

By Carrie Pratt
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Since she was little, Laurel Deppen has always enjoyed sharing stories with an audience. Her childhood hobbies were writing stories and creating videos. At five-years-old, she received her first video camera and she spent her time interviewing her family to share with classmates and others. When she went to high school, she discovered that broadcast journalism was a way to merge her two loves and pursue them as a career. Her high school teacher recognized a possible path for Laurel and pointed her to the School of Media's Broadcast program at Western Kentucky University.

A senior in broadcasting this year, Laurel also minors in journalism writing and political science. She added journalism because she felt it would help her pursue her path in broadcasting and grow her overall storytelling skills. Political science has also been an interest of Laurel's, having grown up watching cable news and being interested in how government works. She says she is fascinated with studying voting behavior.

On staff at the College Heights Herald since her freshman year, Laurel has seen the ins-and-outs of working a beat, editing others' copy and all the while, building her leadership skills. Students from all over WKU can attest to Laurel's impact. "Since I joined the Herald staff a year-and-a-half ago, I've gotten to work alongside numerous up and coming journalists. Laurel Deppen has, by far, taught me the most. She has been a magnificent section editor, managing editor and an even better friend. I'm blessed to have worked with her," says Jack Dobbs, a junior journalism major.

As editor-in-chief this year, Laurel faces one of the biggest challenges to come her way in Student Publications. As she leads her staff through this unprecedented time, Student Publications Director Chuck Clark has been very impressed with her. "Laurel is a talented young journalist, but also a strong storyteller who has a real eye for detail and clear explanation. Those are talents that will really benefit her as editor of the College Heights Herald," Clark says.

Laurel has been helping other student leaders navigate the current staff from print to digital this semester because of COVID-19. You can see some of that work at <https://wkuherald.com/coronavirus/>. The traffic on the website has increased dramatically as the staff have helped their audience navigate the new reality at WKU and beyond.

Laurel has received many awards and she recently placed 20th in the Hearst Personality Profile writing competition. She has also received an SPJ award for her podcast, Top of the Week (<https://wkuherald.com/podcasts/>) One of Laurel's more challenging stories was interviewing and writing a profile about a WKU student who was at George H.W. Bush's bedside when he passed away (https://wkuherald.com/life/wku-student-details-life-as-aide-for-george-h-w-bush/article_5acfdc4e-3959-11e9-8b92-7f27aa296f81.html)

She has interned at TechRepublic, the Louisville Courier Journal and the Charlotte Observer.

<https://www.wku.edu/schoolofmedia/undergraduateprograms/broadcasting/broadcasting.php>