

THE LINK

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Department of Communications Media Alumni Newsletter

The Laurel Highlands Communications Conference



Communications scholars from across the region presented their research at the fifth annual Laurel Highlands Communications Conference (LHCC) Thursday, April 10 and Friday, April 11. Presenters from more than 20 institutions visited the Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex in Indiana, Pennsylvania, for this year's conference.

Jonathan Sinclair, a 1990 graduate of IUP and the Department of Communications Media, was the featured conference speaker. As executive vice president and executive producer at Harpo Studios in Chicago, Sinclair develops and delivers programming for Harpo and OWN: the Oprah Winfrey Network. During his presentation "13 Secrets to How Television is Really Developed & (Successfully) Produced," Sinclair talked about the importance having good instincts.

"If you can focus on one thing, make it your ability to hone the feelings in your gut. Your gut will always tell you if you're in a situation where you're forcing something or something is off, or something is bad, or something is good. Your gut will always tell you," said Sinclair during his keynote speech.

Following his address, Sinclair took time to meet with undergraduate Communications Media students during an informal roundtable discussion. Students were able to ask for career advice as well as learn more about Sinclair's career and Emmy award winning television productions. Sinclair was also on campus to receive IUP's 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award. (continued on page 2)





The LHCC began on Thursday with individual and panel presentations. The Poster Presentation Session was open Thursday afternoon, and the Media Showcase exhibition was open on Friday morning along with additional presentations and panels throughout the day.

During the two-day conference, faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students from the region's colleges and universities attended presentations, panels, poster presentations, and media displays. Conference participants had the opportunity to network with other scholars, professionals, and students.

As a student entering the Communications Media Department, IUP junior Madeline Williams used the LHCC to gain knowledge in communications research. "Attending this conference gave me an insight into what I would learn in communications," said Williams.

The conference, which began in 2009, encourages research and scholarship in communications, media and related fields. The conference accepted presentations from a broad range of communications research topics. Presentations included media ethics, crisis communication, media criticism, instructional technology, and social media. In addition to presenting at the conference, session presenters have the opportunity to submit their academic papers for publication in the 2014 LHCC conference proceedings.

This year's conference was directed by IUP faculty members Dr. B. Gail Wilson, Dr. Mark Piwinsky, and Dr. Nurhaya Muchtar, and graduate students Jennifer Helman, and Kristen DeWitt. Twenty-three graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and staff members contributed to planning the LHCC.

- Submitted by Anastasia Gaines



Your Department Needs Your Support!

When the IUP Foundation comes calling this year, designate your donation to your favorite *IUP COMM Media Program*!

Put your annual contribution to work directly for the programs that you participated in during your years here at IUP. Alumni donations are an important key to the department's continued success. Your support will help ensure that generations of future communicators have the tools and technology they need to prepare them for rewarding careers in the communications field. Use the following Foundation codes to designate contributions to specific departmental programs.

<u>Foundation Code</u>	<u>Departmental Program</u>
224663	General Communications Media Support
224722	IUP-TV Support
224765	Communications Media Journal & Conference
225302	Doctoral Scholarship & Research
228431	WIUP-FM Radio Support

International Communication: Indonesian Exchange Program in the Works

Dr. Nurhaya Muchtar of the Communications Media Department is hard at work in her efforts to create and maintain a new exchange program between IUP and [Universitas Multimedia Nusantara](#) (UMN) a university near her home town of Jakarta, Indonesia.

Muchtar is one of two Indonesian professors at IUP and she says that by building this program she hopes to increase diversity and bring more income to the university. She hopes it will not only increase international enrollment at IUP, but the exchange program will create more opportunities for IUP students to travel abroad and further their educations as well.

“Even though it’s a longer distance to travel, the cost of living in Indonesia is much lower than other, more popular study abroad destinations like Europe,” says Muchtar.

Muchtar has already visited UMN’s campus and this coming summer, she is planning to travel there once again to participate in workshops and give some presentations. She also wants to use this trip to build more interest for attendance and collaboration. She will talking about this exchange program at a conference that she is chairing at Ohio State University next November.

By creating these partnerships, Muchtar wants to spread the word about this fledging program and grow interest and participation.

“Not only will it be a good opportunity for students at the universities,” says Muchtar, “but by getting in contact with professors, we’ll be creating more professional connections.” University faculty and graduate students will have opportunities to collaborate on research and other projects.

Initially, the program will be open for students in the Communications Media Department. However, Muchtar it will branch out into an interdisciplinary program, to include Fine Arts, Journalism, and other closely related majors. It could even evolve into a university wide option for study abroad.

While the project is in it’s early stages, Muchtar says that she’s received a lot of positive feedback and support from colleagues, and interest from participants at UMN who are working with Muchtar to get the program off the ground.

“Right now I’m doing anything I can to grow interest in the program. And I hope to continue helping in any way that I can,” says Muchtar.—submitted by Amanda Dunlop



Teaching Associates: The Great Balancing Act

Some call them teaching associates; others call them masters of time management. Three students in the Communications Media and Instructional Technology (CMIT) Ph.D. program do double duty as doctoral students and as instructors for courses in the Department of Communications Media. Annaliese Piraino, Rebecca Elinich, and Brittany Pavolik were selected as teaching associates for the 2013-14 academic year based on their skills, experience, and the department's need for instructors. Each of these three women are teaching two undergraduate courses during their one-year appointment. Communications Media undergraduate student Anastasia Gaines, talked to this year's TAs.

Annaliese Piraino teaches 'Digital Instructional Technology' for freshmen pre-service teachers, and 'Making Presentations with Media' for Communications Media students.

She chose the Ph.D. in Communications Media and Instructional Technology because of its solid curriculum, convenience, and practicality. The program fits her needs and ties in to her backgrounds in education and communications.

Her previous experiences include teaching secondary English at McKeesport High School, teaching as an adjunct faculty member at ITT Tech, and serving as the Associate Dean of General Studies at ITT.

As both student and a teacher, Piraino explains her biggest challenge is balancing her professional life and student life. She says there is never enough time or hours in a day, and it is important to master time management.

Piraino's best moments in teaching happen when she sees students "do something or complete something they initially resisted or didn't think possible." She enjoys seeing students who are proud of their accomplishments and who have realized their capabilities.

After graduation, she hopes to find a tenure track professorship or a position in corporate training, and, of course, pay off her student loans.

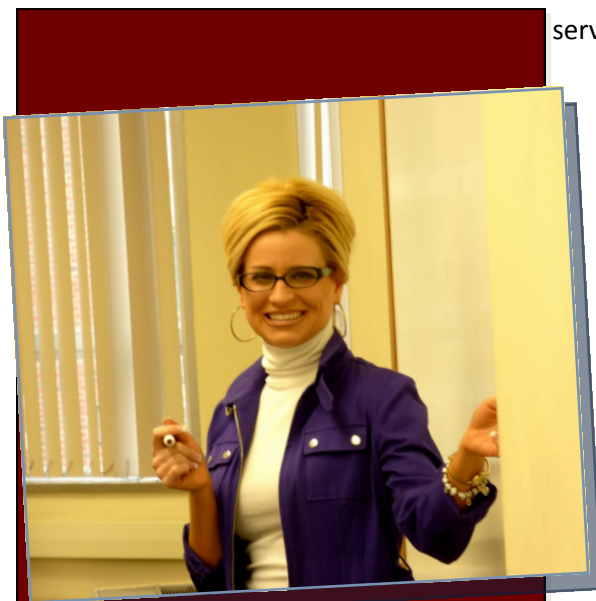
Rebecca Elinich's experiences allow her to teach courses in game simulation, game design, and animation. She currently teaches 'Internet and Multimedia' and '3-D Game and Simulation Design and Development'.

She enrolled in the CMIT program because the coursework complemented her background in multimedia development. The program offered her an education in theoretical frameworks, which was something her previous education lacked.

Her biggest challenge when it comes to teaching is balancing her own coursework while also preparing class material for her students, such as creating lecture notes and grading papers. Since she teaches technology courses, Elinich also finds teaching development languages in 15 weeks difficult and compares it to teaching any other language in a short period of time.

The moment that shaped her entire career happened during a discussion with the chair of her department. The two were discussing a situation with a student who was unhappy with a final grade. When Elinich said she thought she cared too much, her chair responded, "The day you stop caring is the day you become a poor teacher."

After she obtains her PhD, Elinich plans to find a tenure track teaching position in video game development or a career in the video game industry as a scripter or developer.



Teaching Associates: The Great Balancing Act



Brittany Pavolik (pictured at left) currently teaches 'Creating Feature Programming for Television' and 'Broadcast News Process'. She is also in charge of video production at the Center for Media Production and Research (CMPR).

As an IUP undergraduate, she focused her courses in video production and completed an internship at Fox 53, in Pittsburgh. Pavolik completed the Adult Education and Communications Technology Master's Program and worked as a graduate assistant with Dr. Piwinsky. She worked with Dr. Piwinsky and CMIT student Lacey Fulton to create the CMPR. Pavolik did not consider pursuing a Ph.D. until one of her professors encouraged her to apply.

Pavolik describes her life as a student and a teaching associate as a "balancing act." She finds she works nonstop and is engulfed in academia. Pavolik says the most challenging aspect of being a teacher is that "things pop up that you do not expect to happen." Late assignments and tardy students are two situations that she frequently deals with.

Her favorite moment as a teacher occurred after she and Dr. Piwinsky redesigned the Broadcast News Process course. The redesign brought IUP-TV's News Center into the classroom. Pavolik says after watching an episode from a previous semester and comparing it to the productions done in her class she could see the improvement and this gave her a sense of accomplishment.

Her goal after graduation is to find a faculty position teaching video or media production. Pavolik enjoys teaching and working with students and hopes to become a mentor to her students.

Here's what some COMM students are doing



Alumni Update

We recently caught up with four alumni couples who met during their college days in the Department of Communications Media to see where they are now...

Jeff and Jenn (Rak) Sunderland

Graduated: Jeff 1997, Jenn 1999

Together: 19 years, married 15 years in June 2014

Children: Daughter, Addison (Addy), July 2011

A Radio/TV Romance: Jeff and Jenn first met at WIUP-FM in Fall 1995. Jeff was Sports Director and Jenn (a freshman) came up to Jeff and asked, "Are you prejudiced against girls?" Jeff said, "Absolutely not." From there, they started to work together on the sports staff at the radio station and also at IUP-TV. They knew it was love when they once stayed up all night talking at Denny's.

Happy Talk: During the Spring of 1996, when Jenn was a news anchor at IUP-TV and Jeff was a sports anchor, they had hit a rough patch and had decided to break up. "One night taping the news, we had to do 'happy talk' for the show. We got back together during the next break." Both Jeff and Jenn have enjoyed making lasting friendships with their fellow alumni at IUP-TV.

Where are they now? Two days before their wedding, Jenn interviewed with CNN. While on their honeymoon, CNN called to say Jenn had the job. They moved to Atlanta four weeks later and never looked back. Since then, Jenn has worked most of her career at CNN as a Senior Electronic Graphics Operator (EGO) and was chosen as the solo EGO for the 2004 Primary Elections produced by CNN in New York City. In January of 2012, Jenn was promoted to Technical Director and currently works on Headline News, Morning Express with Robin Meade and CNN Newsroom with Fredricka Whitfield.

After graduation at IUP, Jeff worked as a sports writer at *The Sentinel* in Lewistown, Pa. He is currently the Director of Communications for the Georgia Hospital Association, a non-profit trade association representing the state's hospitals. He has worked for the company since 1999.



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Matt and Kim (Wilt) Salerno

Graduated: Matt 1988, Kim 1990

Together: 27, married for 21 (April 24, 1993)

Family: Son, Luke 16. Two German Shepherds, Charlie and King and one rabbit, Tiny



Love was “on the air”: Kim and Matt met working at WIUP-FM. Matt was co-host of a morning radio show and Kim was a newscaster. It was through their work at the radio station, and frequent post-show breakfasts at McDonald’s that their friendship, and eventually love, blossomed. “We can’t really pinpoint an ‘ah ha’ moment,” says Matt. “Our love grew slowly over time from a really strong friendship.” However, Matt does tell a story about meeting Kim, well before they ever dated, and half-jokingly telling one of his friends that she was the girl he was going to marry. Matt really didn’t know her then, but some years later that prophecy came true.



Just Married: After graduation and leaving Indiana, Kim and Matt relocated to Tampa, Fl. They returned to Kim’s hometown of Cresson, Pa. for their wedding and the reception was held in Indiana. What wedding reception is complete without a cruise through the IUP campus in your wedding attire? As they drove around IUP in their car bearing a “Just Married” sign, they were greeted and cheered everywhere they went. It was both funny and touching.

Where are they now?

Matt currently works as a U.S. Technical Sales Support Specialist with Meyer Sound Laboratories, Inc.

Kim is a CASA Coordinator with Disney Vacation Club.

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Bob Gillmer and Cheryl (Weber) Gillmer

Graduated: Bob 1993, Cheryl 1993

Together: Since Spring of 1991, 23 years

Children: Son, Logan, 12 and daughter, Riley 10

She's the boss: "I was working camera for a shoot covering the IUP Speakers series," says Bob. "Cheryl was the Director of Creative Services. My first TV boss!" Cheryl remembers Bob being, "A little shy, but great to work with. I told my roommate that night I met a cute redhead and knew from then on I'd be arranging a lot more shoots with him."

They fell in love after working together more in the department but Cheryl admits she knew it was real after Bob met her crazy family and didn't run away screaming.



Bad news is funny: Bob and Cheryl recall pulling a prank on the IUP-TV news crew. Without telling the news anchor, they re-ran a recorded broadcast but went on taping a newscast as though the show was going live. What followed was the worst news cast possible, complete with incorrect graphics, wrong tapes, backward prompter text, and a staged fight between a co-anchor and Bob, the director. The anchor managed to soldier through, but most of the crew left before the prank could be explained. Luckily they tracked everyone down to explain the joke and had a laugh watching the "bad news" tape.

Who is Big Al Wilson? Another Gillmer prank involved Bob switching Dr. Wilson's name from B. Gail Wilson to 'Big Al' Wilson on the department's marquee in the Stouffer Lobby. The nickname started after Bob misheard 'B. Gail' as 'Big Al' in a conversation. Bob and Cheryl are both thankful for the life long friendships they formed during their time in the department.

Where are they now? Bob is the Coordinator of Communications Media at North Penn School District in Lansdale, Pa. Cheryl works as a Video Editor at KYW/CBS3 in Philadelphia.

Alumni Update

We recently caught up with four alumni couples who met during their college days in the Department of Communications Media to see where they are now...

Joe and Becky (Brock) Spadea

Graduated: Joe 1988, Becky 1989

Together: 26 years, married for 24

Children: Daughter, Kacie 21, and son, Thomas 19.

Both attend Oklahoma State University.



A “love” of sports: Joe was working as the Sports Director at WIUP-FM and Becky was a reporter who wanted to work on sports stories. “She asked if she could, expecting me to say no,” Joe says. “But I said yes.” Eventually, their conversations about sports got longer and less about sports.

Joe and Becky can’t pick out just one moment when they knew this was “love” but they both say their relationship grew quickly. Their first date was October 22, 1987 and they got engaged February 13, 1988. They were married the following year, September 2, 1989.

Not so “Fatal Attraction”: While Joe admits it wasn’t really a first date kind of movie, he took Becky out for their first date to see the movie ‘Fatal Attraction’. Lucky for him, Becky agreed to a second date.

Joe and Becky also recollect funny occasions that included any event involving Brian Canning, a dented air conditioner, Canadian beer and hallway hockey. It would seem there are some inside stories only those involved will understand.



Where are they now?

Becky works as an Optician/Optical Manager at Elkhorn Ridge Vision, in Omaha, Nebraska.

Joe currently works as the News Director at KMTV Action 3 News, Omaha.