

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA | COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION SCIENCES

COMMUNICATOR

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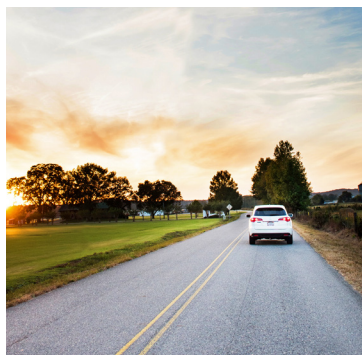
INSIDE» Communication and Media Preview / Minerva—Creative Advertising / C&IS in L.A.

A Journey for Truth

Discovering the people
behind “the media”

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Everyone has heard about “the media,” but the diverse groups of journalists, broadcasters and personalities that make up the global industry of news professionals cannot be collectively stereotyped. In this story, JCM instructor, Meredith Cummings sets out on a 10,000+ mile journey to meet more than 100 people in “the media” and tell their stories.

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VOLUME 38

Communicator is published by the Capstone Communication Society and The University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences. Its purpose is to keep alumni and supporters informed about the programs, services and activities of the College, as well as developments in the fields of communication and information.

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DEAN'S NOTE



Dear Alumni & Friends,

It is a privilege to share with you the Spring 2018 Communicator. This issue will offer a view of the exceptional accomplishments of the year past, the innovations and transformations ahead and the support of alumni and friends that make it all possible.

Last fall, a record number of new faculty joined our College with a profile including published researchers, industry leaders and award-winning teachers. This cohort of seventeen includes two interdisciplinary positions that work to propel research in health communication and sports communication across our disciplines. Additionally, Dr. Jim Elmborg was named director of our School of Library and Information Studies and will continue to explore additional degree programs to aid in the intersection of information and digital media. We were also excited to welcome our first cohort of freshmen into our creative media and news media majors.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on our vision—to develop global leaders who do the extraordinary across the full communication, media and information spectrum. We have seen tremendous success with C&IS in LA and we are expanding national and international reach through international study, mentoring and

internship opportunities. Additionally, we are proud to have eight faculty members serving as president or vice president of national and international professional organizations in our fields. Their leadership extends our impact and our global reach.

If you have not been to campus recently, I invite you to see the transformation of our College's facilities. In this issue, you will see renovations in Reese Phiher Hall and Gorgas Library in addition to the Plank Center's new space in Capital Hall. These, along with enhancements to our Digital Media Center, indicate that we continue to create a cutting-edge environment that extends the C&IS legacy well into the twenty-first century. These facilities attract faculty and students who understand our emphasis on community and collaboration.

Enjoy the diverse stories of our faculty, alumni and students who contribute to our past and future success. An exciting future lies ahead for C&IS, and I thank you for being part of our story!

Mark D. Nelson, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor

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In partnership with UA Athletics, CAMP included a tour of Coleman Coliseum with free time in the UA Gymnastics practice facility and presentations by Athletic Communications staff.

TR



The University of Alabama Men's Tennis coach, George Husack, and athletes joined CAMP participants for a simulated press conference experience.



CAMP TRAINING DAYS



CAMP participants worked "hands on," using some of the most cutting-edge equipment and computer software available.



The week concluded in an awards banquet for all of the project teams' accolades and achievements. Luke (second from left) and Cheney (second from right) were a part of the project team who took home the award for Best Campaign.

Communication and Media Preview gives high school students an educational head start.

Luke Winstel and Cheney Harden came to Communication and Media Preview (CAMP) wanting to learn more about sports communication. Luke, a junior, works as a sports announcer, covering six different teams for St. Pius X Catholic High School's webcast. Cheney is a senior cheerleader at Cherokee High School and has a passion for photography and digital editing. They both live in Georgia, they both love sports, and they are both asking big questions about their futures. In other words, they are exactly the kind of students who benefit from the College's newest high school program.

"I wanted to come to C&IS CAMP because I wanted to learn more about the sports broadcasting field and what it would be like to work on a broadcast team in college," said Luke.

"The more I looked into CAMP, I realized that it would provide me with tools to use in the industry I want to enter: sports communication," Cheney said. "My ideal career path deals with athletic management with a focus on image repair."

After an intense week of diving headfirst into sports communication, they traveled home a step ahead of their peers. Through hands-on learning and classroom discussions, 50 students like Luke and Cheney discovered a variety of career opportunities surrounding sports communication at the very

first CAMP. They engaged in specialized skill seminars, interactive presentations from industry professionals and C&IS faculty, a team lip-sync battle, collaborative workshops and a final group campaign.

"Getting experience through the campaign helped me hone my skills and develop as a communicator," said Luke. "We were able to participate in a press conference with the UA men's tennis and women's gymnastics teams, which gave me valuable experience I can use as an aspiring sportscaster."

Before ever stepping foot on campus as a college freshman, CAMP participants experienced what it's like to learn from some of the nation's leading educators in areas such as advertising, public relations, video production, news media and public speaking. The participants were immersed in an atmosphere that offered a real glimpse into what college is like.

"It was very beneficial to work with professors from The University in a smaller, group setting

"From my roommates to my team members and even to participants who were on other project teams, I formed amazing friendships which will last."
—Cheney Harden, high school senior



Our award-winning faculty members worked alongside CAMP participants in cutting-edge University facilities including computer labs, classrooms, the indoor football practice facility and the set of the Nick Saban Show inside the College's Digital Media Center.

when it came time to work on our skills," said Cheney. "I was one of the people in my group not as accustomed to visual design, so having the professors there to help teach us the skills we needed was awesome!"

No matter the task at hand—a skill session with a C&IS faculty member or taking notes during the hype video presentation from Crimson Tide Productions—CAMP encouraged participants to grow in areas where they may have had little experience. Introducing high school students to highly technical camera and production equipment and industry-leading, video and photography editing software comes with a steep learning curve. The students rose to the challenge and produced campaigns worthy of the UA Athletics teams they represented.

"A part of CAMP that was difficult for me was video editing," said Luke. "I had never attempted it before, and it was very tough to learn at first. The faculty and CAMP leaders were extremely helpful, and I improved in two or three days."

Whether it is print journalism or a web-based video broadcast, finishing assignments under a deadline somewhat defines the communication industry. CAMP participants gained valuable experience completing their campaigns while working against the clock. The adversity of a hard deadline and the teamwork needed to

complete a major project went hand in hand in forging relationships.

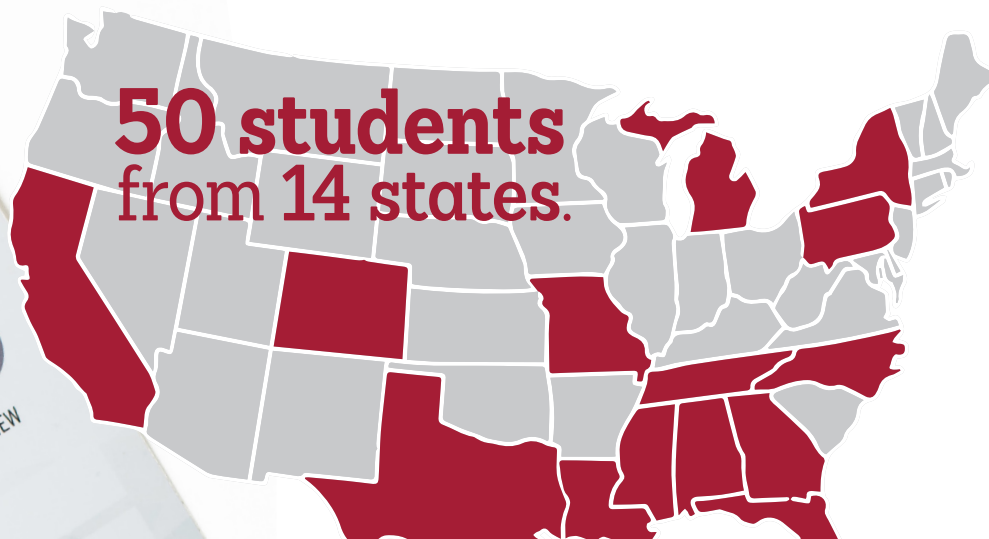
"This was by far one of the best experiences I have ever had, bonding with the people at CAMP," said Cheney. "From my roommates to my team members and even to participants who were on other project teams, I formed amazing friendships which will last."

Luke agrees.

"I got to meet a multitude of peers with similar interests and learn from them," said Luke. "I still stay in contact with them, and made many new friends I would not have if I did not attend CAMP."

C&IS CAMP brought together students from across the country to experience the world of sports communication. Altogether, this new program required a year of preparation and collaboration from C&IS faculty and staff, partners in UA Athletics and a small army of student leaders. According to Luke, it was all worthwhile.

"This experience was one of the best I have ever had in my life. Before CAMP, I was not really considering The University of Alabama as an option for college, but after CAMP, it is number one on my list."



CAMP 2018: July 10-14 / register at cis.ua.edu/camp

DID YOU KNOW? This past summer, ASPA hosted 125 students for The Long Weekend Multimedia Camp, and 10 students for the Multicultural Journalism Workshop. C&IS also hosted 20 students for the Alabama Forensic Institute.

RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

C&IS faculty are nationally recognized for their cutting-edge research initiatives and their best-selling books. In the past year, \$700,000+ of grant proposal submissions to top-level organizations and agencies empowered the College to continue creating knowledge and developing solutions to global issues. These are some examples of notable secured grants and published books.

DR. DARRIN GRIFFIN \$251,850

Improving tornado warning access and comprehension for the Deaf, Blind and Deaf-Blind

DR. JOSH PEDERSON \$27,000

Charting chronic health issues related to stress from communication in intimate relationships

DRS. ANDY BILLINGS AND KENON BROWN \$20,000

Second-screen use at the 2018 Winter Olympics

DR. CORY ARMSTRONG \$10,000

Examining media messages of impending severe weather in urban and rural areas

DR. SCOTT PARROTT \$5,000

Media portrayal of servicemen shaping perception of veterans

DR. KENON BROWN \$1,000

Criminal allegations & athlete image repair

The Crunk Feminist Collection

DR. ROBIN BOYLORN

Sweetwater (Revised edition)

DR. ROBIN BOYLORN

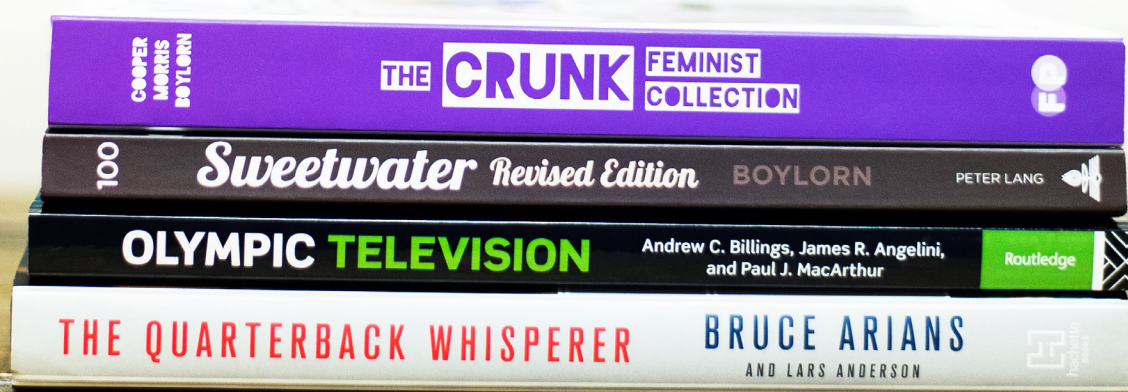
Olympic Television:

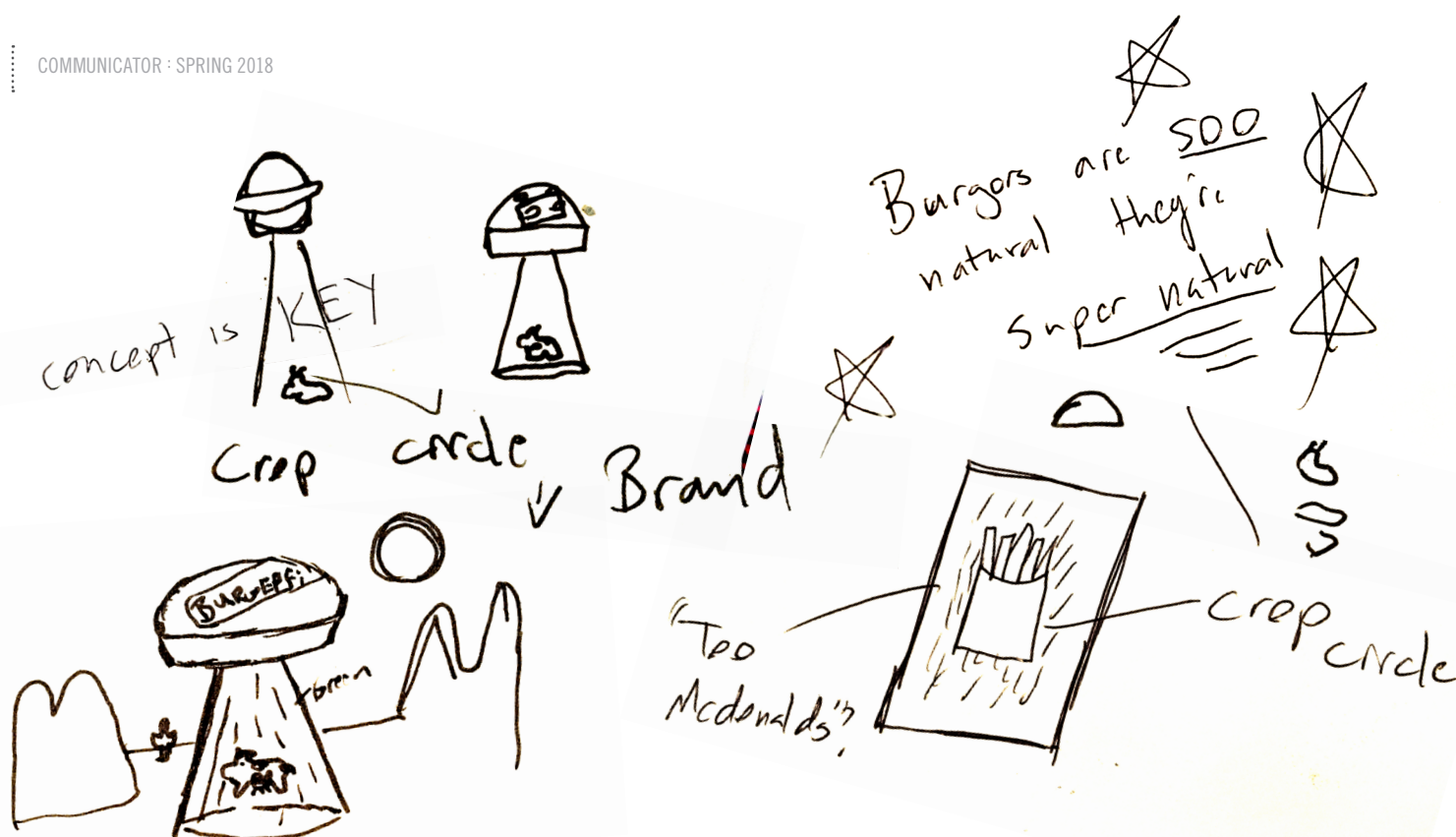
Broadcasting the Biggest Show on Earth

DR. ANDY BILLINGS

The Quarterback Whisperer

LARS ANDERSON





MADE IN MINERVA

UA's Creative Advertising program goes beyond ordinary

In most classes, detailed syllabi are handed out at the beginning of each semester, but in a small classroom in Reese Phifer, something different happens on the first day.

Students are asked to sketch out hundreds of concepts on small pieces of paper. Scribbled in pencil, these ideas are then put on a wall and judged for their merit. After editing and critiquing the drawings, an idea emerges. From that original idea, Minerva students are guided through an intensive process of creativity for the rest of their time studying creative advertising.

This small group of students make up the Minerva program. Minerva, named for the Roman goddess of wisdom and arts, is the name given to the cohort of students selected to join the creative specialization within advertising. Students are selected through a rigorous application process, attracting some of the most creative minds on campus. They care about the identity of Minerva and intentionally represent it in nearly every facet of their lives.

These creative minds influence campus conversations on how to think about social problems, campus issues and student

relationships. Students in Minerva are expected to care about the process of design which includes a deep understanding of their environment. Just as their first-draft ideas are crafted into something bigger from the first day on, the students themselves feel a change within as they complete the program.

Britt Buzan, a recent graduate of Minerva from Jacksonville, Ala., knows this to be true. Moving from political science to Minerva, Buzan pushed himself in the program to become the artist he is today.

Last year, Buzan won a Gold ADDY in the full-page magazine ad category of the local American Advertising Student Awards. His ad, "Super Natural," for BurgerFi highlighted the restaurant's vegetarian burger options. The ad is a testament to Minerva's commitment to teach students to dream big and think outside of the box. Every ADDY in the student division went to University of Alabama students.

"Minerva became my place, it was the perfect outlet for me," said Buzan. "We want to creatively solve problems and we are challenged in this way. The process shapes us."

From the initial concept sketches to the finished product, Minerva students craft and perfect their messages in the most creative way possible.

ABOVE: Britt Buzan's concept sketches that led to a Gold ADDY.

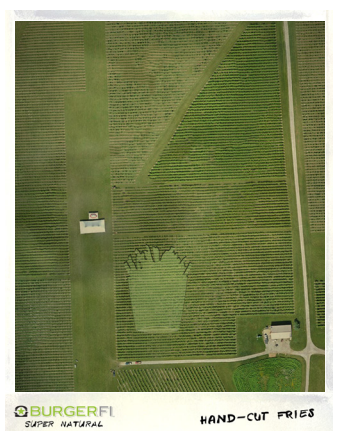
"GREAT IDEAS ARE FOUND BELOW
SURFACE-LEVEL THINKING. IF
YOU ASKED 100 PEOPLE TO COME
UP WITH A WAY TO VISUALLY
COMMUNICATE 'BURGERFI
BURGERS ARE SO NATURAL,
THEY'RE SUPERNATURAL,' 99 OF
THEM WILL COME UP WITH THE
IDEA OF A UFO ABDUCTING A COW.
SO THAT GOT TOSSED OUT AND
BRITT KEPT DIGGING."

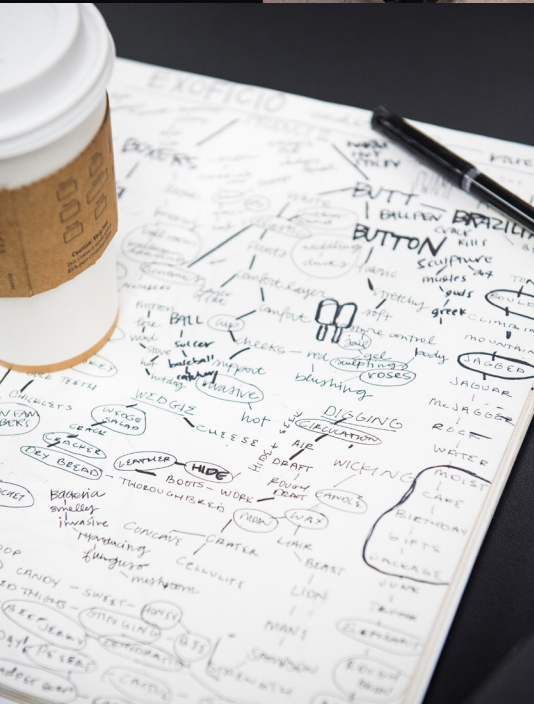
– Mark Barry,
Creative Advertising Instructor



ABOVE: The final advertisement created by Britt Buzan who won a Gold ADDY
in the local American Advertising Awards for his BurgerFi ad, "Super Natural".

BELOW: Additional ideas Buzan created before the final selection of the most creative and effective ad.





Minerva brings together the most creative minds on campus in an intimate, collaborative cohort designed to foster dynamic thought and creative problem solving.

"WE'D CRITIQUE EVERYONE'S WORK AND PUSH OUR THINKING TO BE SMARTER, BOLDER AND MORE SURPRISING."

— Larissa Magera

Buzan and other students have found solidarity in the process, becoming mentors for one another during late nights in Reese Phifer 332. The hard work is worth it because they get a taste for agency life while completing their undergraduate degree. No matter the challenge, Minerva students face it together, head on.

Mary Buzbee (Birmingham, Ala.), a senior in Minerva, discussed the program's desire to change the campus conversation about the creative focus and to introduce more collaboration.

"We want to dispense the information we have, and we want to widen the scope of Minerva on campus," said Buzbee.

For each student in Minerva, widening the scope looks a little different. While on campus, they may work with students in other majors to create a project or provide feedback on design and creative initiatives. The program is working to become a student organization in addition to the creative focus in advertising, which exemplifies their desire to reach more people with the creative influence.

After their time in Minerva, many graduates go on to work in an agency, pushing the limits in the creative world. Some go on to work as freelance graphic artists and others look for ways to engage with creative issues around the world on their own terms. No matter the arena, Minerva students tackle problems with the backing of a creative community.

Led by Mark Barry, a former creative director and part-time sculptor, Minerva seeks to go beyond the ordinary for student growth. As Barry put it, "early on, they realize the level of work and work ethic we expect in the program is really high."

Minerva students' creativity is highlighted and encouraged through relationships with their peer cohort, but also with their professors like Barry.

"[The faculty] are usually kind and positive, but sometimes they have to be brutally honest," said Caleb Ledbetter (Columbia, Tenn.). "No matter what, I always know that they care most about helping me create my best work, so that I can land that agency job."

Larissa Magera is a Minerva alumna and current designer at Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborne (BBDO) in New York City. She

knows the Minerva mission and how it facilitates collaboration among students, first hand.

"Every week, we had to come up with ideas for our assigned products. During class, we'd critique everyone's work and push our thinking to be smarter, bolder and more surprising," said Magera. "It's uncomfortable having your ideas in the hot seat, but the comradery that emerges eventually builds a more collaborative environment."

Beyond the work load and creative expectations of the program, the cohort style fosters relationships among students. Eventually it is the students, not just the faculty, that keep the creative standards for the program alive.

"They hold each other accountable for the amount and level of work they do," said Barry. "No one gets to slack off because everyone wants to succeed."

In addition to their cohort's cohesive mentality, the comradery plays right into Minerva's culture. The group of students molds the program into what they want it to be.

"Everyone cares about creativity and ideas," Ledbetter said. "We get along well, which is good because we spend hours together every week in group meetings, we eat together, and we go out together. As a group, we are free-spirited, progressive and positive."

The students are excited to be a part of building the program. It is within programs like Minerva that leaders are created.

These leaders steward the arts and create pieces that offer creative solutions to communicate messages. As Buzbee said, their art opens the door to a broader conversation and invites collaboration in new ways on campus.

The Minerva community is dedicated to designing compelling, creative advertising, and for most students, the program is just the beginning.

No matter the next step for students, Minerva goes with them. At its core, Minerva is a tight-knit group of creative minds. These minds are part of an international creative movement.



Mentor Moment

The Oakley Society pairs students with a professional mentor in a desired career path, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship. To give you a glimpse into the process, we listened in on a conversation between Marielle Mathé and her mentor and C&IS alumna, Alyse Goodwin.

Paired in Fall 2017, Marielle and Alyse have been talking once a week, learning from each other. Marielle is a senior majoring in advertising and triple minoring in entrepreneurship, general business, and food and nutrition. Alyse is a Senior Manager at Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, and her insights and advice into Marielle's future career are shaping her collegiate experience. They speak frequently over the phone and, like many of the Oakley Society pairs, they have successfully navigated their career development relationship from a distance.

MARIELLE: Hey, Alyse. I'm excited to talk with you again. Our talks are always so helpful. I WAS EXCITED TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR NEW ROLE AT DISNEY. CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT IT?

ALYSE: Sure. I'M NOW SENIOR MANAGER, GLOBAL INITIATIVES & INTEGRATION FOR REVENUE MANAGEMENT AND ANALYTICS. IN WALT DISNEY PARKS AND RESORTS, I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR WORKING ACROSS ALL AREAS OF REVENUE MANAGEMENT AND ANALYTICS to frame up all of the technology projects that we want to do long term. I'm the strategic vision for the partners with our pricing and rate strategies. Revenue management is an area at Disney that looks at how to make money in a lot of different ways.

MARIELLE: That's so exciting! How did C&IS and attending UA prepare you for your new role?

ALYSE: Communication skills do not come naturally to everyone, especially in business. So, when we're framing up new initiatives or requesting money for different endeavors, HOW WE TELL THE STORY AND HOW WE COMMUNICATE THAT VISUALLY, VERBALLY AND IN WRITING MEANS A LOT IN GETTING PEOPLE TO BUY IN. Having developed those skills at UA really helps me stand out in my career because not everyone has that.

MARIELLE: WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE AN OAKLEY SOCIETY MENTOR?

ALYSE: At the root of it, I just put myself in your shoes. As a student, I would have liked something like this a lot—to have guidance from someone professionally related to a field I want to go into. And because of how much going to UA helped my career, and all of the support and encouragement I got from C&IS when I was there, I DEFINITELY WANT TO STAY CONNECTED AND GIVE BACK HOWEVER I CAN. This is just one way of doing it.

MARIELLE: Did you have any hesitations about being a mentor?

ALYSE: The only hesitation I had was just the time constraints, but when you have a flexible mentee—which you have always been—I think it's workable.

MARIELLE: HAS THE OAKLEY SOCIETY EXPERIENCE BEEN BENEFICIAL FOR YOU?

ALYSE: It's been interesting to talk to someone who is just starting out in their career, because it's helped me to think about how new people might feel coming into Disney or any new company, and the position they are in. It's hard for me, having been working for a while now, to



put myself back there again. So, it is good to talk with you and see the questions you have and the hesitations you have, and to kind of ground me on how other people might feel.

MARIELLE: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHERS WHO ARE CONSIDERING BEING A MENTOR?

ALYSE: I would say definitely participate. YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW MUCH YOUR EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVE CAN BE HELPFUL TO OTHERS WHEN THEY'RE JUST STARTING OUT IN THEIR CAREER.

MARIELLE: Well, it was great chatting with you today. Thank you so much for talking with me. Hopefully I'll get to see you again sometime soon.

ALYSE: Yeah, definitely. Let me know next time you come down and we'll get together.

If you're interested in becoming an Oakley Society mentor, please e-mail uaccis@ua.edu.

A LEGACY OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The faculty of C&IS is widely renowned for its exemplary leadership and involvement in organizations beyond Tuscaloosa. This year, the College boasts an unprecedented eight faculty members serving as president or vice president in major national and international communication associations.

DR. DIANNE BRAGG PRESIDENT
American Journalism Historians Association

DR. MICHAEL BRUCE PRESIDENT
Broadcast Education Association

DR. SIM BUTLER PRESIDENT
Delta Sigma Rho—Tau Kappa Alpha

DR. JENNIFER GREER PRESIDENT
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

DR. EYUN-JUNG KI PRESIDENT
Korean American Communication Association

DR. JAMIE NAIDOO PRESIDENT
Association for Library Service to Children

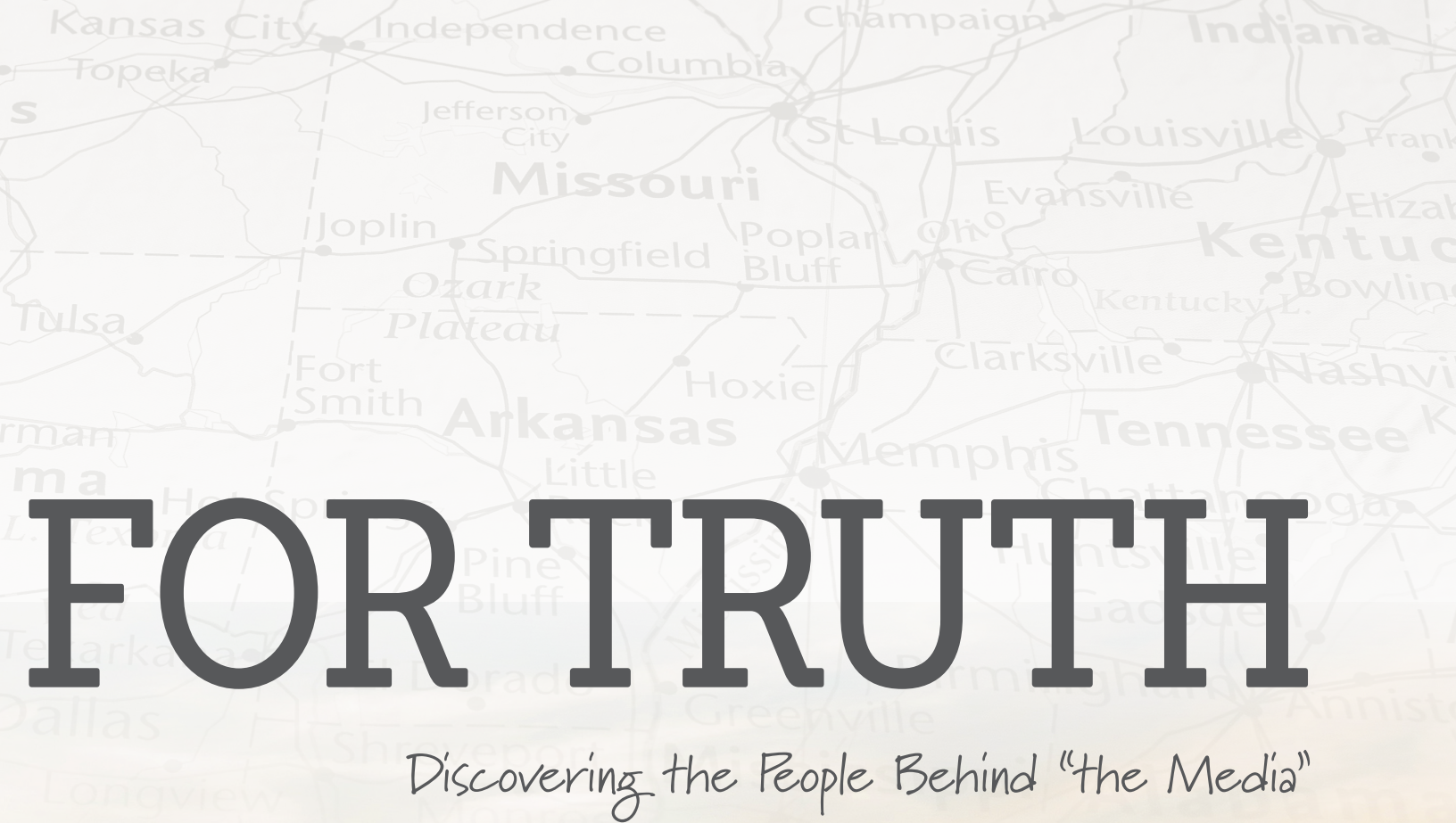
DR. STEVEN YATES PRESIDENT
American Association of School Librarians

DR. SHUHUA ZHOU VICE PRESIDENT
Chinese Communication Association





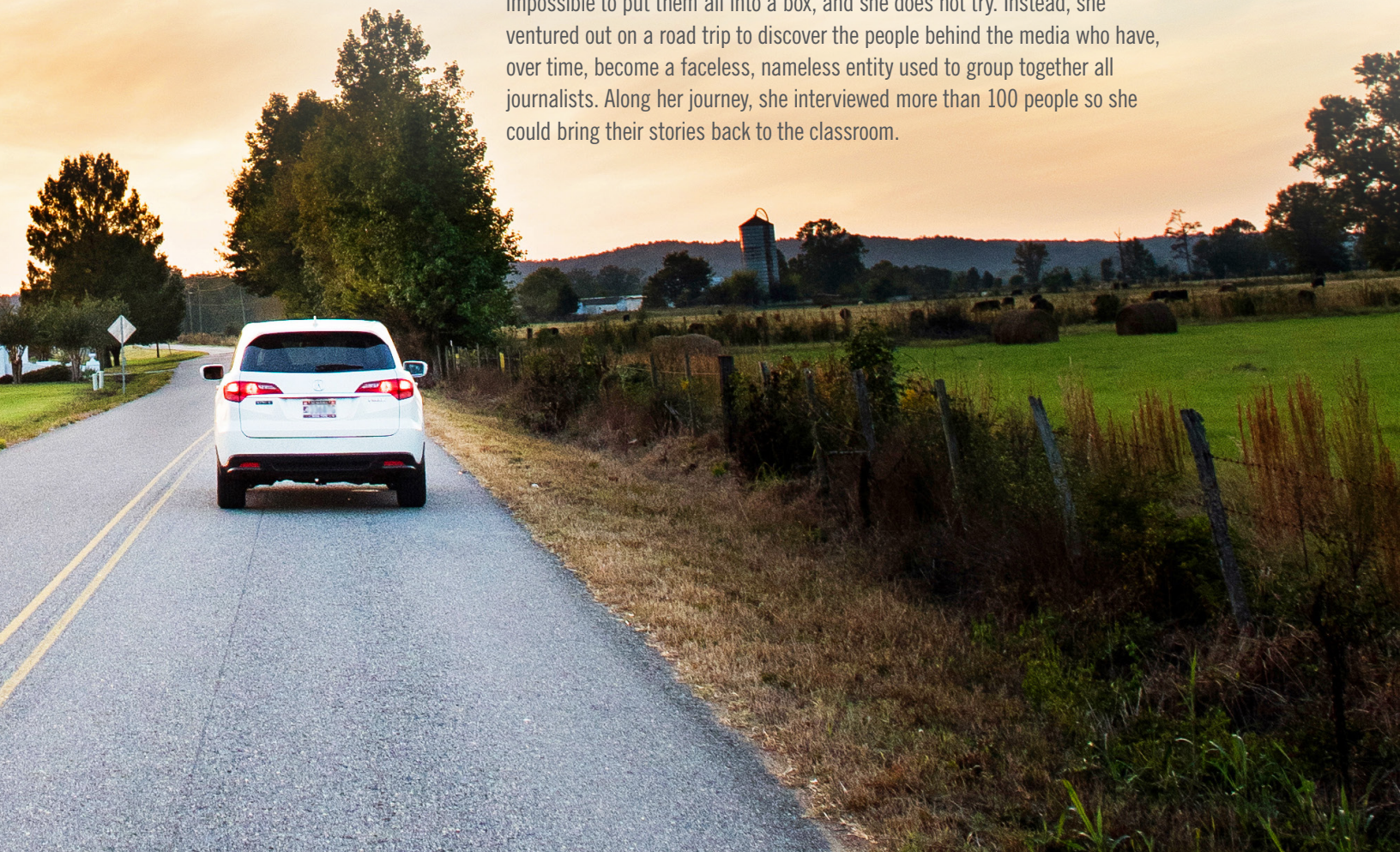
A JOURNEY



FOR TRUTH

Discovering the People Behind "the Media"

For Meredith Cummings, the media is a collection of people—male and female, rich and struggling, liberal and conservative, optimists and pessimists—working as copywriters, editors, producers, broadcasters and radio personalities. The 20-year news media instructor knows it is virtually impossible to put them all into a box, and she does not try. Instead, she ventured out on a road trip to discover the people behind the media who have, over time, become a faceless, nameless entity used to group together all journalists. Along her journey, she interviewed more than 100 people so she could bring their stories back to the classroom.



"The media has always had a contentious relationship with politicians—that's nothing new," said Cummings. "But I felt like the climate for the public had changed with the media."

"I always loved long road trips," said Cummings. "I would go and visit former students and friends at different news stations, and I always thought it would be cool to go from outlet to outlet, visiting different people, but I could never afford it."

When The University of Alabama's Innovation Team put out a call to fund Innovation Projects, Cummings jumped at the opportunity. She was looking to incorporate new content into her classes, so she pitched the idea to take a road trip across the country, interviewing the many faces who make up the media.

For the next ten months, Cummings drove nearly 10,000 miles across the United States. At each stop, she interviewed a representative, asking general questions about the news outlet, its culture and news as a craft. In all, she visited more than 25 news outlets, stopping in places such as Virginia, New York, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Oregon, Utah and Colorado. She hopes her first-hand experience with these stories brings truth and inspiration to her classrooms of aspiring news media professionals.

"It really all started with the phrase, 'the media,'" said Cummings. For her, the phrase does not tell the whole story. "My students use it, and I hear the public use it all the time. I understand why, but I challenge them to tell me what kind of media they're talking about. Be specific. Are we talking about a national website, a local radio broadcast, a weekly or daily newspaper—who is doing this?" she said. Cummings believes the phrase, 'the media' contributes to the public villainizing journalists and she desires specificity.

Much like the proverbial "they," "the media" does not address anyone in particular. It is easy to distrust "the media" when you are not mentioning an exact organization, person or story. This creates a built-in excuse for selectively doubting news coverage. In its entirety, the media is millions of people from many different walks of life. The experiences, world views and personal beliefs of every single media professional impact how they interpret events and how they tell stories.

Cummings collected stories from people like T. J. Johnston, assistant editor of Street Sheet, a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness in San Francisco. He discovered journalism in a free class offered through a local media coalition. Not long after starting at Street Sheet, he fell on hard times and found himself in the situation of his audience: homeless. He's been living in the shelter system ever since.

Or take Tom Arviso Jr., for example. He is the Chief Executive Officer and Publisher at The Navajo Times in Window Rock, Arizona. His entire staff, including himself, is Navajo American Indian. An old-school journalist, he takes great pride in the quality of work his staff produces as they cover both tribal-specific issues and other news in the area.

Cummings also visited larger outlets such as BuzzFeed, Sports Illustrated and Bleacher Report. From station to station, she documented stories and put a face and name to "the media," regardless of the outlet's



Throughout her journey, Cummings blogged her updates and thoughts. Visit medium.com and search Meredith Cummings or follow on Twitter #FollowMyLede.

size. Introducing the writers, producers and broadcasters behind the news humanizes media professionals, helping to earn the public's trust.

When Cummings began her news tour in Fall 2016, the national context for media distrust reached a boiling point.

"The media has always had a contentious relationship with politicians—that's nothing new," said Cummings. "But I felt like the climate for the public had changed with the media."

In election years, polarizing opinions seep into everyday conversations, and hot-button issues can separate people of different worldviews. The 2016 presidential election was no exception. As an almost overnight sensation, "Fake News" appeared everywhere. The rebirth of this term appeared to exacerbate the public distrust of news outlets.

Perception and Distrust

"We have to be very careful when we are teaching our students what fake news is, because there are different levels of fake news," said Dr. Chandra Clark, assistant professor of journalism and creative media. Clark's research includes the topic of fake news.

According to Clark, fake news operates in at least three main areas. First, fake news exists when people make up stories with no validation in an attempt to effect change or profit from generated web traffic. Stories lacking fair objectivity and balance is another form of fake news—even if elements of the story are true, a selective rendering of factual information misleads readers. Last, fake news can be the result of poor reporting. Even well-trained reporters can be sloppy with one fact, making the whole process look dishonest.

While the branding and popularity of fake news may be recent, it is not a new phenomenon. At the end of the 19th century, for example, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst grossly sensationalized the explosion of the USS Maine to increase circulation of their newspapers, the New York World and the New York Journal. Many historians attribute these events as a major factor leading to the Spanish-American War. While these exaggerated stories were not wholly accurate, that did not stop the public from believing them. Such has always been the case.

Much like the generalized use of "the media," fake news poses a problem for the news industry. In the most recent cycle of fake news hysteria, it is not that people are frequently finding stories to be false, eroding their confidence in major news outlets; it is



that people use the concept of fake news as a smoke screen to discredit news they do not like.

"People tune into conversations that they already agree with to have their biases confirmed," said Dr. Chris Roberts, associate professor of journalism and creative media. "There's even research out there that shows that people don't trust 'the media,' but they trust 'their media.'"

These biases are not unnatural. Consumers identify with different networks based on the voices and perspectives they share. To further complicate the bias, most national, television news organizations stack their programming with news broadcasts in the prime time slots and fill the spaces in between with opinion-based shows where current events are discussed. When the casual media consumer tunes in to the station they prefer, the lines can blur between what is news and what is commentary.

"Much of talk radio is not about delivering the news so much as it is talking about



Cummings met with local reporter, Stephon Dingle of WIAT CBS-42. In all, Cummings interviewed 100+ journalists at news outlets across the country.



"I want to give my students a sense of what newsrooms are actually like. While Skype is good for journalists to talk to my students, it doesn't bring the atmosphere to life for them."

— MEREDITH CUMMINGS



Cummings visited small and large news organizations, gaining insight and perspective from individuals at national and niche publications.

Above: Kelsey Hendrix of Sports Illustrated,
Top Left: T.J. Johnston of Street Sheet
Top Right: Tom Arviso Jr. of the Navajo Times.

what The New York Times, The Washington Post, Fox News or somebody else said in its reporting," said Roberts. "That's how you handle filling 24 hours in a 24-hour news age."

The confusion caused by program scheduling is not considered fake news, but it can still produce distrust in news reports, because opinions are not held to the same standard as news columns and televised broadcasts. A radio personality's opinion on an issue may sway their audience to one side or the other without presenting any new information. When audiences interpret this commentary as news, opinions drive the narrative rather than the facts.

The Media

These problems make the task of educating the next generation of news media professionals that more urgent. For Cummings, this task begins where her road trip ends: the personal stories of her media connections.

"The journalists I talked with are hard-working men and women who want to tell great stories about their own communities in context and ethically," said Cummings. "More often than not, these are people who work difficult hours and go home to cook dinner, take care of their kids and fall into bed exhausted before starting again the next day."

In the classroom, highlighting the individual journalist can change the perception of the media as a whole. When students hear the personal voices and unscripted thoughts of news professionals talking about the news business, it personifies the industry and adds color to a black and white field.

"The general public might be surprised to find that, in most situations, journalism is a solitary task," said Cummings. "The big, evil media, as it is often portrayed, is made up of individuals who are passionate about their careers and think of their job as chronicling American history, one story at a time."

As Cummings pulled back into Tuscaloosa and shifted gears from traveling to teaching, she began implementing her experiences by restructuring classes. Her travels were specifically designed to create new

content for her Foundations of Journalism and Social Media class, JCM 200.

"I want to give my students a sense of what newsrooms are actually like," said Cummings. "While Skype is good for journalists to talk to my students, it doesn't bring the atmosphere to life for them."

The interviews collected by Cummings play a vital role in giving students a feel of the variety of newsrooms across the country. They illustrate a genuine image of the news industry, using testimonies from the people behind the scenes.

"From an instructor's perspective, I love doing innovative projects in my classroom," said Cummings. "It's crucial that we try creative things in the classroom even if that means failing first. It beats a boring PowerPoint any day."

With her journey behind her, Cummings looks ahead to her next opportunities. She has hinted at writing a book which documents her experiences. But, for Cummings, this trip has reinforced a simple and important truth: behind every column, broadcast, radio segment and interview, there is an individual person with a story to tell.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ALABAMA

How interns gave C&IS a West Coast reputation

Tuscaloosa is vastly different from Los Angeles and New York in its culture, climate and industry presence, but The University of Alabama boasts outstanding programs in media production and management.

Fifteen years ago, a bulletin board flyer outside an office in Reese Phifer caught the eye of telecommunication and film student, Dana Melton. The flyer advertised an internship program through the Television Academy in Los Angeles.

On something of a whim, she applied, becoming the first Television Academy intern from The University of Alabama. By a long shot, she would not be the last.

PICTURED:
ABIGAIL ARMSTRONG
TELEVISION ACADEMY INTERN, TELEVISION DIRECTING.



FROM LEFT: Abigail Armstrong, Kathleen Bodle and Drake McDonald at the Television Academy in Los Angeles.

“Most creative people in the industry don’t follow football,” said Melton. “So, when I moved out here and said ‘University of Alabama,’ there were definitely hurdles. Most people were baffled that Alabama even had a film program. I remember having to kind of defend my education.”

At the time, Melton graduated with half her classes focused on news and half on filmmaking. While the program has since evolved—including a recent merger between the Department of Journalism and the Department of Telecommunication and Film and a redesign of the offered majors—there are still differences between Alabama’s program and the film school proper.

“We’re not a film school,” said Rachel Raimist, associate professor of journalism and creative media. “A film school is a particular model for this area of study.” While this is true, UA is competitive in placing students in “film” internships and runs a program in Los Angeles each summer to provide students with the experience they need to work in the film industry.

UA may not have a film school in the traditional sense, but that is not stopping students from securing top placements in the Television Academy’s Internship program. In the last three years, The University has seen ten students follow Dana Melton in being

accepted as a Television Academy Intern. This internship program pairs students with television production companies in Los Angeles, putting them on set, behind the scenes and networking with industry-leading experts.

“For this industry, Alabama is an underdog,” said Raimist. “We’re not located anywhere near Hollywood. We don’t have movies shooting in our backyards every day. For our students to be competing with the top film schools in the country and getting the top positions, it’s quite incredible.”

The recent success at the Television Academy stems directly from C&IS in L.A. and the mentorship accompanying the application process. Students applying for the internship get help from experienced faculty members who know what the Television Academy is looking for.

Four current C&IS faculty members have participated in the Television Academy’s faculty seminar, a week-long intensive training from the best television show runners, producers, editors and directors in Los Angeles. What they picked up from these industry experts translates in the way students seek out these opportunities.

“When I did the faculty seminar, I really listened and paid attention to what the academy winners were saying,” said Raimist.

“I started to formulate ways to mentor students to apply. I realized the thing everyone has that makes them unique is their story.”

TELLING THEIR STORY

Students applying for an internship at the Television Academy have a lot in common. They can all edit video in Adobe Premiere. They have written scripts and produced student films. According to Raimist, they usually have a story about how they picked up a camcorder for the first time sometime around their tenth birthday. Avoiding these clichés by tapping into their story makes UA students’ applications memorable and fuels their success.

“If you can tell a story about who you are and what helped you become this person, how you see the world and how television fits into that, then you are showing yourself to be different from the thousands of other



film students from all over the country,” said Raimist. “This is not how you introduce yourself in class; it’s deep down, ‘Why are you, you?’”

Last year, three C&IS students worked as student interns through the Television Academy: Abigail Armstrong, Kathleen Bodle and Drake McDonald. All natives of Tuscaloosa, they were encouraged by Raimist to open up and tell their story when they applied.

Each of the interns possess a narrative that shaped them into who they are. These key moments of their life, such as disappointments and accomplishments, enhance their passions and give them peculiar lenses through which they capture and relay the stories they tell. The application is simply the process of telling their story and helping the reviewers see how their story adds value to the television industry.

“This isn’t just something that I apply to the internship,” said Armstrong. “It will also impact my career to find out what’s unique and desirable about me to help me stand out.”

As they venture out into their filmmaking careers, in a sense, the way these students tell other stories, tells their story. Their artwork is a way of showing the audience who they are, capturing little pieces of them all along the way. Their story is not something that can be taught in the classroom; it’s instinctive, in their gut, and it pushes them forward.

THE INTERNSHIP EFFECT

The Television Academy acts as a matchmaker between the selected interns and the production studios to which they are assigned. So, while the students’ internships are equally impressive, the experiences they had in Los Angeles are hardly the same.

The Television Academy selected Armstrong for one of the most competitive categories offered, Television Directing. She worked alongside and shadowed directors from *The Big Bang Theory*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live* and *Code Black*.

“It was a greater experience than I could have hoped for,” said Armstrong. “I was involved in every stage of production for *Code Black*. I got to assist in casting some minor characters, make my own shot list for how I would direct the show and go in for a few editing sessions.”

Bodle was selected in the Movies for Television category and worked with a development company called Stan and Deliver Films, giving hands-on assistance with the research needed to bring their projects to development.

“There’s so many things happening and you’re there to be a sponge,” said Bodle. “I got to see field memos, budgets and correspondence between producers and talent managers. You hear all about that in theory, but I got to see real-life examples.”

McDonald worked with Disney Jr. in the category of Children’s Programming and Development. Working in the development division of the company, he worked alongside the research process for shows that have yet to air, and adapted pitches from existing children’s literature into potential shows which may be of interest to the company.

“Being in the development space helped me to think about, when I’m pitching a show, who am I pitching to?” said McDonald. “Seeing how they decide what they want in a show and how they decide what is pertinent to their brand is one of the biggest takeaways I got from the program.”

The Television Academy internship is much more than the experience the host company provides the interns. The interns network with and work alongside their peers and with television’s biggest writers, directors, actors and producers through the program itself.

“If you start out with one of those TV internships, you’re taking a major, major short cut that can take one to three to five years,” said Melton. “People who don’t have an opportunity like this wind up taking jobs for a year, just to make low-level contacts. If you’ve gotten in, that’s half the battle.”



UA Television Academy interns and alumni at the end of the summer Emmys mixer in L.A.

PHOTO BY PHIL MCCARTEN / INVISION FOR THE TELEVISION ACADEMY / AP IMAGES

Many television and filmmaking professionals acquire jobs through familial relationships or based on the recommendation of a friend. The Television Academy contacts offer a foot in the door in what can be closed-door industry.

For University of Alabama students, it’s making all the difference, and people are starting to take note. In fifteen years, the landscape has dramatically shifted for UA students, even those who did not intern through the Television Academy.

“Alabama has progressed greatly. In my first five to eight years in the industry I didn’t meet anyone from Alabama,” said Melton. “When I say The University of Alabama now, people actually recognize it and know someone from there. People are starting to be aware of the fact that we have a solvent film program.” In 2017, UA was #2 for placement of interns in the Television Academy, showing just how competitive UA students are.

From trailblazers like Dana Melton to the many professors spending countless hours building mentoring relationships with UA students, much has happened to generate the success of UA students in recent years. Students who intern through the Television Academy have an outstanding head start, but it’s also the network of more than 150 C&IS alumni in the Los Angeles area and the dedication of our faculty that have put UA in the game with film schools around the world.



POINTS OF PRIDE



The College of Communication and Information Sciences is among the **top 10** largest and most comprehensive programs in the United States, ranking among the best schools of our kind in the world. Our **distinguished faculty** are recognized nationally and internationally for their leadership in major communication organizations related to their fields of study. Our students excel in both major-specific and interdisciplinary **student organizations**. The **extensive alumni network** of C&IS is home to some of the world's most influential industry leaders and professional communicators, spanning the globe.

PROFILE

3,000+ STUDENTS

POST-GRADUATION PLANS FOR THE CLASS OF 2017



90% POSITIVE CAREER OUTCOME

77% DIRECTLY TO WORK

12% GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL
1% TRAVEL/MILITARY/OTHER



19,000+ ALUMNI

represent **50 STATES**
& **34 COUNTRIES**



WHO'S TEACHING?

144 FACULTY MEMBERS

101 FULL TIME / 43 ADJUNCT

FIVE PULITZER PRIZE

winners among C&IS faculty

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



15+ TRAVEL PROGRAMS

LED BY FACULTY AND STAFF EACH YEAR

100+

students intern in the **DIGITAL MEDIA CENTER** each year

1 OUT OF 3 students participate in C&IS student organizations



C&IS HOSTS

4 HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER CAMPS

with **200+** participants each year

AWARDS & RANKINGS



#2

for intern placement at The Television Academy in L.A.

NAMED

TOP 5 PR PROGRAM by PRWeek

21

Forensic National Championships

The Public Speaking Program is designated a **PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION** by the National Communication Association



#1

STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS FIRM

TOP 12

CREATIVE ADVERTISING PROGRAMS internationally



TRANSFORMING C&IS

The College has progressively transformed its facilities and resources to establish and maintain a focus on collaboration, excellence and intellectual creativity. Extensive renovations and technological advancements ensure that students learn in cutting-edge environments. Over the last three years, C&IS has invested \$4 million in space and resources and increased the College's campus footprint by more than 10,000 square feet.



➔ **STUDENT LOUNGE:** The Hub is a new student space providing both formalized collaboration rooms and a lounge for students to study and socialize between classes.



→ **ROOM 216:** New desks with power outlets and technological presentation upgrades help make Reese Phifer's largest classroom, 216, look and feel more comfortable, while improving the educational environment.



→ **SLIS:** The fifth floor of Gorgas Library is home to the School of Library and Information Studies. In Summer 2017, the space was renovated to include aesthetic enhancements throughout the floor and redesigned collaborative spaces.



➔ **MULTIMEDIA LAB:**

Inside the Digital Media Center, a new multimedia lab provides space for students to brainstorm and create storytelling efforts on multiple platforms. (LEFT)



➔ **STUDIO A:**

The Digital Media Center's newly designed Studio A provides the option for live audience productions and studio filming. The movable seating creates a dynamic background for a variety of projects and can seat up to 75 people. (LEFT & ABOVE)



➔ **THE PLANK CENTER:** The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations moved to Capital Hall, giving it a dramatic increase in space for board meetings, events and classes.

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Thank you to alumni and friends who supported the College of Communication & Information Sciences in 2017. Your generous contributions support scholarships and further our mission to develop global leaders who do the extraordinary across the full communication, media and information spectrum.

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Bill Lewis is a two-time graduate of The University of Alabama. With experience in corporate communication at Alabama Power and Compass Bankshares as well as agency experience with his own firm, SlaughterHanson, Bill embodies the characteristics of a generational leader.

Bill led the Board of Visitors, both as chair and through general service, to great success. His dedication to the College of Communication and Information Sciences is evident in his friendship with the College. Bill led the charge to refine the vision, values and branding for C&IS and continues to work tirelessly to bring acclaim and opportunity to our College. He recently developed an endowment which will provide scholarships to students participating in travel programs.

“International travel can help us explore the unfamiliar and reset our cognitive boundaries. It can offer—beyond our expectations—critical life lessons, immersion, joy and connectivity to different cultures, people, norms, and means of healing; all essential to effective interaction with a global village.”

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SPOTLIGHT: THE BOARD OF VISITORS BOARD OF VISITORS EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

The Board of Visitors (BOV), an advisory group that works to advance the College and its mission, announced a new initiative to make Industry Immersion accessible to more students.

Roy Clem, Lindsay Garrison and Debra Nelson, led the Executive Committee that created a \$100,000 endowment to support students on Industry Immersion trips. Industry Immersion gives students a first-hand look into the communication industry and allows them to interact with professionals in a big-city market. Clem, Garrison and Nelson are among BOV members who value experiential learning and are passionate about facilitating student success in C&IS.

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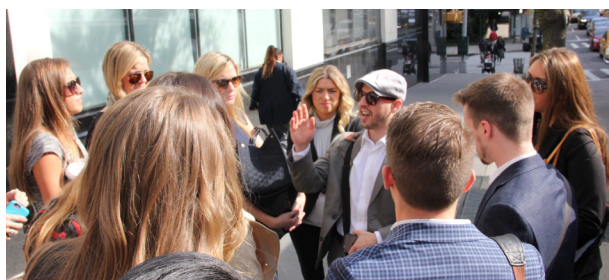
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