Communication Studies Faculty Receive CCIM Awards

By Glen Stamp
Department Chair

One of the traditions at the first College of Communication, Information, and Media Fall meeting is the presentation of faculty awards. This year, the faculty in the Department of Communication Studies dominated, winning four of the seven awards. Dr. Kathy Denker received the award for “High Technology,” Dr. Peggy Fisher for “Community Connections,” Dr. Kristen McCauliff for “Teaching,” and Dr. Carrie Shue for “Research.” Each of the recipients indicated they were both surprised and honored to win their particular award since, as noted by Kathy, “with so many exceptional faculty in our college, it is really a privilege to win an award like this.”

Kathy Denker is the Director of COMM 210, one of the largest, and therefore most challenging, classes on campus. With the need to teach 3 weekly lectures to 500+ students each, COMM 210 has, as Kathy notes, “a lot of joys, but also some unique challenges.” One of the greatest challenges is keeping the students engaged and her use of technology helps to achieve this goal. Kathy indicates, “to ensure a more positive and successful environment for all of my students, I have incorporated more technology in the classroom, via student response systems and social media.” But student interest is only one outcome. As the instructor of record for over 3000 students per year, Kathy is concerned about students being “silenced” and her innovative use of technology allows “all students to have the opportunity to give voice to their ideas, ask questions, and provide feedback.” For Kathy, the use of technology makes a large class smaller, facilitates learning in an interesting way, and helps students to be actively involved.

Peggy Fisher believes that community involvement is part of her professional identity. As an educator, she sees herself as “an ambassador for CCIM and BSU.” For Peggy, “it is important that we get off campus and become part of the community.” By doing so, she makes a difference in Muncie, while providing a great educational opportunity for her classes. While her past classes have been active with many outside organizations such as CASA, SCORE, Ball Memorial Hospital, and the Chamber of Commerce, her current involvement is with “Feed my Sheep” and the “Innovation Connector.” The goal, for

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Communication Studies Honors Student Discovers Empowerment and Confidence on Her Motorcycle

By Laura O’Hara
Associate Professor

Kathy Herbert is an academically gifted senior majoring in Communication Studies with a history minor. She is president of Lambda Pi Eta, the Honor Society of Communication Studies. She is a full-time administrative coordinator in the Chemistry Department at Ball State. She is the mother of two wonderful children, Matt and Elizabeth, both of whom are doing well in their respective educational journeys.

But Kathy can sometimes be spotted in a riding jacket, gloves, and motorcycle helmet, cruising along the streets of Muncie on top of a shiny, red and black FZ6R Yamaha sport motorcycle, “living in the moment” as she experiences a kind of freedom and pride of accomplishment that few other endeavors have given her.

These two “portraits of Kathy” may seem a bit incongruous at first. Even
CCIM Ph.D. Pathways Project Begins

By Glen Stamp
Department Chair

This Fall, an exciting new BSU initiative, the College of Communication, Information, and Media’s Ph.D. Pathways Project, officially began. The goal of this mentoring program, as explained on the Project’s website, is to match:

“undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented ethnic and racial backgrounds with faculty, professional staff, community professionals and distinguished alumni associated with Ball State University. Through a matching process and relationships established through this program, students will have a heightened awareness for the opportunities that lie beyond the first degree and support for the process of pursuing higher academic goals and resources. The ultimate goal of the program is to encourage students to pursue doctoral studies outside of Ball State University to potentially and ultimately return to work and teach as a faculty member.”

The Project Director is Robin Phelps-Ward, who recently completed the MA program in the Department of Communication Studies at BSU and is now a first year doctoral student in the Adult, Higher, and Community Education program. Robin explains the genesis of the program and the support received from different BSU constituencies:

“The catalyst for the inception of the Ph.D. Pathways program came from the need for institutional diversity at Ball State in the form of diverse faculty and students. With the support of the Office of Institutional Diversity, the Provost, Graduate School and the College of Communication, Information and Media the resources were put in place to create a program that would work to reach the goal of diversifying the campus through a mentoring program.”

The first official meeting of the program was a reception on September 19, where the main goals were to provide an overview of the program and give mentors and mentees an opportunity to meet one another. Currently, there are 12 faculty mentors and 13 student mentees. The Communication Studies faculty serving as mentors are Dr. Kathy Denker, Dr. Kristen McCauliff, and Dr. Marcy Meyer while the Communication Studies student mentees are graduate students Tynesia Ross and Scarlet Hester, and undergraduate student Shaniece Thorpe.

When asked why she volunteered to be a mentor, Dr. Meyer indicated her desire for more diversity at BSU:

“I volunteered to serve as a mentor in the program because I view it as an opportunity to nurture a campus climate in which we value diversity (and) help us create a more demographically diverse faculty population at Ball State . . . We need to hire more minority faculty members who can serve as role models for our minority students! The PhD Pathways program is one means by which we can achieve that goal.”

While also acknowledging the importance of more diversity, Dr. Denker and Dr. McCauliff also acknowledged their own personal reasons for being a mentor. Dr. Denker notes that “Mentoring has been so fundamental to my own academic success, that I think it is our responsibility to pay our opportunities forward. Additionally, it would have been an awesome opportunity to have someone available early in my undergraduate career to ask more questions about the graduate process.” Similarly, Dr. McCauliff indicates “I have a pay it forward mentality about mentoring. I was fortunate enough to have great mentors all throughout my career and know that they literally changed my life. I can only hope to be as open-minded, supportive, and instructive as my mentors!”

Both Scarlett and Tynesia see the program as an opportunity to have a mentor

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her and her students, is to help these
groups “define who they are and what
they can become” as they evolve into
successful enterprises making contribu-
tions to Delaware County.

Kristen McCauliff sees teaching as “the
most important part of my job.” Her goal
as a teacher is to help students reach
their potential by giving them the tools
to be “different people and citizens” then
they were when they entered the class-
room. While Kristen regularly teaches
“traditional” classes, she also offers spe-
cial topics classes for students, helped to
create a class for the digital media minor,
and converted her Communication and
Popular Culture class to a large-lecture
core-curriculum class. As this particular
class is being taught in this fashion
for the first time this fall, Kristen notes
that her goal as a teacher remains the
same -- to choose techniques that “adapt
to whatever the students need” and to
equip them with critical thinking skills
and the confidence to take those skills
out into the real world and make a dif-
ference.”

Carrie Shue has had a very active
research program since coming to Ball
State. In particular, Carrie and her col-
leagues (including Dr. Laura O’Hara)
have developed a partnership with
the IU-Health Ball Memorial Hospital
Family Medicine Residency Center. The
research at BMH involves the investiga-
tion of health related topics such as
the assessment of the communication
competency of medical residents, using
narratives to examine the health literacy
of patients related to their illness, and
patient access to the medical setting.
Carrie sees her communication research
to be particularly important in terms of
her role as a teacher. She notes that
through research, faculty contribute “to
the body of knowledge from which we
draw to teach students about the latest
theories, innovations, and processes that
they will need to know to be competitive
in the workforce. We require students to
be professionally engaged and research
is one way faculty remain professionally
engaged.”

While each of these faculty members
may have been surprised to receive their
respective award, it is no surprise that
they did. Each also acknowledged how
grateful they were to be at a place where
they could be successful. As Carrie said,
“It is a privilege to work in a college that
values and supports the unique con-
tributions of the faculty. I could not be
a successful researcher if not for the sup-
port I have received.”

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Kathy, who is upbeat and soft-spoken, is
surprised at how quickly she learned to
love riding and owning her own sport
bike and how much she has learned
about herself in the process of becom-
ing a rider. Kathy’s love affair with her
bike all started late last spring when
her son Matt told her that he wanted to
learn how to ride. As Kathy discussed
the prospect with Matt, she realized that
he “was the spark” that ignited her own
interest in pursuing sport biking. As she
explains it, “I wanted to live—to experi-
ce as much as possible.” Sport biking,
seemed, might be her ticket.

Kathy and Matt delved into the sport
biking world. As a conscientious mother,
her first order of business was to enroll
in motorcycle safety training. She found
ABATE (American Bikers Aimed Toward
Education), but discovered that she and
Matt would have to wait until the end
of summer to attend ABATE’s intensive
safety training seminar. In the meantime,
Kathy’s skills as a researcher served her
very well as she scoured the internet
for information about the various types
of bikes and biking equipment. For the
uninitiated, there are three basic kinds
of motorcycles: cruisers, which are
meant to travel long distances (think
classic “Harley-Davidsons”), touring
bikes, which are meant for comfort
(think “Gold Wings” that have giant lug-
gage compartments, A/C and heat), and
sport bikes, which are meant for speed
and performance (often called “the sport
cars of motorcycles”).

In their quest for their perfect sport
bikes, Kathy and Matt spent considerable
time trolling a large bike dealership in
Indianapolis, where the clientele were,
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Both Scarlett and Tynesia see the program as an opportunity to have a mentor who can assist them with achieving their goals. However, while Scarlett is already committed to pursuing a PhD in Communication Studies, with an emphasis in media and gender, Tynesia is unsure if she will go straight into a corporate job or pursue a PhD. For Scarlett, therefore, one of the main objectives is to “gain more knowledge in the process of applying to doctoral programs and how to manage the stress and expectations that go along with that.” While understanding the application process is also important to Tynesia, she is hopeful the Pathway’s program will help her make a decision as to which direction to pursue after her Master’s work. As she states, “I hope to find out if pursuing a PhD is the right option for me. I think that having a mentor who has been in the same position as I am currently in will definitely help me to gain a better understanding of what pursuing this option will mean for my future and career.”

The overall goal of this program is long-term and it will be some time before we see these students achieve their doctorates and return to Ball State as faculty members. For the faculty mentors and student mentees, however, goals are already being achieved as they get matched up, begin to establish personal and professional relationships, and share their academic stories, dreams, and achievements with each other. Because of the culture in CCIM, Robin is not surprised at the success of the program in this initial stage: “Though I am not surprised by how giving and enthusiastic the faculty in CCIM continue to be, their support through volunteering to mentor has been the greatest accomplishment thus far. When I interviewed minority mentoring program directors at different universities across the country, one the biggest themes was a lack of faculty support—I don’t think we have a problem with that at CCIM.”

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in Kathy’s recollection, “a little intimidating.” Kathy laughs as she recalls how she bucked the “norm” in that dealership by sitting on each bike to get a feel for how it might “ride.” Apparently, in the macho, adrenaline-fueled world of sport bike retail, the mostly male customers spend little time “trying on” their bikes. The manager of this particular dealership, however, was very pleased at Kathy’s discrimination and congratulated her for “shopping smart.” Kathy finally found her perfect bike at Power Sports in Anderson, Indiana. “She called my name. When I sat on her I knew.” As Kathy observes, “You don’t pick your bike. Your bike picks you.”

And Kathy’s bike is a beauty. She’s big, sleek, streamlined, classy, and powerful. Kathy is in love with this bike. But the real story here is about how the experience of learning to ride the bike has challenged and changed Kathy. As she recalls, “In my head I knew I could do this,” but it wasn’t until Kathy was actually enrolled in the ABATE training class at the end of summer that it had turned “from a fun idea into a reality for me.” Kathy acknowledges that the ABATE class of nine men and three women (one of whom dropped out early) was challenging. However, she also counts the ABATE training experience as one of the most empowering times of her life. For instance, Kathy was surprised at how comfortable she was learning how to make tight turns at high rates of speed. She also noted that throughout the training her fellow trainees expressed admiration at her concentration and progress. As she recalls, “it was an exercise in self-fulfilling prophecy. I knew I could do this. I didn’t worry about what others thought. This was about me!”

Since taking the course Kathy has become increasingly confident on her bike. She loves riding her bike and the feeling of “being completely present” in her surroundings whenever she is riding. She loves the feelings of empowerment, confidence, and satisfaction that she experiences while riding the bike. Riding the bike has also taught her to move past any perceived limitations she might have. As Kathy asserts, “Every time I get on my
Poverty Simulation Challenges Stereotypes and Raises Awareness of the Plight of Impoverished Citizens

By Laura O’Hara
Associate Professor


These were some of the descriptors that the record crowd of nearly 75 CCIM faculty, administrators, and students attending the Poverty Simulation sponsored by TEAMwork for Quality Living and the College of Communication, Information, and Media’s (CCIM) Diversity Interest Group used to describe how they felt after the nearly three-hour interactive exercise showed them how it felt to live in poverty.

The idea to host a Poverty Simulation for those associated with CCIM came about last spring when CCIM’s Diversity Interest Group explored the issue of poverty in their book club. At that point, members of the Diversity Interest Group wanted to do more to raise the CCIM community’s awareness of the difficulties faced by those in poverty. As Diversity Interest Group member and Communication Studies professor Dr. Beth Messner noted, “It has always struck me how hard it is to live life in poverty... the stressors you face, the attitudes you face, the walls you have to climb. [The Poverty Simulation] seemed like it could bring the issue to others’ attention in a very potent way.” So, Messner spearheaded the effort, working with TEAMwork to organize the September 19th event.

The poverty simulation, which helped participants learn what it is like to be part of a typical low-income family trying to survive from week-to-week, sensitized participants to the situations many low-income people encounter daily. During the simulation, participants played the roles of families living in poverty. Each family was challenged by a different set of circumstances. For example, some families had members who were disabled. Other families discovered that their primary breadwinner had lost his or her job. Still other families’ income was limited to what one family member could earn through a part-time job supplemented with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Many families had multiple children, some of whom had special needs. The task of these families was to provide members with basic necessities during the course of the four 15-minute “weeks.” However, the various families also had to abide by the types of constraints faced by those in poverty, including lack of child care, elder care, lack of transportation to work, rigid agency regulations, and very limited financial resources.

Once the actual simulation ended, participants shared their “lessons learned” from the simulation. For example, Scarlett Hester and Megan Getter, both graduate students in the Communication Studies Master’s program (and who were both assigned simulation roles as adolescents) experienced feelings of “helplessness,” “uselessness,” and “powerlessness,” in those roles as they witnessed their “families’” struggle while they could do little to help. Interestingly, it seemed to these “youngsters,” that the only ways they could help their respective “families” were to flout the legal system. For instance, Hester, in her role, tried to help out her “family” by “skipping school” to babysit a “younger sibling,” only to get thrown in “Juvie” for 10 days. Such traps were commonly discussed during the post-simulation discussion, as participants described the experience as a “no win situation,” or as being “stuck in a cycle with no opportunity to ever get ahead.”

Ms. Pam Barnhouse, one of the TEAMwork staff members, was on-hand to help lead the post-simulation discussion. She explained to participants that she had lived in poverty for several years. She emphasized that that many of the issues that participants dealt with during the evening’s simulation had been a fact of life for her; and that she too, had experienced feelings of frustration and lack of control trying to survive in poverty. Ms. Carrie Summers, member of the TEAMwork staff and primary organizer of the Poverty Simulation event, expressed her hope that participants of the Poverty Simulation had learned that poverty can happen to a family very quickly, due to an unfortunate situation such as a death or an illness and that members of the middle-class should not blame the victims of poverty for their circumstances. Dr.see POVERTY SIMULATION | page 6

POVERTY SIMULATION — (From left to right) Rebecca Buchen, Kristen McCauliff and Sarah Clark.

POVERTY SIMULATION — Left photo: Nicole Johnson reading the poverty simulation materials.

Right photo: The poverty simulation had a good turn out from CCIM faculty, staff and students.
bike, I overcome a fear—about where to go [or] how fast to go. I'm always stretching myself. We all set limits... but I've taught myself that I don't need anyone's permission to do something. . . I'll never sit on the back of anybody's bike... ever! I've gotta drive.”

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Messner acknowledged that “it is always a challenge to open peoples’ eyes” to the plight of those in poverty, but is hopeful that the simulation gave the CCIM participants a greater appreciation for the struggles of those in poverty, noting that we need to “begin to question stereotypes [we] have of people in poverty and begin to treat those in poverty more kindly.”

2012 – 2013 Communication Studies Graduate Assistants

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Fusco, Amy
Hester, Scarlett
Kemp, Daniel
Pugh, Marilyn
Sroufe, Katie
Summers, Morgan
Tully, Meg
Jones, Charles
Pike, Dallis
Markancek, Alyse
Saalman, Kenny
Foland, Molly
Chagnon, Alyssa
Dicker, Aaron
Green, Caleb

Clark, Sarah
Colpean, Michelle
Getter, Megan
Dunn, Elizabeth
Taweh, Jumah
Fish, AnnaBeth
Stewart, Stevie
Cameron, Sarah
Crowder, Justin
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EVENTS