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Communication

4-2017

Communicator, April 2017

Western Michigan University

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Western Michigan University, "Communicator, April 2017" (2017). *Communicator: School of Communication Newsletter*. 15.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/communication_news/15

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April 2017 NEWS

- Sports Media students getting real-world experience with ESPN3
- J Gabriel Ware, a School of Communication undergraduate alum and current MA student, is one of the summer 2017 Chips Quinn Scholars
- WMU journalism students take over Encore

Sports Media students getting real-world experience with ESPN3

contact: Molly Goaley and Jeanne Baron
March 17, 2017 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Students in Western Michigan University's new Sports Media course are gaining hands-on experience in live broadcasting under the tutelage of instructor **Wade Cutler**.

Working with Bronco Productions in WMU's Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, Cutler and the students have been streaming men's basketball games this semester on ESPN3, ESPN's signature



Instructor Wade Cutler (foreground) works in the control room with Devon Doxey, assistant director of Bronco Productions, and students like Juno Hickman (background), a senior majoring in film, video and media studies.

broadband sports network and the online home for live sports.

The School of Communication began the course in fall 2016, taking advantage of an agreement between ESPN and the Mid-American Conference. The agreement calls for various athletic events to be covered on ESPN's family of networks for 13 years, with broadcasts over the ESPN3 platform overseen by the MAC's 12 individual universities.

As part of the pact, students get the chance to develop athletic events for live streaming if the schools provide the infrastructure to produce broadcasts of ESPN quality. WMU has invested in the necessary infrastructure, and now Bronco fans worldwide as well as Sports Media students are reaping the benefits.

Learning by doing at WMU

Cutler's students are learning the ins and outs of live-sports production by working alongside the Bronco Productions team. That team broadcast more than 30 men's and women's basketball games and other select events this academic year for ESPN3, in addition to producing the game broadcasts that air on WMU's in-house video screens during home athletic contests in a variety of sports.

"The benefit to our students is the experience of working with the latest broadcast equipment and the ability to include ESPN3 work experience on their resumes," Cutler says. "Our students are gaining so much 'real world' experience from this course that I'm confident they'll have no problems getting a job in this industry."

WMU's Sports Media students get to operate cameras, video switchers, audio consoles and other high-tech equipment provided by the School of Communication and Bronco Productions. They learn about story creation and development, preproduction elements, anchoring, live-show production, control room techniques and master control operation, as well as marketing, advertising and how web streaming works with live broadcasts.

Cutler says 99 percent of his course is hands on, with students able to take on ESPN3 production roles with the Bronco Productions team as they gain more experience.

"One area that I focus on during live broadcasts is the little and big problems that occur, from simple misspellings on graphics to equipment malfunctions," he adds. "The 'show must go on' is so true in live broadcast, so we teach our students how to resolve issues while still producing a network-quality show."

Premier equipment, training

The infrastructure upgrades WMU needed to make to comply with the ESPN-MAC deal were finished in 2015 and partially covered by the MAC. Among the University's key investments has been purchasing a state-of-the-art production trailer and other pieces of equipment mimicking those owned and operated by ESPN.



A part-time WMU communication instructor, Cutler is well versed in all of that equipment. He is CEO of Trade Communication, a film and video marketing company based in Grand Rapids, and has done live sports production work with outlets such as ESPN and ABC, CBS and NBC sports.

Cutler says he not only teaches the fundamental skills needed to be successful in the growing field of live-sports production, but also lets his students know what the networks expect from those they hire and uses his connections to help students find work.

"It's my goal to make ESPN look at WMU as the premier MAC school for this type of educational training," Cutler says, "and the national television exposure for our athletes is exciting, as well."

An in-depth **story about the ESPN-MAC agreement** and Bronco Productions is available at bit.ly/2mBjAqg. More **information about WMU sports** is available at wmubroncos.com.



April 29, 2017

For Immediate Release

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WMU JOURNALISM STUDENTS TAKE OVER *ENCORE* MAGAZINE'S MAY ISSUE

If they were given a magazine to write, what would today's college journalists write about? That question is answered in May's issue of *Encore* Magazine, a regional lifestyle magazine based in Kalamazoo and serving Southwest Michigan.

The May 2017 issue was written almost entirely by a team of junior- and senior-level Western Michigan University journalism students taught by Professor Sue Ellen Christian in the WMU School of Communication. For their senior capstone experience, five aspiring journalists — Carolyn Diana, Samantha Marzke, Samantha May, Jay Penny and Greyson Steele — conceptualized, reported, researched and wrote the feature articles in the magazine and also, in many cases, took photographs to accompany the articles.

The students' articles are in keeping with *Encore's* mission of showcasing the greater Kalamazoo community, but, the articles have a decidedly WMU bent. Among the stories are an in-depth feature on how technology has revolutionized the academic and social lives of college students, an article about a program that addresses student hunger and economic need, a profile of an inventive cellist, and another about an enterprising student who has turned custom-dyed socks into a viable business and a montage on how dorm décor has evolved over the decades.

Encore editor Marie Lee says that the project was conceived in collaboration with Professor Christian to encourage and showcase future journalists.

"In a time when journalism is under fire and people wonder about its future, we want to showcase just how important journalism education is," Lee says. "Not only do these young writers give us great stories about people and initiatives at their own university, but this issue spotlights their talents and the outstanding journalism training they are receiving through WMU's School of Communication."

The project was a semester-long endeavor for the five students who began in January working on content for the May issue. Sue Ellen Christian says it was an important and exciting collaboration that is in keeping with the intent of the journalism program's capstone reporting course, which focuses in depth on a single topic or project throughout the semester.

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"The *Encore* collaboration was a mountain-top experience for the students because they were treated as professionals, received excellent editing and were highly motivated to get the facts and stories right. They were able to put into practice all the lessons they'd learned throughout their program at WMU, and had a great time doing it," says Christian.

The issue will be available May 1 and will be available at public distribution points around the greater Kalamazoo area and online at encorekalamazoo.com.

To view the digital edition of *Encore's* May 2017 issue, visit http://issuu.com/issuencore/docs/encore_may2017?e=4962941/47832685

Hometown Information for Students:

Carolyn Diana, 22, is from Beverly, Illinois, and graduated in April from Western Michigan University with bachelor's degrees in journalism and Spanish.

Samantha Marzke, 22, is from St. Joseph, Michigan, and graduated from Western Michigan University in April with a bachelor's degree in journalism.

Samantha May, 21, is from Washington, Michigan, and graduated in April from Western Michigan University in April with a bachelor's degree in film, video, and media studies.

Jay Penny, 39, is from Edwardsburg, Michigan, and graduated from Western Michigan University in April with a bachelor's degree in journalism. He will pursue a graduate degree in communication at WMU this fall.

Greyson Steele, 20, is from Plainwell, Michigan, and is a third-year journalism major at Western Michigan University who will graduate in 2018.