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School of Communication

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What’s inside...

- Distinguished Lecture Series inaugurated
- Faculty trot the globe
- Student engagement: Internships and more
- Alumni awards and achievements
Greetings!

As we prepare this newsletter, I find myself once again so very proud of the students, faculty, and alumni of the WMU School of Communication. As you review this issue of the Communicator I believe that you will agree that the School of Communication sustains its reputation for excellence.

I have been thinking about the notion of sustainability a lot lately. The university has designated sustainability as one of its core values. But what does that really mean to us as students, faculty, emeriti, and alumni of the School? A simple (and not so simple) answer might focus on steps to be more “green” such as moving our newsletter to an electronic version only, or faculty and students reducing paper copies and utilizing university electronic resources more effectively. We certainly value and hope to increase efforts like this.

More salient to me in these times of budget uncertainty is the sustainability of our School and its programs. As we say goodbye to two respected and long serving faculty and welcome two new faculty to our School (see p.3), we continue to be one of the largest departments on campus with a strong, vibrant, active faculty (a large part of the reason we attract many students). Our focus must be on developing strategies for sustaining a quality program in the coming years. With the help and support of all stakeholders, friends, faculty, emeriti, and alumni, we look forward to the important process of planning for sustainability in the 21st century.

Leigh Ford
On April 29, 2011, Dr. Peter Northouse presented the first Communication and Community Distinguished Lecture, an annual lecture series inaugurated by the School of Communication with this event. Northouse spoke before nearly 150 guests including students, faculty, emeriti, and alumni of the School as well as Northouse’s family and friends, in the Steve & Ann Rhodes Auditorium on WMU’s campus.

Northouse, a communication faculty member since 1974, is an internationally recognized expert on leadership. His lecture, “Reflections on Leadership: 37 years in the making,” not only served as the first lecture in this series but also as his personal last lecture as he retired after more than 35 years of teaching at WMU in Spring 2011.

Dr. Northouse began his lecture with a demonstration of a community building activity he uses in the classroom that involved current events questions and tossing candy across the auditorium to those first with the correct answer. In his lecture Northouse shared his authentic reflections in three areas: critical life events and his career; his perspectives on leadership; and utilizing leadership research. As is his practice in the classroom Northouse shared many stories, some sad or difficult, but most humorous, to illustrate his reflections.

At the conclusion of the lecture, Northouse was honored for his many contributions to the School of Communication during his distinguished career.

Based on the School of Communication’s mission and values, the Communication and Community Distinguished Lecture Series is framed by the philosophy of engaged scholarship and the principles of applied communication that focus on ethical awareness, leadership development, economic progress and civic engagement.

Each year the School of Communication will engage a distinguished communication professional who represents these values and who is committed to making a significant difference in their profession, their communities, and the greater society to present a public lecture on a communication topic of their choice. The Northouse lecture served as an excellent beginning to our ongoing and future contribution to the public discourse about communication through this lecture series.

Save the Date!
Join us on April 3, 2012 for the next Communication and Community Distinguished Lecture. The featured speaker will be Steve Roberts, a nationally known journalist, columnist, media and political analyst, best-selling author, and the Shapiro Professor of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University. See you there!
New Faculty
This fall, we welcome Leah Omilion-Hodges (Ph.D., 2011, Wayne State University) and Stacey Wieland (Ph.D., 2007, University of Colorado, Boulder) to our faculty. Dr. Wieland’s research and teaching interests focus on organizational communication. Dr. Omilion-Hodges’ research and teaching interests include public relations and organizational communication.

Tenure & Promotion
Dr. Patric Spence was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor by the WMU Board of Trustees at their June 2011 meeting. Spence joined the faculty in the School in 2009. His research focuses on risk and crisis communication, specifically audience perceptions of emergency messages produced from government or news agencies, and how they motivate the public to take action.

Dr. Kathleen Propp and Dr. Richard Junger were both promoted to full professor by the Board at that same meeting. Propp’s areas of expertise include small group decision making, organizational communication, and conflict management. Her recent work has addressed communication issues in health care teams in health care. Junger’s area of expertise is journalism history. Junger’s most recent work examines journalism practice in 19th century Chicago.

Sabbatical
Dr. Richard Gershon will be on sabbatical for the academic year 2011-12. Gershon plans to work on a new book and will also teach a course on media innovation at the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain, for part of the fall term. Associate professor Sue Ellen Christian will spend her fall 2011 sabbatical working on her upcoming book, “Overcoming Bias: A Journalists’ Guide to Culture and Context,” and creating a website for the book. She also will prepare a scholarly article focused on the application of cognitive psychology to journalism.

Farewell to Two of Our Finest

After a combined total of 73 years of service to the School of Communication, Drs. Peter Northouse and Steve Rhodes have retired from teaching. Northouse officially retired on April 30, 2011 while Rhodes retired on July 5, 2011.

Rhodes joined the Western faculty in 1975 and taught undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership, listening, communication theory and research, small group decision-making, and organizational communication. As the author of numerous articles, book chapters, and conference papers on topics related to listening, small group decision-making, leadership, effective interpersonal communication, and sexual harassment, he made steady and significant contributions to the field of communication. In addition to scholarly contributions, he served as consultant to organizations ranging from small community nonprofits to Fortune 500 companies.

During his tenure at WMU, Rhodes served as Director of the School of Communication from 1999 to 2009 when he stepped down to return to teaching. In retirement, he looks forward to spending more time with his wife Ann, who also will retire this year from Michigan State University. The Rhodes are active community members in Marshall, where they have lived for over 25 years. “People can really make a difference in a small community, and we’d like to think we’ve had a positive impact on Marshall. We’re looking forward to full retirement, when we should have more time to get involved with other projects,” says Rhodes.

Peter Northouse joined the Communication Arts and Sciences Department at Western Michigan University in 1974. During his tenure he taught speech, interpersonal and organizational communication. He was instrumental in developing the first course in health communication, the interpersonal communication mass lecture model, and the leadership mass lecture course. He was energized by his students and tried, particularly with his stories, to make learning enjoyable and worthwhile. Most of all, he tried to create community and esprit de corps with students. In addition to publications in professional journals, he is the author of Leadership: Theory and Practice, (now in its fifth edition), Introduction to Leadership: Concepts and Practice, (now in its second edition), and coauthor of Health Communication: Strategies for Health Professionals, (now in its third edition). His books have been adopted at more than 800 colleges and universities worldwide and have been translated into nearly a dozen languages.

His avocation while at Western was running, which included completing four Boston Marathons and finishing 17 other marathons. Future plans include reading, writing, consulting, and exercising. He especially looks forward to having more free time to spend with his wife Laurel, son Scott, daughter Lisa, and granddaughter Madison.

Dr. Kathy Propp

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New Course Inspires Student Action

WMU students have completed over 3,000 hours of community service thanks to a new introductory communication course. Communication and Community Engagement, COM 1000, was developed by Dr. Chad Edwards in order to apply communication theories and concepts to civic engagement. In this course Edwards wants to break the “academic bubble” and give students the opportunity to connect with the community in which they study and to put their communication knowledge into action. To meet these goals, each COM 1000 student completes five hours of community service and is required to write a paper applying course concepts and theories to their experience. In another course activity each semester five or six COM 1000 students selected by their classmates compete with one another in a public speaking contest where they deliver persuasive speeches on current issues relevant to the greater Kalamazoo community.

Students report that the experience has helped them gain a more positive view of community engagement and an increased appreciation for it in their own lives. COM 1000 now is the School of Communication foundational course and increasingly is a popular choice for students across campus.

Research with Impact

Dr. Jocelyn Steinke’s research on media science stereotypes and their effects on middle school girls appeared in the summer issue of The Western Michigan University Magazine devoted to “Research with Impact.” Our colleague Diana Berkshire-Hearit was the managing editor of this publication and also wrote many of the articles. Visit www.wmich.edu/magazine to view the magazine.

Drs. Kathy Propp, Julie Apker, Wendy Ford, and several student co-authors recently learned that their article “Meeting the Complex Needs of the Health Care Team: Identification of Nurse—Team Communication Practices Perceived to Enhance Patient Outcomes,” published in Qualitative Health Research, was the most downloaded article in this publication for 2010.

Borden Wins CAS Award

Dr. Sandra Borden won a College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Achievement Award in Research and Creative Activity for 2010-2011. Borden was nominated on behalf of the School of Communication based on three core principles: the significance and impact of her theorizing in journalism ethics as represented in her books, book chapters, and journal articles; the prominence and recognition of her work in the communication ethics field; and finally, the integration of research, teaching and service in her scholarship.

Borden joined the WMU faculty in 1996 and earned the rank of full professor in 2008. Throughout her career, her scholarship has focused on media ethics, specifically journalism ethics as both theory and practice. A nationally and internationally recognized communication ethics scholar, Borden has been recognized by COMVista as one of the top 20 communication ethics specialists in the world.

Books

Dr. Steve Lipkin authored “Documdrama Performs the Past.” Dr. Richard Junger authored “Becoming the Second City: Chicago’s Mass News Media.” Dr. Heather Addison co-edited “Motherhood Misconceived.”

Visiting Scholar

Dr. Gregory J. Shepherd, dean of the Scripps College of Communication at Ohio University, was a Visiting Scholar in the School of Communication in March. Shepherd gave a public lecture on communication and the American pragmatist tradition in 1028 Brown Hall. Shepherd also gave private presentations tailored to faculty and graduate students during his visit.
Dr. Jennifer Machiorlatti, far right, and fellow filmmakers.

Nepal International Indigenous Film Festival

Dr. Jennifer A. Machiorlatti was a North American delegate at the Nepal International Indigenous Film Festival (NIIFF), held in Kathmandu in April. As an honored delegate, she presented a lecture titled “The Bridge to Tomorrow: Storytelling, Community Allies and All-Our-Relations in a Webbed World.” This year the NIIFF 2011 was dedicated to the “Indomitable Spirit of the Indigenous Woman.” The festival aimed to bring out the sensitivities, strengths, skills, knowledge and wisdom that enables the indigenous woman to play a key role in holding societies and communities together. Forty-two films from 20 countries were screened.

The conference supported the writing and presentation of the “Kathmandu Declaration of Indigenous Women,” one of the highlights of the trip for Machiorlatti. “Nepalese men and women wrote the document and the international delegates were asked to ‘witness’ the reading and presentation of this to the interim government (of Nepal),” said Machiorlatti.

She currently is working on a documentary on Indigenous Women in Film and Digital Media. Last fall as part of her sabbatical, she traveled to Winnipeg to videotape Tracey Deer (Mohawk) who was working as a guest director on the production set for “Cashing In,” a fictional crime drama which airs on APTN (Aboriginal People’s Television Network) in Canada.

Cities, Connectivity, and Creativity

In July, Dr. Richard Gershon traveled to Istanbul, Turkey, to attend the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) Conference. He presented a paper entitled, “Redefining Business Space: The Transnational Corporation and Intelligent Networking.”

Gershon’s paper examined what makes a global organization global, a topic that speaks to the theme of this year’s conference, “Cities, Connectivity, and Creativity.”

Faculty Exchange with Passau University

Dr. Sandra Borden spent a month in Passau, Germany, in the summer of 2010 as a visiting professor at the University of Passau. Borden was chosen from among numerous applicants to participate in the faculty exchange. During her stay, she lectured for an ethics class in the philosophy department and for a media class. More significant, however, was the interaction she was able to have with Passau faculty and students.
“It was those informal conversations shared over lunch in the caf or coffee ... and the opportunity to pick the brains of people you don't normally run into” that were most meaningful, according to Borden. These informal interactions sparked ideas for research collaboration and other potential partnerships.

“Problems we research do not fit neatly within national boundaries,” said Borden. International partnerships in research provide the opportunity for scholars to gain a new perspective on their field of study—they discover new questions and new ways to delve into them, she added.

Not only did Borden see the exchange as a professional opportunity, but also as an “invaluable family learning experience.” Her spouse and children accompanied her to Passau as well as on a side trip to Austria.

Borden said she was empowered and encouraged by this experience. “I see my research and teaching becoming more international as result of this experience,” she concluded.

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATION AND MASS MEDIA**

In May, Drs. Heather Addison and Kathleen Propp traveled to Athens, Greece, to attend the Ninth Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media, sponsored by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER).


Addison and Propp enjoyed the opportunity to present their work internationally. In addition to meeting scholars and graduate students from other countries, they also spent time visiting other Greek cities and sites rich in history.

**Communication That Makes a World of Difference**

This summer, Dr. Mark Orbe traveled to Lima, Peru, for the World Communication Association (WCA) Conference held in early August. Orbe was a program planner for this year’s conference, as he serves as the WCA Secretary General.

The theme of the 2011 conference was “Communication That Makes a World of Difference: Looking Back, Thinking Forward.” Orbe, along with the other WCA program planners, endeavored to celebrate how seminal research has influenced the world in which we live, and to examine the potential of intercultural communication scholars to address emerging issues.
A Unique Program

The internship program in the School of Communication is the single largest department internship program on Western Michigan University’s campus. Over 200 students voluntarily participate in our internship program annually, with the highest participation exceeding 350.

This program provides students with the invaluable opportunity to apply and expand on classroom knowledge and training. Students are able to develop their skills and deepen their knowledge as they fill a variety of positions in many successful, longstanding businesses and organizations. In fact, ours is one of the few departments on campus that awards academic credit to interns participating in the world-renowned Disney College Program.

Internships can be found locally, across communities in Michigan and at times in other states and cities such as Chicago and New York.

Interested students may find their own internship or select from one of the over 200 already approved internships found on the School’s website. The internship may be paid or unpaid, and students may earn up to 12 credit hours toward their degree. All interns are also required to submit a portfolio, containing evaluations and samples of their work.

Internships can set students apart from the rest, as well as provide them the opportunity to create professional networks and develop mentor relationships. The School of Communication has received positive feedback from numerous student interns and highlights several of their stories.

Positive Feedback from the Gazette

Although all journalism majors are required to fulfill one to three credit hours through interning for their practicum, many go above and beyond the minimum requirement. A number of these students have the opportunity to go to work at the Kalamazoo Gazette.

Sebastian Fryer is one such student, who completed a full-time internship with the Gazette this summer. Another intern, Holly Deal, was selected as a part-time fall intern, but was invited to do some freelance writing this summer and has already contributed several stories, with which her supervisor was reportedly pleased.

On occasion, internships turn into employment opportunities. Anthony Smigiel, who completed an internship writing for the Gazette this summer, was hired as a part-time sports writer after completing his internship. Anthony is currently writing news, but will begin writing sports in the fall.

Attention Alumni!

Would you like the opportunity to reinvest in your alma mater and to connect with our outstanding internship program?

School of Communication alumni interested in posting an internship with their business or organization should contact Marilyn Kritzman at marilyn.kritzman@wmich.edu.

Student Videographer Helps Produce Bronco Review

Derek Wilds, a film, video, and media studies major, completed an internship with the Bronco Review last fall. As a videographer and editor, Derek was responsible for filming football, basketball, and hockey games, editing the material and helping produce and distribute the show.

The Bronco Review is an on-campus production by WMU’s Media Services that airs during football, hockey, and basketball seasons. The Review features highlights from the games and on-air interviews with the coaches. This show, co-produced and directed by Stephen Kettner, won a Telly Award in 2008.

Interning for the Bronco Review helped prepare Derek for live productions. Not only did he learn technical skills like lighting and editing programs, he also learned management and communication strategies. “These skills have definitely made me a better filmmaker,” said Derek. He will continue his work as a videographer and editor for the Bronco Review this fall as a student employee.
Networking at Its Finest

MacKenzie Reynolds, a 2011 graduate, held an internship with EMI Music North America in New York City in the summer of 2010. EMI is the parent record label of several prominent labels, including Virgin Records and Capitol Records.

As an intern, MacKenzie was responsible for monitoring print and online media of EMI’s artist roster, including Katy Perry, Snoop Dogg, Coldplay, and countless other musicians. She also collaborated with Senior Publicity Directors to pitch possible album reviews for artists like VV Brown and The Constellations.

The perfect illustration of networking in pursuit of a goal at its finest, MacKenzie began her internship search in Kalamazoo last spring with School of Communication instructor Cheri Bales and through a series of personal and professional references ended at EMI.

“Network as much as possible,” and “don’t think anything is out of reach,” is the advice MacKenzie offers to undergraduates. After completion of her internship and graduation, MacKenzie was offered the position of publicity assistant and is now a full-time employee at EMI.

Live, Learn and Earn Locally

Tyler Bailey, a film, video, and media studies major, completed a year-long internship with Absolute Video & Media in Kalamazoo. Tyler was able to develop a variety of skills including video editing and web design.

Tyler’s main duties included editing corporate and residential videos and designing websites. He also was responsible for many other small office duties. “All in all, I have learned more in my year and a half at Absolute Video than any schooling could have taught me,” Tyler said of his experience.

According to Tyler, he benefited most from his internship with Absolute Video because of the many opportunities he had to participate in a live production. One task he really enjoyed was controlling the video board and audio throughout the entire stadium at Bronco football games.

This internship has given him the confidence and skills necessary to continue to pursue a career in film, video, and media. He concluded, “I am very competent in my skills and I feel I am now ready to take on a nation-wide production.” Tyler is currently employed by Absolute Video.

Budding Political Activist

Interns for City Commissioner

Erin Gignac held an internship with Kalamazoo City Commissioner Don Cooney in the spring of 2011. She helped organize political rallies and forums, and engaged WMU students in discussion through social media.

According to Erin, the most beneficial part of the internship was her personal development and a newfound confidence in her ability to inspire and inform others. “I will no longer remain silent on the pressing issues of the community. I have an outlet: political activism.”

Event Planning and Public Relations,

Allegan Chamber of Commerce

Doug Ferrall, a spring 2011 graduate in public relations, completed an internship with the Allegan Chamber of Commerce in spring 2011. During his internship, he managed social media, designed monthly newsletters, wrote articles and press releases, and planned fundraising events.

“I had the opportunity to put the knowledge I gained from WMU into practice and I made great contacts through my experience,” said Doug. In his time at the Chamber of Commerce, he was able to expand his network and secure several references. Doug was recently hired by StructureTec in Kalamazoo.
Presidential Scholar in Communication

Jacqueline Luedtke, an organizational communication major and June 2011 graduate, received the 2010-2011 Presidential Scholar in Communication award at the Fetzer Center in March. In addition to an outstanding GPA, Luedtke has an admirable record of community service. While serving in the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, she earned both the Congressional Award for youth service and Presidential volunteer Service Award in 2007. She currently serves as an Oakwood Neighborhood Association board member.

On campus, Luedtke is a member of the Honors Student Association, Phi Beta Kappa honor society, Lambda Pi Eta communication honor society, in addition to serving as a student co-coordinator for 2009 homecoming and 2010 Spring in the Streets volunteer program. Luedtke’s other awards include the 2009 Humanities Next Generation Leadership Scholarship and a 2008 Kalamazoo Gazette STAR Award for volunteerism. In 2011 Luedtke was selected by the Lee Honors College to receive the Eileen A. Stein Scholarship for dedicated commitment to community service and engagement.
A SoC Three-peat: All-University Graduate Awards in Teaching and Research

Western Michigan University’s Telecommunications and Information Management (TIM) program was the recipient of the 2011 International Telecommunications Education & Research (ITERA) Award for program excellence presented at the annual conference in April. This marks the first time that WMU has been so honored for its work in the field of information technology management. According to James Gantt, Director, Center for Telecommunications Systems Management, Murray State University and outgoing Chairman for ITERA, “The TIM program at Western Michigan was selected for the 2011 ITERA Undergraduate Program of the Year because of its academic strength and the performance of the students it produces. In a relatively short time, the program has become a dominant factor in the ITERA National Case Study competition and student paper competitions...This award is a recognition from peer institutions of its status as a premier program.”

At the April conference for the second year in a row, the WMU team was invited to the final round of competition in case study design and duplicated its victory of 2010. One judge was so impressed that he took the time to personally compliment our team, calling them a “class act,” reported Dr. Rick Gershon, Co-Director of the TIM program. TIM major Tharyn Taylor also presented an undergraduate student paper on Facebook at the conference.

TIM Majors, a “Class Act”

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The Telecommunications & Information Management (TIM) program is a interdisciplinary major offered through the Department of Business Information Systems, Haworth College of Business and the School of Communication, College of Arts and Sciences.

Journalism Student Wins Scholar-Athlete of the Year

Phillip Swanson, a spring 2010 graduate in journalism, was one of two seniors named Western Michigan University’s Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Swanson was recognized at a reception in the Fetzer Center on April 18 for his outstanding athletic and academic performance.

A two-time Academic All-American and three-time Academic All-District IV honoree, Swanson started for the Bronco football team in 48 of 49 career games. He entered the School of Communication master’s program in fall 2010.

Student Awards & Honors
Jonathon Blakely  
B.A. ’91

Blakely is a producer for National Public Radio’s Foreign Desk, based in Washington D.C. He joined National Public Radio in 2001, as Associate Editor of the Newscast Unit. In 2005 he became one of the producers for the award-winning news magazine All Things Considered. In 2007, he began working for the Foreign Desk. As Foreign Desk producer, Jonathan's primary job is managing the staff of 10 Iraqi journalists and drivers who are part of NPR’s Baghdad Bureau.

Prior to NPR, Jonathan worked as a news writer for the Associated Press Broadcast News Center in Washington, DC, as a news writer for ABC Radio News in New York, and as an assignment editor for WWJ Newsradio in Detroit. Jonathan was also part of the team which launched the “all-news” format at WKZO Radio in Kalamazoo.

In the summer of 2010, Jonathan produced “River of Life: Congo Odyssey for NPR.” To create this well received multimedia presentation and five-part radio series Jonathan and NPR West Africa spent seven days aboard a packed barge chronicling life along the Congo River.

In 2002, Jonathan spent nine months at the University of Ghana-Legon as a Fulbright Guest Lecturer teaching communication theory and radio broadcasting. His students successfully took their campus news magazine show to the studios of the Ghana Broadcast Corporation (GBC) where the program was aired live, nationwide. He has also lectured at Howard University.

Jonathan is actively involved in mentoring Washington-area high school students in radio production through a partnership with the Washington Association of Black Journalists. He is an active member of the National Association of Black Journalists and is also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Deirdre Bryant Worth  
B.A. ’70

Deirdre Bryant has been a news correspondent for ABC Radio Networks for 20 years, anchoring hourly newscasts heard coast to coast. She has won a number of professional awards for her work including the Pinnacle Award from the American Women in Radio and Television. She began her career in broadcasting when she was hired for an entry-level position working on “The CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite.” Two years later, she received a Master’s degree from Penn State and returned to CBS.

After several years of working behind the scenes, in 1981, Deirdre became a reporter, joining ABC Radio News in New York to anchor hourly newscasts. In addition to her ongoing anchor responsibilities at ABC Radio News, Deirdre also can be heard on WRNJ in New Jersey where she has hosted several talk programs and has been heard on hundreds of local radio commercials.

Deirdre has been active in the community drawing attention to substance abuse and educational issues and has received numerous awards for her community service. She currently is a Trustee for Joan’s Legacy in New York City, a foundation focusing on the rise in non-smoking related lung cancer in women.

Deirdre teaches tap dancing to adults and dances with a small troupe for charity events and at senior citizen homes. She’s currently writing a musical with a fellow WMU alumnus. Deirdre also received a 2010 College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Achievement Award.

In addition to his regional management duties, Heidbreder is the publisher of The Daily Telegram, in Adrian Michigan. The Daily Telegram team has created two magazines and one of the most active, vibrant websites in southeastern Michigan under his leadership. The newspaper has earned numerous editorial awards from both Associated Press and the Michigan Press Association in recent years. The Daily Telegram production team has earned national awards for quality photo reproduction in both black and white and full color reproduction in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 from the Inland Newspaper Association.

Paul currently serves as Chairman of the Lenawee County Economic Development Corporation. He has served on Rotary and Chamber boards throughout his career. He is a member of the Knights of Columbus and is an avid bow hunter.

Kelly Heidbreder is a 15-year news veteran who currently is the morning anchor for Toledo’s NBC 24 affiliate WNWO. She is a meteorologist, and has filled that role on air at NBC 24 since 2007.

She began her broadcast career as a producer at WTVG in Toledo. She then moved to Bangor, Maine as a reporter for WVII-ABC. While in Maine she created and hosted a weekly home and garden show, Get Growing, featuring viewers and their gardens in the region. She then spent five years reporting, and anchoring the news and weather at WPTA in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She had the opportunity to cover politics at the State Capital in Indianapolis, and President George W. Bush on his visit to South Bend. She chased tornadoes across north-central Indiana during her stint with WPTA. She also served as a reporter/anchor at WTOL - CBS affiliate in Toledo.

In addition to her broadcast career, Kelly was the general manager and co-owner of The Blissfield Advance weekly newspaper, which was sold in the mid 1990s. She also currently writes a garden column for the Toledo Blade, which she has penned as a weekly feature since 1998.

Kelly is an active volunteer for her children’s school PTO organization as well as the youth group at her church, St Joseph Shrine, in the Irish Hills region of southeast Michigan.
Paul Nwulu is an Associate Professor of Communication and Multimedia Design in the School of Information Technology and Communication, American University of Nigeria, Yola. He directs the School’s effort to establish the first Digital Multimedia Program in Nigeria.

He is also an accomplished media content creator and still runs TriCom Productions Ltd., a media production and consulting firm he established in Abuja Nigeria in 2006, where he consults with several government and non governmental organizations including the Nigerian Communications Commission and the Nigerian Independent National Electoral Commission. He is also a member of the implementation team for the Center of Excellence in Multimedia and Cinematography (CofE-MMCine), a World Bank funded project aimed at establishing a center to promote research and training in multimedia and cinematography, across several Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Formerly, Paul was an Associate Professor in the School of Communication at Western Michigan University, where he taught courses in media production and media theory, and conducted research on uses of and social impact of new media technologies.

Paul is actively involved with several non-governmental organizations in Nigeria and serves as a board member of Center for the Rights to Health, an NGO working to ensure rights to healthcare and privacy for terminally ill patients in Nigeria. He also serves as a member of the Governing Board of Trinity College of Ministerial Arts, Aba-Nigeria. He is a Carnegie E-Fellow at the University of Jos, Nigeria.

John Fortino is a successful entrepreneur, business owner and active member in the global human resources community. He started his career in the technical recruitment industry, assisting large automotive manufacturers and their suppliers hire talented staff. Later he worked as a manager of Executive Search for Motorola where he oversaw an eight-person research team responsible for hiring VP and director-level personnel and where he was an integral part of the team responsible for building Motorola’s internal search practice.

In 2001, John and a partner co-founded Velocity Resource Group, a leading strategic solutions provider for new hire candidate sourcing. Under his leadership as senior managing partner, the company has seen triple-digit growth and has a client roster topping 200, including several Fortune 500 and international firms.

In 2001, John also founded Resource Dynamics Technologies, an IT consulting business serving the Chicago area, and in early 2009 John became a co-founder of the ASHER Talent Alliance, a talent acquisitions consortium made up of four companies with distinct specialties serving the human resources community worldwide.

John is an active member of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) and is a former member of the Young Entrepreneurs’ Organization. He remains actively involved in community affairs, including service as a board member of one of the largest youth football programs in the country.
Jonathan Blakley Chosen for Nieman Fellowship

Jonathan Blakley, B.A. ’91, recently was selected as a 2012 Fellow by the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University. Jonathan is one of 24 journalists from around the world chosen for this prestigious fellowship. Nieman Foundation curator Bob Giles announced on the Foundation’s website,

“The class of 2012 includes journalists who have reported from around the globe on an extraordinarily wide range of topics and, in many cases, under dangerous circumstances. They will bring diverse interests and experiences that will enrich one another and the Harvard community. This new class of fellows holds great promise for leadership and advancing the practice of serious journalism in difficult times.”

A 2010 School of Communication Alumni Academy inductee (see p. 11), Jonathan currently is a producer for National Public Radio’s Foreign Desk. At the conclusion of his most recent assignments in Libya and Iraq, he will relocate in fall 2011 to Cambridge, Mass. to study history, politics and social media in sub-Saharan Africa during his Nieman fellowship.

We congratulate Jonathan and wish him the best in the coming academic year!

Matt James
B.A. ’81

Matt James and his partners announce the creation of The Center for the Next Generation (TCNG). Opening offices in San Francisco in fall of 2011, TCNG will be a policy research and communications organization focused on three program areas: Clean Energy and the Environment, Children and Families and the California Economy and Budget.

The partners’ primary motivation in forming this company is an effort to improve the lives of their children and their country. Matt, who will serve as President and CEO of TCNG states, “Like many of us, [my partners] and I have concerns about the direction of California and our country - - and like many of us, we also believe that through hard work, smart policy choices and the ingenuity that America has demonstrated through the years, our future can be bright.”

To assume this new challenge at TCNG, Matt will leave the Kaiser Family Foundation, where he has worked for over 18 years, recently as Executive Vice President for media and public education.
Chris Groscurth, B.A. ’02; M.A. ’04, is currently working as Senior Culture Transformation Consultant with Trinity Health, a multi-state health organization headquartered in Novi, Mich. Chris works collaboratively with senior leadership on organizational culture change interventions.

Sarah Clevenger, B.A. ’03, was promoted to an Account Director at GCI Health, a New York-based global healthcare communications agency.

Gabrielle Keenan Steckman, B.S. ’94, was hired as Senior Program Manager at Public Consulting Group and their subsidiary, Public Partnerships of Denver, Colo.

Christopher Tremblay’s, B.A. ’94; M.A. ’99, one-act play, “In The Dark,” received an Honorable Mention at the Fenton One Acts Festival. Christopher served as co-author and assistant director.

Amber Pritchard MacKenzie, B.A. ’97, joined the American Red Cross as a Senior Major Gift Advisor at their National Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Larissa Hunt, B.A. ’08; M.A. ’10, is currently working as the Student Admissions Specialist at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Larissa’s supervisor, the Director of Admissions, Registration & Records, is Michael McCall. Michael, B.A. ’76; M.A. ’77, is also a School of Communication alum.

Marirose Metzke, B.A. ’08, works for RDA Group, Inc. of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., as a Research Analyst and Project Manager. In this position, Marirose administers a global market research study for Ford Motor Company.

Zak Walsh, B.A. ’05, was promoted to Senior Account Manager at Tanner Friedman of Farmington Hills, Mich. Since being hired in 2007, Zak has managed multiple award-winning client strategic communication efforts.

Stephanie Porolniczak, was promoted to Vice President of New Media for Outback Concerts of Tennessee. Stephanie was also recently nominated for “Generation Next Awards” from Venues Today for her leadership in the Nashville community.

Regina Switalski Schinker, M.A. ’04; Ph.D. ’10, graduated from WMU with her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, concentration in Organizational Analysis.

Alicia Kornowa, B.S. ’95; M.A. ’07, accepted a position as Senior Associate Director of Admissions for Strategic Communication and Prospect Management at Cornell University.

Sarah Ling Wei Lee, B.A. ’05; M.A. ’08, accepted a position with Greenleaf Hospitality Group of Kalamazoo as Marketing Manager. Sarah previously served as the Director of Communications for the Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Catherine Vandermaas, B.A. ’06; M.A. ’09, was hired as Storyteller and Copywriter for WMU’s Office of Development and Alumni Relations.

Kellen Manley, B.A. ’06, served as digital media specialist for “Love and the Musical Arts: Reflecting on Enchanting Powers that Modulate the Soul,” a collaboration between the Fetzer Institute of Kalamazoo and the Erano Foundation of Ascona, Switzerland.

Alumni News
Support the WMU School of Communication

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Or fill out the form below and send it with your contribution to:

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School of Communication,
1903 W. Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5318

Enclosed is my gift of $__________, payable to WMU Foundation for the School of Communication.

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Contributions to the Western Michigan University Foundation are tax deductible. You will receive a receipt for your contribution.

Upcoming Alumni Events

Bronco Season Opener Pep Rally and Watch Party

The WMU Athletic Department and the Office of Development and Alumni Relations invites you to the Bronco Stampede pep rally.

When:  Wednesday, August 31, 5:15 to 7:30 p.m.
Where:  The B.O.B., Grand Rapids

Please click here to RSVP online.

The WMU Alumni Association invites you to join other alumni in Southeast, Mich. for a season opener Watch Party.

When:  Saturday, September 3, 3:00 p.m.
Where:  24 Seconds Bar & Grille, Berkley

Please click here to RSVP online.

Art Prize After Party

Please join WMU alumni and friends for the unveiling of the world’s largest WMU Bronco story, “The Epic Broncos.” Enjoy food, drinks, and entertainment, featuring the internationally acclaimed Western Jazz Quartet.

When:  Friday, September 23, 7:00 p.m.
Where:  WMU Graduate Center, Grand Rapids

Click here to register online.

Homecoming at the Corral Entertainment Village

Join the WMU Alumni Association Homecoming Pre-Game action. Activities for all ages. Come join us for food, drinks and fun, and reconnect with fellow alums!

When:  Saturday, October 8, 10:00 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.
Where:  The Corral Entertainment Village located inside the Robert J. Bobb Stadium

Free entry to the Corral with football ticket or student I.D.
To view the event details, please click here.

Brown and Gold Gala

The WMU Alumni Association invites you to attend the first Brown & Gold Gala. School of Communication alumnus, Suzanne Geha (B.A. ’73) will be featured. WMU’s award winning Gold Company will perform!

When:  Friday, November 11, 6:30 p.m.
Where:  Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids

Click here to register online.

Tell Us Your Story!  The School of Communication wants to know what you’ve been up to since graduation! Tell us your story, including degree and graduation year atleigh.ford@wmich.edu

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