



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

February 2009

Communication Alumni Reception Well Received

On October 17, 2008, about 40 Communication alumni attended the reception hosted by the School of Communication. A few of our current students were there to cover the event for their news reporting course. To give you a recap of the event as well as show off the work of one of



our students, we present a slightly shortened version of the story she wrote:

UHA Communication Alumni Take a Look Back

by Mallory Duncan ('09)

The melody of "Blame It On My Youth," plucked on piano and bass by student musicians, accompanies the chatter of old friends reuniting with their professors. Alumni of all ages fill the Konover Great Room. There are hugs, beer, wine, and cheese and crackers to go around. Nostalgia fills the air.



"This guy! Are you telling them about your yearbook parties?" exclaims the director of the School of Communication as she greets a former student. "How are ya!? Good to see ya!"

Dr. Lynne Kelly is talking about the Class of 1983's George Petro, who served as photographer and editor for the school yearbook more than 25 years ago.

It's the first time in many years that the School of Communication is holding a reception during the university's Alumni Weekend. And for the former communication students who've taken the night to revisit their college campus, it's hard to believe how much has changed since they received their diplomas.

Even more recent graduates like Aaron Fellman, Class of 2006, can notice improvements made to the campus since graduating two-and-a-half years ago. "The buildings improved a lot. Like Regents Park [his former dorm building]. It definitely didn't look like that when I lived there," he says. "And the athletic fields look a lot better, too."

Petro also notices the new buildings.

"There's a million things different. I mean, jeez, when I was here there was nothing but the concrete blockhouses for dorms, none of these fancy apartments, none of that stuff. No big giant gym. The littlest part of the athletic center was our gym," he says.

But it's Steve Rothman, Class of 1975, who notices perhaps the most drastic changes, made both to the campus and the School of Communication.

"The campus was half the size of what it is now [and back then] it was sketchy whether or not communication was worthy of being a major," he explains. "I mean, nobody knew what I was doing when I graduated. 'What? A degree in communication? What does that mean?' My mother always never knew what I was doing," jokes Rothman.

Yet Communication has been growing ever since, officially becoming a school in 1994. Rothman says that when he was a student, the communication offices were originally located on the first floor of University Hall, now known as Hillyer Hall, and he worked in the original television studio, tucked away in the building's basement.

Working in the campus' original TV studio in the early 1970s, Rothman doesn't forget just how tedious the process was for editing back then, or the heavy, clumsy equipment that was used.

Looking back at the communication department's inception, Rothman says, "It's no longer a little department. It's a school. So [it's] the credibility and recognition."

And similar to how tape editing wasn't as technologically advanced as it is today, imagine the process for writing a typical ten-page paper, without a laptop or Internet readily available. Such was the case for Marilyn Kusnierz, Class of 1994, who used her then-boyfriend's typewriter at the time.

"It was so primitive. I didn't have a computer as of yet. My husband had a video writer, like a typewriter with the cartridges, and it was really tough because it took a special cartridge, and when the cartridge ran out he was the only one who could get it. You couldn't get them in any other stores," she recalls. "I wish I had a computer like I do now. It was hard."

But what's especially hard for Kusnierz today is realizing what she had at the school nearly 15 years ago.

"I kind of get a little twinge of 'I miss it.' The best thing I liked about being here is the comradery. My friends were a phone call away. They would always visit me in my dorm. I always had someone to eat lunch with--I was never really alone," she recalls. "That's what I miss."

Students flocked to hear two communication alumni speak about their careers: **Jake Cross ('04)** and **Tamar Juda ('05)**.

Jake Cross, a freelance producer in Washington, D.C., returned to campus on December 4 to speak about his career and his recent film project. The film, "Shipwreck! Captain Kidd," is a one-hour high definition documentary about a team of underwater archaeologists exploring the recently discovered remains of a wreck believed to have belonged to the infamous pirate. The film aired as part of National Geographic Channel's new "Expedition Week" programming block on November 18. On this project Cross worked for a production company, 62 Blue Productions of Arlington, VA, commissioned by National Geographic Channel to do the film. He served as field producer for the film and was deeply involved in its production from development all the way to delivery, including shoots in the Dominican Republic and an interview shoot with a Penn State University scientist in State College, PA. During the talk he showed segments of the film, and with his characteristic dry humor, shared his experiences in television and film producing and offered advice about how to prepare for a career like his.



Students with interests in public relations, joined by others in the University's music management program, lined up to speak one-on-one with **Tamar Juda** after her talk in Wilde Auditorium. The event was covered by one of our current students, Grace Goode ('10), for the Informer:

PR Grad Tells All to Students

by Grace Goode ('10)

"How do I make this happen?" Tamar Juda, president of Last Word PR, asks every day as a reminder to do the best she can possibly do. And in the PR industry, being the best you can be is the difference between making and breaking your reputation.



Returning to her alma mater on Nov. 13, the 2005 School of Communication grad offered a glimpse into how she got to where she is today and what it takes to make it in the industry.

"You really do have to make your own luck," she said, "but I can't see myself doing anything else." Juda recounted the endless hours spent as an assistant and the intense pace she set for herself in order to make it. Laying the groundwork at Sony Music Corporation, her first major internship was definitely "a learning experience," as she put it.

"I worked vacations, holidays, weekends...you name it, I did it," said Juda. In the end, meticulous attention to detail and persistence paid off when she tagged along to a photo shoot for XXL Magazine with big names Kanye West and Common. She hasn't looked back since.

As she ran through the highlights of her career path so far, Juda made sure to paint a realistic picture of what it's like as a public relations agent. "Be prepared to be super flexible," offered Juda while talking about a major chunk of her job, pitching. No matter how much planning and organization, there is always something that will come up, she said. Not knowing what to expect, no matter how planned the day, Juda counted prioritizing as one of her most valued skills.

While trying to organize something as easy as the day's tasks may seem daunting at times, try not only having everything laid out and ready to go by the time your boss walks in the door in the morning, but having to read their mind as well. Juda did just that while assisting Quincy Jackson at Sony Music. "It's all in the details," she said.

Juda also credited always parting on good terms as a major boost to her success. In an industry known for its high turnover rate, Juda has managed to remain friends with all of her former employers. Another piece of advice? Go to a Barnes and Noble. This may seem weird, but Juda stressed the importance of knowing everything possible about the area you are working in. Buying four or five magazines at a time, Juda would sit down with them and memorize the layouts, the content and anything relevant to

marketing and PR.

Today Juda's clients include Lil' Jon and Shawty Putt, an Atlanta-based rapper, among others. "It's all about doing what you love," she says. Although it is something she initially didn't even contemplate four months in, Juda loves running her own company and can't wait to see what the next year brings.

PRSSA Conference in Detroit

The University of Hartford Public Relations Student Society (PRSSA) attended the annual Conference in Detroit, MI. Motor City welcomed public relations students and professionals from around the country. The conference was filled with educational workshops, themed social events, and networking opportunities. Featured



speaker, Mitch Albom, spoke about his past experiences and how it helped him write the award winning *Tuesdays with Morrie*, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, and his latest, *For One More Day*. Other speakers included: Ofield Dukes, President of Ofield Dukes & Associates; Penelope Trunk, Author of, "Brazen Careerist: The New Rules for Success;" Craig Newmark, Founder of Craigslist; and Bob Lutz, Vice Chairman of Global Products for General Motors. The students immersed themselves in workshops ranging from Crisis Management, Event Planning, Entertainment PR and Global PR. Aside from learning about the various facets of public relations, PRSSA was able to mingle with professionals in the field and meet other students from around the country. Contacts made from the conference will be included in some of the planning for the spring semester. When PRSSA came back to Hartford, they had a lot to share! The group spent two meetings reiterating what they learned from the conference and how the experience helped them learn more about the public relations field as well as network with well-known agencies.

Faculty News

Dr. Susan Grantham, who teaches in the Advertising and Public Relations emphasis, was awarded tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. Her tireless dedication to educating students to prepare them for successful careers in public relations—evident in her use of actual clients in her advanced courses and her role as PRSSA advisor—along with her scholarly record and service to the School of Communication and the University earned her tenure and this promotion.

Dr. Aimee Miller joined the School of Communication this fall to teach courses in the Human Communication area, such as interpersonal and family communication. In just one semester she has made her presence felt with her dynamic teaching style and active research agenda. She has already begun collaborating with students on research projects, contributing to a successful start for our undergraduate research program.

Although he began this year as a Visiting Assistant Professor, **Dr. Mark Cistulli's** teaching and scholarly qualifications made him our top choice for the tenure-track position in Advertising and Public Relations. His acceptance of the position means that he will continue on in the School of Communication teaching advertising, public relations, and media courses and will serve next year as the faculty advisor to the group of students participating in the AAF's National Student Advertising Competition.

During her sabbatical in Fall 2007, **Dr. Elizabeth Burt** continued her research on women journalists in the Progressive Era with the hopes of publishing a book on the topic. She read dozens of newspapers from the period and examined documents in archives in Cambridge, Mass. and Madison, Wis.

Five School of Communication faculty attended the annual National Communication Association convention in San Diego on November 20 through 24, winning three "Top Paper" awards. **Dr. Don Ellis** presented a "Top 3 Paper" in the Group Communication Division called, "Deliberative Intergroup Contact as a Predictor of Integrative Solutions to Ethnopolitical Conflict," co-authored with Ifat Maoz of Hebrew University and delivered a second paper on political discourse and argument in ethnopolitical conflict. He also served as a scholar-critic

at the Scholar to Scholar poster session.

Dr. Aimee Miller had a "Top 4 Paper" in the Family Communication Division, "Face Concerns and Facework in Balancing Coparenting and Dating after Divorce," which she also presented in the Scholar to Scholar poster session. She also presented a paper on "Dating as a Divorced Parent" to the Interpersonal Communication Division and gave a talk on "Reflection as a Teaching Tool" as part of a panel on promoting creative learning.

Dr. Paul Siegel participated in meetings as a member of the NCA Legislative Assembly, as did **Dr. Lynne Kelly**, who also had a "Top 4 Paper" in the Communication Apprehension and Competence Division, called "The Impact of Reticence on Email Style." As Chair of that division, she also was responsible for running the annual business meeting.

Dr. Harvey Jassem was a presenter on a panel called "Taking It to the Streets: A Protest Against the Loss of Free Expression in America," and participated as a board member of the Urban Communication Foundation.

If you have any news you'd like to share, or if you'd like to be a guest speaker, or if you have internship opportunities for our students, please let us know. We enjoy hearing from you. To keep up with School of Communication happenings, you can also visit our website at <http://uhavax.hartford.edu/cmm>.