An Educator’s Heart

By Beth Messner
Associate Professor

When Lora Helvie-Mason (MA ‘03; Ed.D ‘07) arrived in New Orleans in 2007 to begin teaching at the Southern University of New Orleans (SUNO), the city was still recovering from the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Like much of New Orleans, the hurricane had submerged the campus of the historically black college under 4 to 5 feet of water. Gone were most of the markers associated with a traditional campus environment. The landscape was bereft of trees, many of which were killed when salt water flooded the city. Traditional outdoor gathering spaces had been swept clear of their seating. The campus’s buildings were shuttered, waterlogged, mold-infested, and unfit for habitation. But one thing had not changed – the spirit of the students and faculty.

This spirit is what drew Lora to accept a position as an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at SUNO. While she had taught in several different educational environments, including Ivy Tech and Ball State University, the position at SUNO provided her with challenges and opportunities that she had never before envisioned.

Lora describes her decision to teach, particularly in higher education, as a passion. In her words, she simply “followed what my heart wanted to do.” As the first of her family to receive a college degree, she fell in love with learning as an undergrad student. It seemed like a “natural progression” to become a teaching assistant while working on her Master’s degree.

Correctional Education program rewarding for faculty, inmates

By Vicki Rosenberger
Graduate Assistant

For over 13 years, Department of Communication Studies professor Susan Klingel-Dowd has settled into the role of the “stern, grandmother-type” professor to the students she teaches through Ball State University’s Correctional Education program.

Established in the mid-70s, Correctional Education operates through the Department of Online and Distance Education (Extended Education). The program places educators from around the state in prison classrooms, where the students can have the option of earning a general studies degree after completing two minors. According to Klingel-Dowd, there are 80-100 faculty members from Ball State currently participating in the program. In addition to Klingel-Dowd, current and former participants from Communication Studies include: Stephanie Vertrees, Chris Seitz, Mariah Tester, Ken Marshall, Nicole Johnson and Corey Fritzke.

“I think it is a very successful program,” said Klingel-Dowd, explaining that Ball State has a five-year contract with the state to teach in the prisons. “We are one of the most active schools in the state,” she noted.

Klingel-Dowd entered the program at the University of New Orleans.
Department news

Honor Society inducts members

One new student, two new faculty members from Communication Studies recognized at ceremony

By Maggie Doyle
Senior

While many students were busy wrapping up their fall semester, the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi (PKP) was inducting some new Communication Studies members into their organization. Established at the University of Maine in 1897, Phi Kappa Phi is the oldest honor society in the United States. It also is the largest, with approximately 30,000 new members welcomed each year.

This past December, Ball State’s chapter of Phi Kappa Phi welcomed one new student and two new faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies. Lisa Cappa, a Junior inductee, had to be in the top 7.5% of her class to be asked to join the organization. (Seniors and graduate students must be in the top 10% of their class.) Lisa was the only student who was inducted this past December. When asked what attracted her to PKP, she said that, “it is a great opportunity to network with other students and professionals from their particular field of study and gives them the chance to be very successful.”

INDIVIDUALS HONORED — Junior Lisa Cappa (left), Dr. Kristen McCauliff (center) and Dr. Katherine Denker (right) pose after the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society induction ceremony this past December.

For a faculty member to become a part of Phi Kappa Phi, the requirements are a bit different. Dr. Lori Byers, the Associate Dean of CCIM and the current President of Ball State’s Phi Kappa Phi explained that faculty inductees must be exceptional. They must have done something that makes them stand out. Some of these activities may include academic research and service to the university.

The faculty members that were inducted this past December were Dr. Kristen McCauliff and Dr. Katherine Denker. Dr. McCauliff said that this was something she wanted to be a part of because, “it was a chance to be...”

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Competition opens doors, helps community

By Aaron Estabrook
Graduate Assistant

Bree Nelson was selected as the inaugural winner of the COMM 210’s Bucket Speech Competition. The Bucket Speech is a philanthropic activity that challenges undergraduates enrolled in COMM 210. Students are required to research a particular local non-profit organization, write a persuasive speech about why it should receive donations, and compete to determine which local non-profit organization will receive the donations collected throughout the semester. Overseen by Dr. Kathy Denker, the event was developed by Communication Studies Graduate Assistants Kendra Tarr, Aaron Estabrook, Jessica Choquette, Kristina White and Heather Chalk.

After encouragement from her COMM 210 graduate assistant, Amy Yount, Bucket Speech winner Bree Nelson decided to enter the competition. “I cared about my topic, and it sounded like a good idea ... I thought I had a decent chance, so I (entered),” Nelson said.

The Bucket Speech helped raise $370 for the Julian Center, a non-profit organization that aids victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. “It was easy to write a persuasive speech for (them), because there really are so...”

see BUCKET | page 4
SWEET SUCCESS — During Ball State’s National Educational Debate Tournament held in December, 2010, the Debate Team debated the merits of increasing the use of nuclear power in the U.S.

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

December 3-4, 2010
Holiday Frolic Invitational Tournament at Ohio State University:
NICCOLE FORTUNATO
3rd place Prose Interpretation
5th place Informative Speaking
MICHELLE COLPEAN
3rd place Persuasive Speaking
MEG MOSHE
5th place Rhetorical Criticism
HALEY ARMSTRONG
5th place Prose Interpretation
ANDREW NEYLON
5th place Impromptu Speaking

NICCOLE FORTUNATO
3rd place Prose Interpretation
ANDREW NEYLON
5th place Prose Interpretation
3rd place Dramatic Interpretation
3rd place After Dinner Speaking
2nd place Editorial Impromptu
1st place Impromptu Speaking
1st place Duo Interpretation
1st place overall speaker
KATE ROESCH
1st place Duo Interpretation
1st place overall speaker
KATE SHAFFER
4th place Prose Interpretation
TAYLOR O’BANION
4th place Rhetorical Criticism
TEAM - 2ND PLACE

KATE ROESCH
3rd place Prose Interpretation
ANDREW NEYLON
5th place Prose Interpretation
3rd place Dramatic Interpretation
3rd place After Dinner Speaking
2nd place Editorial Impromptu
1st place Impromptu Speaking
1st place Duo Interpretation
1st place overall speaker

KATE SHAFFER
4th place Prose Interpretation
TAYLOR O’BANION
4th place Rhetorical Criticism
TEAM - 2ND PLACE

MARSHALL Half
ERIC ROESCH
2nd place Rhetorical Criticism
MICHELLE COLPEAN
2nd place Informative Speaking
5th place Persuasive Speaking
HALEY ARMSTRONG
1st place Duo Interpretation
4th place Prose Interpretation
6th place Informative Speaking
NICCOLE FORTUNATO
3rd place Prose Interpretation
4th place Informative Speaking
ANDREW NEYLON
5th Editorial Impromptu
5th Prose Interpretation
3rd place ADS
3rd place Dramatic Interpretation
2nd place Impromptu
1st place Duo Interpretation
1st place overall speaker

HALEY ARMSTRONG
3rd place Informative Speaking

January 15-16, 2011
M&M Swing at Miami University hosted by Miami and Marshall University:
MIAMI HALF
ERIC ROESCH
1st place Rhetorical Criticism
MICHELLE COLPEAN
1st place Persuasive Speaking
6th place Informative Speaking
HALEY ARMSTRONG
1st place Informative Speaking
1st place Duo Interpretation

M & M Half
ERIC ROESCH
1st place Rhetorical Criticism
MICHELLE COLPEAN
1st place Persuasive Speaking
6th place Informative Speaking
HALEY ARMSTRONG
1st place Informative Speaking
1st place Duo Interpretation

KATE ROESCH
3rd place Prose Interpretation
ANDREW NEYLON
5th place Prose Interpretation
3rd place Dramatic Interpretation
3rd place After Dinner Speaking
2nd place Editorial Impromptu
1st place Impromptu Speaking
1st place Duo Interpretation
1st place overall speaker
KATE SHAFFER
4th place Prose Interpretation
TAYLOR O’BANION
4th place Rhetorical Criticism
TEAM - 2ND PLACE

M & M Half
ERIC ROESCH
2nd place Rhetorical Criticism
MICHELLE COLPEAN
2nd place Informative Speaking
5th place Persuasive Speaking
HALEY ARMSTRONG
1st place Duo Interpretation
4th place Prose Interpretation
6th place Informative Speaking
NICCOLE FORTUNATO
3rd place Prose Interpretation
4th place Informative Speaking
ANDREW NEYLON
5th Editorial Impromptu
5th Prose Interpretation
3rd place ADS
3rd place Dramatic Interpretation
2nd place Impromptu
1st place Duo Interpretation
1st place overall speaker
KATE SHAFFER
4th place Prose Interpretation
TAYLOR O’BANION
4th place Rhetorical Criticism
TEAM - 2ND PLACE

January 21-22, 2011
Bulldog Battle at Butler University:
ANDREW NEYLON
4th place After Dinner Speaking
2nd place Impromptu Speaking
1st place Duo Interpretation (with Haley Armstrong)
1st place overall speaker
M & M Half
MICHELLE COLPEAN
4th place Persuasive Speaking
5th place Informative Speaking
NICCOLE FORTUNATO
4th place Informative Speaking
HALEY ARMSTRONG
3rd place Informative Speaking

ACTIVE LISTENER — Ball State student Gary Scribner listens intently as his opposition debates the implications of increasing nuclear power at BSU’s annual NEDA Debate Tournament in December.

see RESULTS | page 6
Knowing that this project will help the community by earning money for a non-profit organization is very rewarding. It is inspiring to see students working to help better the Muncie community."

Kendra Tarr | Communication Studies Graduate Assistant

Department also generously donated both money and time serving as volunteer judges.

Nelson was "honored and excited" about winning the competition, though she did not go into it expecting to win, especially since "everyone else did such a good job."

According to Nelson, winning the competition changed a lot of things for her. Speech Team sponsor Ashley Coker approached Nelson after the Bucket Speech about joining the Speech Team. Nelson followed up and "fell in love with the team instantly. I just returned from my first competition, and am so happy that I joined the speech team," she said. "Had I not participated in the Bucket Speech, I may have never found my niche."

Nearly forty COMM 210 students signed up to present speeches for their charity of choice at the event. This event was also supported by the Office of Admissions, and local businesses Scotty’s Brewhouse and Carino’s which donated prizes and gifts to finalists. The Communication Studies department is looking forward to this event next semester and is confident it will be even more successful.

As Kendra Tarr mentioned in the December 2010 issue of Commentary, "Knowing that this project will help the community by earning money for a non-profit organization is very rewarding. It is inspiring to see students working to help better the Muncie community."

- Vicki Rosenberger contributed to this article.
Student groups showcased at Super Party

JOIN THE CLUB — SuperParty is an event sponsored by the College of Communication, Information and Media that showcases the more than 40 student-led organizations in the college. CCIM conducts two SuperParties a year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The most recent event was held Thursday, January 27.

1. Communication Professionals Network (CPN) Vice President Chad Allen was on hand to answer questions at the CPN booth. Interested TCOMM senior Rachel Layton signs up to receive more information about the group;

2. CCIM Dean Roger Lavery discusses topics with Debate Team members Lauren Bade and Joel Franz;

3. Kate Shaffer attends to the Speech Team’s table.

4. TCOM sophomore Samantha Molenda signs up for future COMM Club activities.
Muncie SCORE Ambassadors finished the 2010 fall semester with a showcase and recruiting event.

“We considered it to be a success,” said graduate student Seth Davis of the December recruiting event held at the Muncie Chamber of Commerce. “We got people to come out who were interested in being SCORE mentors and we also got a lot of people to come by who were interested in being mentored by SCORE,” Davis said.

As a result of the recruiting event, project sponsor Peggy Fisher said one individual recently completed the process of being approved to be a mentor, while others are “in the pipeline waiting to go through that process.”

According to Davis, the fall and spring recruitment events serve a dual purpose. “In the fall, people who mentor try to mentor a small business owner,” Davis explained. “In the spring, the event is geared toward people who are trying to start their own business and want to connect with a mentor to help give them a jump-start.”

Muncie SCORE Ambassadors completed another recruiting event February 1, and Fisher said there are “other programs (planned for) the spring to market SCORE to the Muncie community” before the project wraps up at the end of the semester.

“Even though we are about to be finished, there are a lot of opportunities for the Muncie community to come out of this project,” Davis said. “The Muncie community may be hungry for the services SCORE can provide.”
in 1997 when it was announced that teachers were needed. "I usually teach two classes here (at Ball State) and two at the prisons, wherever that may be," she said, explaining there are five prisons served by the program. These are located in Pendelton, New Castle, Michigan City and Miami County. Faculty are not assigned a specific prison and are required to go to the location they are most needed, usually for the length of a semester before they are rotated to a new location. Klingel-Dowd did mention instructors can request sites they prefer.

A director from Extended Education oversees the entire program, while Klingel-Dowd serves as prison coordinator for Communication Studies. She and Department Chair Glen Stamp arrange the scheduling for Communication Studies faculty members who participate in the program. Full time openings are treated like any other faculty position and are advertised, with applicants interviewing with Stamp, who makes the hiring decisions. Once hired, orientation and training through Extended Education must be competed before the individual is assigned to a prison.

Attraction to "more diverse, non-traditional groups of students" was what prompted Johnson to become involved in the program for fourteen months between 2006 and 2007. "I feel like I can make a more noticeable difference when I'm working with under-served populations," Johnson said. She pointed out that,"(the) role (of) an educator and their role as a student will never need to be so stringent and clear cut as it is inside a prison classroom."

Of her experience, Johnson said it "was exponentially more rewarding than it ever was intimidating. Yes, there were a few times when I was intimidated, but never by my students." According to Johnson, there were times when the drama of what was happening behind the bars was hard to ignore. "It's tough not to let your surroundings harden you to the harsh realities of prison. It wears on you. To see the overwhelming lack of resources available to the students. To see the families, especially the children interact with their dads, husbands, brothers and sons in a huge public gathering place with metal tables and seats. No intimacy. Barely any comfort. It's hard not to let your heart hurt," she said.

Students in the prison program who complete a degree are eligible to take part in graduation ceremonies at their prison, complete with cap, gown and families in attendance. Klingel-Dowd has observed students acting protective of the program "because they want us to be here."

She has also noticed initially reluctant students grow with the program. "I like the fact you are given a group who never had a chance to have a college education — some will say they got in the program for the time-cut (reduction in their sentence for attending classes), but then they find they are really into and care about the program," Klingel-Dowd stated. "There's a growth level with the students. Some have graduated from the program and gotten out (of prison) and have come (to Ball State)or to other universities to finish their degree."

Klingel-Dowd would advise others interested in this program to take their best teaching strategy with them. "I don't do anything different on campus than I do in the prisons - what I teach on campus I teach there," she said. "Be yourself, take your best teaching strategy and teach."
MASON | continued from page 1

in Communication Studies at Ball State. In particular, she became interested in teaching non-traditional learners. This led her to pursue an Ed.D in Adult, Higher and Community Education, also from Ball State.

Despite all of her teaching experience, Lora describes her first semester at SUNO as “a shock to my educator’s heart.” In the aftermath of Katrina, there were few resources available to the faculty. The “campus” consisted of approximately 45 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers parked in an empty lot across from the devastated campus. Some of the trailers were used for classrooms while others were used as office and administrative spaces. Each faculty office (i.e., half of a FEMA trailer) was shared by 23 faculty. Prior to Katrina, SUNO served approximately 4000 students. But immediately after the hurricane, the scattered student population was drastically reduced as the beleaguered faculty struggled to teach many of them through on-line courses. Since the physical campus reopened in the Spring of 2006, the student population has grown to approximately 3400, but resources such as classroom technology remain scarce.

Teaching in this environment has certainly been a challenge to Lora. The lack of technology meant a reliance on the fundamentals of good teaching and finding new ways to engage her students. In her mind, this made her an even better teacher. While Lora typically teaches in an engaged and democratic manner, she maintains that, “no [other] experience has stripped away everything and exposed the importance of communication to the classroom” as this one has.

Challenges aside, Lora finds herself regularly inspired by the SUNO students. Many are first-generation college students and in their late 20s. Many also come from public education systems that did not leave them very well prepared for college. Yet, they are incredibly resilient. SUNO students perceive their education as a privilege and are willing to deal with the difficult post-Katrina learning environment in order to exercise that privilege. Lora describes them as “proud to be coming to college,” “asking questions that surprise her,” and “dreaming dreams that are inspirational.”

In addition to helping her students rebuild their lives, Lora is helping to rebuild the academic infrastructure of the university. To her, participating in this process “is a powerful place to be as a junior faculty.” She notes that “every action taken makes a difference. . . You can see how faculty directly shape” the university’s effort to remake itself.

One of Lora’s contributions to this process is through curricular development. She currently is the only member of the Department of Arts and Humanities to teach courses in Communication Studies. Specifically, she regularly teaches an on-line course in public speaking and traditional courses in advanced public speaking, and argumentation and debate. But as the university redesigns its curriculum, Lora is advocating a formal program of study in Communication Studies. Toward this end, she has designed and proposed an area of emphasis that includes courses in Intercultural Communication, Organizational Communication, and Gender Communication.

As Lora reflects on the past four years, she notes that she has experienced a lot of change. In part, she credits her ability to adapt to the changing culture at SUNO to her study of communication. While the watermarks that remain inside some of the university’s buildings provide her with constant reminders of the university’s losses, she counts herself lucky to be part of the university’s new beginning.