A Celebration of Excellence

By Beth Messner
Associate Professor

The Department of Communication Studies celebrated the accomplishments of its students and alumni on Sun., April 28 during its annual Spring Awards and Recognition Ceremony. Students, families, and faculty gathered in the lobby of the David Letterman Building to recognize graduating seniors and other students who have made important contributions to the department and its programs during the past year.

During the ceremony, 60 seniors who graduated in Fall 2011 or will graduate in Spring and Summer 2012 were recognized. Among these were eight seniors who are graduating with honors: Patrick Alyea, Tessa Barnard, Lisa Cappa, Brendan Durkes, Leanne Fabellar, Mary Kopecky, Laura McCaffrey, and Lauren Thomas. Lisa Cappa also will be graduating with Departmental Honors. Also worthy of note are three graduating seniors who were recognized by Mortar Board: Stephanie Amato, Kortnie Kammeyer, and Devanny Kuhn.

In addition, the faculty honored a number of undergraduate students by awarding them scholarships for 2012-2013. Recipients of the Donald P. Knott Scholarship for academic excellence were Renee Cirone, Nicole Fortunato, Rachel Martin, and Kristen Seidner. Joshua Fern and Alyssia Haymond received Richard G. Nitcavic Scholarships for promoting diversity and the acceptance of difference. Richard G. Nitcavic scholarships for departmental involvement were awarded to Alyssia Haymond, Andrew Neylon, and Kristen Seidner. Finally, Alyssia Haymond was granted a World Tour Initiative Scholarship to support her study abroad experience.

Other undergraduate students were recognized for their overall performance. Lisa Cappa was awarded the department's coveted “Outstanding Senior” Award for her academic performance and contributions to the department's programs. Rachael Sexton received the Outstanding Junior award for academic excellence. Ashley Carsten was named the department’s “Rising Star” for her potential as a scholar and department citizen.

A number of graduate students also were acknowledged at the ceremony. Katie Sroufe and Morgan Summers each received Richard G. Nitcavic Graduate Student Scholarships for 2012-2013. Other students received awards from the faculty for their outstanding accomplishments. Robin Phelps was recognized as the Outstanding Teaching Assistant. The Outstanding Professional Award was given to Sheri see CELEBRATION | page 4

Students “Walk A Mile” to Spread Awareness of Gender Violence

By Angie Green
Student

For the third year in a row, Dr. Angie Day’s “Leadership Communication” class hosted a “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes” event. The event took place on April 4th, 2012 from 2-5 on Ball State’s Campus on the University Green. Day described the event as “an international march started by Frank Baird in 2001 to raise awareness of sexualized violence.” Day’s class partnered with the BSU Office of Victim Services to help host the event. A focal point of the event involves men marching in high heels to symbolize the need to stop gender violence and to offer support for the victims of gender violence. Day also hoped the event would promote discussion of the cause.

Every spring, students in the Leadership Communication course have the option to do a large research paper or host the event. For three years, the students have chosen to put on the Walk a Mile event. Day explains that she takes on a collective leadership approach, which means there isn’t one designated leader in the class. Instead, the class is divided up into committees: linguistics, public relations,
Satire, Framing, and Gaming – Oh My!

By Glen Stamp
Department Chair

If they so desire, graduate students in the Department of Communication Studies may write a thesis. This endeavor typically starts late in the first year and culminates with a defense of the finished product at the end of their program. For the students graduating this year, 3 chose this path. For Jessica Choquette, Leland Fecher, and Marie Roth, the journey was both challenging and rewarding. Their theses also show the diversity of topics, methods, and theories in the communication discipline.

Marie’s thesis, directed by Dr. Carolyn Shue, was titled “Attitudinal Research and Satire: An Exploration of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart Using Social Judgment Theory.” For this study, Marie utilized a pretest, posttest quasi-experimental method in order to understand how satiric messages impact attitude change. Using social judgment theory, she showed clips of either The Daily Show with Jon Stewart or CBS News to participants, measuring their attitudes on various topics both before and after the viewing. Marie discovered that the type of audience is very important when studying attitude change and that social judgment theory may be an appropriate theory to use.

Jessica’s thesis, directed by Dr. Beth Messner, was titled “The Media Framing of the Juarez Femicides: A Dramatistic Analysis.” For this project, Jessica utilized a rhetorical approach guided by Kenneth Burke’s theory of dramatism. During her academic work, Jessica discovered there were over 420 reports of femicides (women murdered because they are women) in Juarez, Mexico. However, femicide did not appear to be a major part of media reporting. Jessica, therefore, analyzed newspapers from both Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas for themes related to how this issue was reported. Jessica found that femicide is often misunderstood, ignored, or simplified by the media. Moreover, the very prevalence of femicide is linked to it being culturally tolerated.

Leland’s thesis, directed by Dr. Kristen McCauliff, was titled “Looking Past the Action: A Study of the Effects of Structure on Video Game Communities.” For his thesis, Leland used an interpretive qualitative approach to better understand how the ludic structure (game rules, regulations) influence player interactions. He interviewed players of two video games (League of Legends and Puzzle Pirate) and also analyzed his own experiences as a player of both games. He found that competitively structured games tend to have more aggressive communities, while cooperatively structured games have more open and friendly communities.

While their projects differed greatly, Jessica, Marie, and Leland shared some common experiences. Each of them appreciated the mentorship of their academic advisor. Jessica indicated that Dr. Messner “was there every step of the way encouraging me that I would do this. In the process, she also inspired me to become a better scholar.” Each of them also found various parts of the actual process to be enjoyable. For Marie, “The most rewarding part of my experience has been conducting an experiment. After much preparation, I went through two weeks of data collection that were hectic but fun. I really enjoyed this.” Leland found it most satisfying in “Being able to dive into the current research on video games and come out on the other side a smarter person. I feel like I understand how scholars approach games and what I can do to contribute and move the study of video games forward.”

Each of the researchers also found the process to be tricky at times. Since Leland was studying a relatively new topic, he discovered “Finding sourcing was very difficult. Video game studies are uncommon and even more so in the field of Communication Studies. Taking an interdisciplinary approach and making what connections I could was difficult.” Jessica had challenges with data acquisition, and found “It was extremely difficult to acquire newspapers from Mexico. It actually took me about three months to collect them.” For Marie, the most challenging part of the project was the data analysis, since “Social judgment theory has two methods for determining attitude change. Each method yielded different results. I also did not find what I expected so refiguring out how to interpret the data was challenging.”

When asked to reflect upon the process, and whether they would again choose this path, Marie, Leland, and Jessica all enthusiastically indicated they would write a thesis again. They all agreed that even though there were challenges along the way, the reward of the final product, and what they learned about their topic, the research process, and themselves made it all worthwhile.
After a semester of planning, practicing and donating, the efforts of the COMM 210 Bucket Speech Competition concluded on April 22 with the donation of $380 for St. Baldrick’s Foundation, a childhood cancer fundraising organization, won by freshman student Jen Zarate from Crown Point, Ind.

The Bucket Speech is a philanthropic activity that challenges undergraduates, enrolled in COMM 210, to research a particular local non-profit organization, plan a persuasive speech advocating for donations to the organization, and compete to determine which local non-profit organization will receive the donations collected throughout the semester.

Overseen by Dr. Katherine Denker and organized by graduate teaching assistants and committee chairs Katie Sroufe and Jessica Choquette, this semester’s competition included 30 competitors who spoke on topics ranging from the Muncie Roy C. Buley Center to Habitat for Humanity.

With the support of the Office of Admissions, local businesses like Carino’s and support from Communication Studies department members who helped to judge, the competition was a success.

Dear Classmates: Dee Shad

(From the Editor: This letter is the first of many which we hope to publish in future issues of Commentary. The “Letters” column will allow students to express their ideas about issues of importance to them, their classmates and faculty, and the larger Communication Studies community. Dee Shad, the first of our letter writers, is a senior Interpersonal Communication major who wished to share her thoughts on the eve of her graduation).

I am one of those students who could not determine their major. After 14 years of searching for answers off and on, I found myself in the Communication Studies Department at Ivy Tech Community College. In a matter of two semesters, I graduated and found my way back to Ball State University, “defaulting” into the Communication Studies Program, again... only this time at the B.S. level. Now, one may wonder how much of Communication is B.S. In truth, none of it is - - we communicate in everything we do, everywhere we are, and all the time.

My so-called “default” turned out to be one of the best experiences in my life, so much so that if I could financially afford to take each class again I would. Since joining the Communication Studies program, I have overcome my fear of public speaking, learned how to operate in a group setting, and found explanations and solutions with respect to meta-communication. Knowing what I know now, I feel I am more competent as a parent, a partner, a citizen, even just as a human being. It is my personal opinion that Communication Studies is at the heart of all the programs available at Ball State University, just as it is at the heart of our relationships.

That being said, I sometimes am frustrated with those who misuse multimedia and social networking sites during classes. At first, I thought I was alone in my frustration, but I then discovered that faculty shared that frustration but did not wish to ban technology use in the classroom for fear of penalizing those who use the technology in a scholarly way. This has become a bone of contention for me. As a student, I believe it my responsibility to be prepared prior to class, to sit up straight, to keep eye contact with the teacher, and to take an active role during class time. While in K-12, when we were caught passing notes, they were usually read aloud. I feel as though Professors should be able to police the media in their classroom at the same time I expect my fellow students to follow through with their responsibility and use technology in scholarly fashion. On the same note, let me cut my classmates some slack. As a nontraditional student, my brain functions differently - - I am older and a single parent, just to start.

For those who remain as we seniors graduate, please treasure each moment with your new found friends. Show respect to both them and your teachers through the scholarly use of technology. Be present in the moment during your short visit in this brilliant time your life.

Sincerely,
Dee Shad
Niekamp while the Outstanding Service Award was granted to Jessica Choquette. Finally, Leland Fecher received both the Outstanding Researcher Award and the highly prized Outstanding Graduate Student Award. The Outstanding Colleague Award, which is decided by the graduate students themselves, was given to Robin Phelps.

Both the Debate Team and the Individual Events Speech Team also recognized the accomplishments of their members. Lucas Blauvelt received the David W. Shepard Debate Award. Debate Alumni Awards were presented to Elizabeth Hibbler and Dakota Wappes. Two students were awarded the Individual Events Scholarships for their excellence and contributions to the team: Katherine Shaffer and Andrew Neylon. Andrew also delivered his award-winning speech entitled “The Benign Violation Theory of Humor” during the ceremony.

In addition to the students, several other individuals were acknowledged for their contributions to the department. Dr. Kristen McCauliff was given the Department’s Outstanding Teaching Award for her efforts in the classroom and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students. Eric Fenstermaker (M’08) and James Atkins (B’9, M’11) also were recognized as Distinguished Alumni. Eric currently serves as a Staff Accountant at Whitinger & Company. James is an Assistant Director of Admissions at Ball Tyler, Muncie’s Police Chief Steve Stewart, and Muncie’s Fire Chief Eddie Bell stopped by. A Better Way helped during Walk A Mile by handing out fliers. Operation Jungle Red also asked men to pledge to abstain from rape, sexual assault, and gender violence by painting one of the men’s fingernails red. Rachael also says, “I really enjoyed the event and helping [it] run successfully. It was one of the best event planning processes I’ve ever been a part of.”

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fundraising, recruitment and education, media and promotions. Each student has the opportunity to sign up for any committee and they were able to change committees. Student Rachael Sexton was part of the Fundraising and Sponsorship Committee. “Basically, our job was to go out around Muncie and ask businesses if they would be willing to partner with us and give donations for prizes.” Day raves about her confidence in the leadership of the students, claiming the only problem during the planning process on the day of the event was a blow-away tent.

Participation in Walk a Mile was free, but sponsors did accept free-will donations. The event raised $109 on the day of the event alone. $1 cutouts of high heel shoes were available to sign and be displayed by participants. Red high heel shoes were also available for male participants to wear while marching on the University Green. A DJ played music while participants marched, played games, and socialized. Zumba and a relay race were just two events for which students could win prizes. Some prizes included free pizza from Papa Murphy’s and Texas Roadhouse gift certificates.

Day mentioned that she was excited to see so many Ball State students stop by the event, including members of several Ball State athletic teams and random students. Even Muncie’s Mayor Dennis Tyler, Muncie’s Police Chief Steve Stewart, and Muncie’s Fire Chief Eddie Bell stopped by. A Better Way helped during Walk A Mile by handing out fliers. Operation Jungle Red also asked men to pledge to abstain from rape, sexual assault, and gender violence by painting one of the men’s fingernails red. Rachael also says, “I really enjoyed the event and helping [it] run successfully. It was one of the best event planning processes I’ve ever been a part of.”
Instructor Nicole Johnson’s immersive learning project, “Advocacy & Justice,” continues this spring semester with a new group of students. Alyssia Haymond, Tyler Walker, Maggie Carter, Kelly Lamb, Keagan Vaughan, Jamie Dash, and Erika Mabee, are teaching debate to middle-school students. The project teamed up with MOMs (Motivate Our Minds), an after-school program that allows college students to help tutor first- through eighth-grade students. Keagan Vaughan raves about helping the middle schoolers, “While tutoring the students, we are not only increasing debate interest but we are helping them learn valuable skills.”

While the MOMs students are learning about debate, the immersive learning students are learning a lot about working with the children. “I love working with the kids at MOMs. It’s really an amazing experience to see them learning and actually enjoying it,” says Alyssia Haymond about the project. Kelly Lamb looks at the project in a different light. “It’s been a challenging experience. It is a lot different than taking an actual class. There is a lot more room for creativity and collaboration.”

The work begun by the original “Advocacy & Justice” students will continue into Fall 2012 with another group of students. In addition to working at MOMs, these students will be attending and competing in the World Universities Debate Championship in Berlin, Germany.

## Senior Undergraduate Graduates

### FALL 2011
Ryan Anderson
Demetrick Dumas
Brendan Durkes
Gordon Golabowski
Zachary Jordan
Jacob Lentz
Mongomeli Matuka
Jonathan Patton
Madyson Ridenour
Kelly Smith
Joseph Vonderheide

### SPRING 2012
Sarah Adams
Patrick Alyea
Stephanie Amato
Jordan Birch
Samantha Bontrager
Clarissa Bowers
Erinn Buenger
Lisa Cappa
Rachael Clark
Austin Clifford
Carly Colgan

Mary Conley
Tayln Cox
Candis Cruse
Jonathan Dicken
Sarah Ellison
Nathan Erwin
Leanne Fabellar
Rebekah Fehrman
Katie Foltz
Sarah Fout
Kathleen Gallaher
Austin Gammage
Torieal Gibson
Brenda Gonzalez
Kyle Hawkins
Mark Humphrey
Cassandra Janis
Kortnie Kammayer
Ashley Keeling
John Kendall
Kendra Kimbel
Jill Krieger
Devanny Kuhn
Crystal Lane
Chelsea Lloyd

Laura McCaffrey
Danielle Minton
Nathaniel Minton
Nathaniel Pace
Brian Ramsey
Chelsea Roberts
Dearth Shad
Pierre Sneed
Samantha Stuck
Dennis Sullivan
Lauren Thomas
Paula Truex
Shawna Vandament
Taylor Walt
Elizabeth Whited
Christopher Wineland
Qing Zheng

### SUMMER 2012
Tessa Barnard
Taylor Bowser
Leah Ellis
Mary Goris
Mary Kopecky
Kristine Powell
Galina Preston

This well-attended event capped off a very successful year in which our students not only demonstrated excellence in academics, but were nationally recognized at both debate and individual events competitions and contributed significantly to the Muncie community through their immersive learning and volunteer efforts. We are very proud of our students and wish to heartily congratulate the graduates of 2011-2012 for their amazing accomplishments!
COMM 210 Debate Watch

By Robin Phelps
Graduate Student

What do politicians and COMM 210 students have in common? A love for persuasion.

On Feb. 22, the COMM 210 teaching assistants gathered around the graduate office with Dr. Kathy Denker for a live Twitter forum following the Republican presidential debates. Airing at 8 pm on CNN, the COMM 210 instructors and students joined the rest of the nation to watch Republican candidates Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Mitt Romney, and Ron Paul field questions from host, and news anchor, John King.

While the GOP candidates responded to a variety of topics from education to contraceptives, Dr. Denker and the teaching assistants tweeted questions and comments related to public speaking. After tweeting questions about persuasive appeals and vocal and bodily elements of delivery, COMM 210 students tweeted thousands of comments in response.

Though the activity was an extra credit opportunity encouraging students to evaluate famous political public speakers, the Twitter debate also served as the catalyst for students’ increased awareness in the presidential election.

COMM 210 student Mitch Sights tweeted during the debate, “I don’t follow politics, but this debate opened my eyes.”

After the major success of the debate, Dr. Denker said that she will continue the activity for future COMM 210 semesters and encourage even more students to participate even though the Twitter site temporarily paused @BSUCOMM210 tweeting that night because of the high volume of tweets.

Students tweeted us pictures of them waiting for the debate to get started: