imagewest's business, teaching its internship class, and teaching graphic design for Art. This interdisciplinary position shows where higher education is moving—toward flexible assignments that support more than one department.

Over the year, in addition, Communication hosted media producer Santos Lopez, rhetoric professor John Lyne, sponsored student travel to professional conferences in PR and Communication, saw the revitalization of IABC under Dr. Donna Schiess' leadership, sent Popular Culture Studies students and Dr. Hoffswell to Comic-Con, sponsored student competition in a Juried Show, and held a mini-conference on communication.

We are thriving here at WKU. Whether you are a student, alum, faculty member or donor, you've chosen the right department!

Dr. Helen Sterk



PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION  
FINE ARTS CENTER, 130  
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY  
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101