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Winter 2022

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CONVERSATIONS

A PUBLICATION FOR COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

WINTER 2022

Developing inclusive communication practices is a core aim of many College of Communication programs.



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

Greetings to all!

After more than a year of working remotely, we are excited to have students, staff and faculty back to campus for our fall term. I never thought I would be so happy to see groups of students waiting for an elevator to get to classes, but the return of past routines is a welcome sight.

The past year has asked us to reflect, reconsider and reevaluate what human interaction means. We were forced to explore the possibilities and limitations of entirely remote and face-to-face experiences. We have emerged with a different way of "doing" education that includes a combination of digital and face-to-face curricular and extracurricular opportunities. While the pandemic still looms, I am emboldened by the creativity and adaptability I have seen from our staff, faculty and students.

To our alumni and friends, we can't thank you enough for the many ways you've supported our students over the past year. Through initiatives like the Blue Demon Challenge and Now We Must: The Campaign for DePaul's Students, as well as countless individual gifts, your generosity provided direct relief to so many students and families navigating a time of unpredictable and often unforeseeable needs. On behalf of our students, thank you.

In addition to your generous just-in-time gifts, we were especially fortunate to establish several new endowed scholarships, including:

- The Ron Culp Endowed Scholarship for Future Leaders in Public Relations, which aims to support first-generation college students planning for careers in public relations, and
- The Jeannie Morris Endowed Memorial Scholarship, which honors the legacy of the famed Chicago sportscaster and supports journalism and sports communication majors.

We're also happy to share recent developments with the [Center for Communication Engagement](#). Due to



space reallocations at the Loop campus, the center acquired a new home, which allows us to bring various labs and projects into one space. The new location, Suite 100 of the Daley Building, provides much-needed room to accommodate the growing number of student, faculty and community partner collaborations in process.

We'll continue to share updates with you as we pursue the center's next goal: the Communication Engagement Hub (CE-Hub). A dynamic student engagement and event space adjacent to the Center for Communication Engagement, the CE-Hub will serve as a place to spark creativity and inspire collaboration. Fundraising efforts are underway to bring this resource to students as soon as possible.

In closing, we are grateful for a safe return to campus and hope our students and their families are experiencing some level of normalcy again. We are keeping a watchful eye on the COVID statistics, as well as CDC and Chicago Department of Public Health guidance, to keep the health and safety of the entire DePaul community at the forefront as the pandemic continues. As we celebrate the new year, please continue to take care of yourselves and each other.

Alexandra Murphy
Interim Dean

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Jill O'Brien, right, receives the Via Sapientiae Award from then-Interim Provost Patricia O'Donoghue in September 2014. (DePaul University/Jamie Moncrief)

Remembering Jill O'Brien (1947-2021)

Jill O'Brien, professor emeritus in the College of Communication, passed away on June 30. She served DePaul University for 34 years, first in the Department of Communication and then the College of Communication, in roles that included associate dean of the college, chair of the department and communication studies program director.

Alexandra Murphy, interim dean of the College of Communication, says, "Jill was one of three faculty members in the English Department who had the vision to create a standalone unit for the study of communication at DePaul University. We have her to thank for what eventually led to the current College of Communication. She was a strong and passionate voice in the college, and her care and commitment to DePaul and her students were evident in all her accomplishments."

Family, faith, learning and teaching were O'Brien's passions. She attended Catholic schools for most of her formal education, including Siena Heights College in Adrian, Mich., where she took vows as a Dominican nun in 1968, assuming the name Sister Job. Her formal education continued at Loyola University Chicago and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; she earned her doctorate in communication in 1974 at the latter university.

During her career at DePaul, O'Brien made substantive contributions to the development of the communication program. She expanded the curriculum to include organizational and interpersonal communication, generated the first concentrations in the communication curriculum and authored the constitution of a newly formed Department of Communication and the restructured and professionalized Radio DePaul.

O'Brien also developed the first adjunct faculty orientation program, which became a model for other colleges at DePaul. Upon her retirement in 2014, O'Brien received the Via Sapientiae Award, the highest honor DePaul can bestow upon a member of the university community, in recognition of her substantial and noteworthy contributions.

In her private life, O'Brien volunteered a great deal of time and energy to the Dominicans. She served on the advisory board of Dominican University's McGreal Center, which is dedicated to the study of Dominican history and remembrance. She was the archivist for the order's Central Province, and in 2013, she crafted the Lay Dominican Oral History project. In 2017, O'Brien had the distinct honor of representing U.S. Dominican laity in Rome for the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Dominic.

O'Brien will always be remembered for her wonderful laugh, her great sense of humor and her tremendous work ethic. Her passing represents an enormous loss for the college and the many lives she touched in the Chicago area and beyond.

"She was a strong and passionate voice in the college, and her care and commitment to DePaul and her students were evident in all her accomplishments."

—Interim Dean Alexandra Murphy



(DePaul University/Jeff Carrion)

Journalism Students Meet Gov. JB Pritzker

Journalism students met with Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker in the press room of the Thompson Center in downtown Chicago. The students in the Advanced Reporting class, co-taught by Center for Journalism Integrity & Excellence co-directors Carol Marin and Don Moseley, had a candid discussion about the governor's career and Illinois politics. The governor then took questions from the university's student media outlets.

CJIE Bestows Its 2021 Awards

On April 22, the Center for Journalism Integrity & Excellence (CJIE) presented its Distinguished Journalist Award to Chicago news anchor Ron Magers and its Distinguished Alumnus Award to Chicago Tribune police reporter Jeremy Gorner (LAS '04). Center co-directors Carol Marin and Don Moseley presented the awards at an invitation-only, [virtual event](#).



Ron Magers
(Linda Schwartz Photography, Chicago)



Jeremy Gorner
(Chris Walker/Chicago Tribune)

Lourdes Duarte Celebrates 2021 Graduates

Communication alumna Lourdes Duarte celebrated new graduates of the College of Communication during DePaul's 2021 commencement ceremonies in June. Duarte is an Emmy-winning evening anchor and investigative reporter for WGN-TV in Chicago. She is also the recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Alumna Award from the CJIE.



(Photo courtesy of Lourdes Duarte)

Professor Kelly Chu Receives Grant, Leadership Appointment

Kelly Chu, a professor of public relations and advertising, was a member of a team that received an American Academy of Advertising Research Fellowship Grant, for the project "The Impact of Algorithmic Transparency on Consumers' Responses Towards Computational Advertising." Chu also was named 2022-2023 president-elect of the American Academy of Advertising. Following her term as president-elect, which begins in March, she will serve as president for the organization.



Kudos to PRAD Professional in Residence Ron Culp

Professional in Residence Ron Culp was honored with the 2020 Distinguished Senior Leader Award from the Chicago chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. His commitment to educating the next generation of public relations and advertising (PRAD) professionals extends to his establishment of the Ron Culp Endowed Scholarship for Future Leaders in Public Relations.

New Provost, Interim Dean Announced

Professor Salma Ghanem, who joined DePaul in 2014 as dean of the College of Communication, was appointed as DePaul's new provost in May 2021. She was appointed as acting provost in October 2018 and became interim provost in July 2019. As acting and interim provost, she elevated research and innovation efforts, as well as diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Alexandra Murphy, who has been acting dean of the College of Communication since 2018, was named interim dean of the college.



Provost Salma Ghanem

The DePaulia Breaks Award Records

The DePaulia won a record-breaking 22 awards at the 2021 Illinois College Press Association Conference, including first-place wins in Best Feature Photo, Best Spot News Photo and Best Podcast. Check out the entire list of winners [here](#).

NAHJ DePaul Students on the Move

Congratulations to the following journalism students for their achievements through the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ): Richie Requena, recipient of the 2021 Rubén Salazar Scholarship; Maria Marta Guzmán, who participated in the NBC News summer fellowship program working on "NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt"; and graduate student Hillary Flores (CMN '21), who landed an internship with "World News Tonight with David Muir."



Jay Baglia



Wayne Gru

Baglia, Gru Receive Excellence in Teaching Awards

Associate Professor Jay Baglia and adjunct faculty member Wayne Gru were honored with 2021 Excellence in Teaching awards by DePaul's Quality in Instruction Council. Since joining the college in 2012, Baglia teaches a diverse range of communication courses. Students describe Baglia as rigorous, personable and interactive. He encourages his students to think critically and reflect on their life experiences as part of the learning process. One student said, "He made learning enjoyable, and I would love to take another class with him." Gru has been teaching professional communication courses with the college since 2013. He is highly respected by his students, who consistently rate him very high on teaching evaluations. One student remarked, "I loved this course. I was never bored, learned so much and even found the specific route I want to follow as my career."

Cavalcade of Superheroes

The DePaul Pop Culture Conference, held May 1, was "A Celebration of Super Heroes." Featured keynote speakers included novelist and comics author Sarah Kuhn and Frederick Aldama, an expert on superheroes, comics and Latinx media.

Additionally, Associate Professor of Media and Cinema Studies Blair Davis participated in the virtual opening of "Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes" at the Museum of Science and Industry. The large exhibition celebrating the Marvel Universe that featured more than 300 artifacts ran through Oct. 24. Watch the virtual opening event [here](#).



Associate Professor Blair Davis at the exhibit "Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes"

Mastering the Art of Professional Communication



“The development and launch of this program really shows our college and the university at its finest.”

–Matt Ragas

A new online master’s program helps communication professionals advance their careers

Versatile, effective communication skills are must-haves in today’s workplace, and keeping current with communication trends is particularly important for communication professionals. However, many workers who would like to continue their education for career advancement and personal fulfillment simply don’t have the time. For that reason, the College of Communication has launched a master’s degree program that is accessible to just about everyone.

Associate Professor Matt Ragas is founding director of the [Master’s in Professional Communication degree program](#), a new, one-year course of study taught largely online. “We have a curriculum at the intersection of strategic communication and organizational communication,” Ragas explains. “We have classes focused on internal communication and employee engagement. We also have classes focused on fundamentals that we hear are so important—writing and content creation. We also are really proud that we’re one of the first graduate communication programs out there to have a dedicated class on diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.”

Associate Professor and Associate Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs Michaela Winchatz, whose job includes curriculum development, recalls the process of developing the fully online MA degree. “We wanted an interdisciplinary curriculum, so we had faculty from communication studies, organizational communication, journalism, public relations and advertising,

and media and cinema studies coming together to figure out what this new degree would look like.”

The group conducted focus groups with industry professionals, many of whom were in Fortune 500 companies, to understand what competencies they wanted their employees to have. “They talked to us not only about the skills they wanted, but some of the things that we were already doing very well that they wanted to see us (continue) or emphasize in this new program,” she adds.

The master’s program also addresses the needs of chief communication officers, giving students on a rising career path a better idea of the challenges and opportunities they will face in this role. Students also will complete a final project that addresses a real-world communication challenge. The inaugural corporate partners for this final phase are Zeno Group, for advertising and public relations, and Shure, for podcasting and other electronic media. The nonprofit partner is Future Founders, which works to empower youth entrepreneurs, especially women and people of color.

Students have a chance to meet and network with their classmates, professors, alumni and industry leaders from numerous Chicago-based organizations during optional weekend residencies in Chicago at the beginning and end of the program.

Ragas and Winchatz agree that the content of this new master’s program is on the leading edge of where professional communication is moving as a field. As Ragas puts it, “The development and launch of this program really shows our college and the university at its finest.”

To learn more about the program, click [here](#).

Faculty member Judith McCray aims to deepen the bench of diverse journalists

Inclusive Journalism for a Diverse Society

The racial unrest in 2020 shone a harsh spotlight on the inequities that have plagued the United States and led many people to reflect on ways to make society more just and equitable. DePaul journalism students have increasingly expressed the desire to do meaningful work that puts a spotlight on actions for social change. It is the job of Judith McCray, the College of Communication's first diversity faculty fellow, to provide students with ways to realize their social justice ambitions.

An adjunct faculty member in the journalism and media and cinema studies programs since January 2017, McCray focuses her teaching on social justice reporting, news documentary, writing for broadcast and media ethics. McCray has also developed a social justice practicum course addressing race, culture, social justice and equity; established [a student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists](#); and helped connect students with multimedia production and distribution opportunities, including through her media production company, [Juneteenth Productions](#).

"I also develop extracurricular activities—hosting workshops and looking for opportunities for students of color to get more involved in media communications and journalism activities," McCray says. "For instance,

one of the projects is a podcast series called '[Change Agents](#)' that pairs emerging journalists of color with community activists in the Chicago area to focus on grassroots activism activities that aren't necessarily being covered by the conventional media and told in the voices of people living in the communities (who are) addressing the issues."

McCray's interest in such issues harks back to her days in broadcast journalism working in public affairs programming. "I was a producer for many years at WTTW in Chicago. I've also done a lot of independent work looking at social issues, particularly around the area of social justice," she says.

"When I first came to DePaul and talked with Salma Ghanem (then dean of the College of Communication)," she continues, "I told her that I was wanting to teach journalism courses that helped students obtain cultural dexterity in understanding, researching and reaching out to the marginalized and communities of color." In broadening the narrative, journalists then develop a richer storehouse of sources.

McCray starts such conversations by bringing people of different races and walks of life into her classroom. In one class, she had students research and develop audio segments about the 1980s AIDS epidemic. She invited men in their



Judith McCray

seventies and eighties to talk about what it was like to experience illness and death on a large scale in the face of indifference from the larger society. "My students said, 'We didn't know anything about this.' They were appreciative that (the class) wasn't just about this history, but (meeting people) they wouldn't ordinarily have met."

When asked about diverse reporting and journalistic objectivity, McCray remarks, "For a long time, conventional journalism took the approach that people of color couldn't tell their own stories without bias, even though we've long accepted that white people can. Objective is not necessarily the perspective a person brings. Objective is about how we tell the story, checking the story sources, making sure to have more than one viewpoint."

McCray looks forward to developing virtual events, podcasts and other media with students and partner organizations. "And for students interested in broadcast medium or print," she says, "I'm looking for them to have places where they can publish their work as professional journalists."



A student discusses a project with Judith McCray.



Rachel Hinton

An alumna with an ear for news

When she was young, Rachel Hinton (CMN '17) wanted to be a flutist in an orchestra. As the youngest chief political reporter in Chicago Sun-Times history, Hinton often hears the unharmonious sounds of political wrangling. But she remains dedicated to keeping citizens informed and engaged in the civic life of their communities.

"My two interests have always been music and writing," Hinton says. "I've also always really cared about the news and paid attention to it. My parents are people who watch the morning news, evening news, the nightly news. It's fair to say that since I was 14 or 15, I wanted to pursue (journalism) professionally."

When Hinton received a scholarship to attend DePaul, she was grateful to have some of her financial burden lifted. She also loved that she was in the mix of the city. "It wasn't, 'Oh, you need to graduate first before you can become the journalist you'd like to be.' It was, 'Oh, if you work hard (and) you want to get out and see the city around you, and learn more about it and write about it, you can.'"

Hinton entered DePaul as a political science major. "Even though I was really interested in political science and kept up with the courses, I really wanted to learn more about journalism. So, I started contributing to the 'Nation & World' section (of The DePaulia) my freshman year. Sophomore year I became a contributing writer and a copy editor." She went on to become "Nation & World" editor and then managing editor.

"The great thing about The DePaulia was that there weren't always a lot of people doing the stories that I was interested in," she says. "Also (people would come) to me with this idea or

problem, and I had the time and resources to write it up and put it in the paper." When writer Shelley Mesch came to her with a story about rape on campus, Hinton went to work with her on a series of two articles. In 2016, Hinton won two awards from the Associated Collegiate Press for the series.

While interning at The Reader, Chicago's alternative weekly newspaper, during her senior year, Hinton started to "hound" Chris Fusco, then the Sun-Times' managing editor, in the break room the two papers shared. He encouraged her to apply for an internship on the Sun-Times' breaking news desk, and the rest is history.

"It was overwhelming in a lot of ways because you're up against the daily deadlines, and your editors want you to go here and do this and talk to these people, all before six o'clock, when my shift would end." Nonetheless, she says, "I liked that things were coming at me quickly."

Her coverage of the controversial Cook County sweetened beverage tax and subsequent lawsuit helped pave the way to her full-time job. "I think covering that really helped them feel like, 'Oh, okay, she can cover the breaking news things.'"

Hinton feels that her role as a young woman of color invests her with some responsibility to help increase diversity in her field. "Sometimes alumni will reach out to me and ask me to talk about the field. I try to make time to do that because I want them to know that, yeah, this field is predominantly white, predominantly male, and it's still at times a struggle to be heard and seen and respected. But that doesn't mean that you don't belong here."



Assistant Professor Kate Cooper, co-author of "Networks for Social Impact"

Interorganizational Networks for Social Impact

A conversation with Assistant Professor Kate Cooper

Interorganizational networks have long been useful to community organizations, but do they really help solve complex problems? Kate Cooper, an assistant professor of communication studies, tries to answer this question and provide a practical approach to networking for nonprofits and other organizations in her new book, "Networks for Social Impact" (Oxford University Press), co-authored with Northwestern University Professor Michelle Shumate. We spoke with Cooper, who teaches classes in small group communication, communication consulting and organizational communication, about the research that went into the book.

What got you interested in interorganizational networks?

Funders always ask nonprofits, "What are you doing to collaborate with others?" That question always piqued my interest because working on problems collaboratively allows you to devote more resources and more expertise to the problem, and treat it in a more comprehensive way, right? In actuality, when you're working for one of these nonprofits—which I did before returning to graduate studies—the actual coordination of these efforts is really difficult. A lot of research that Michelle and I have been doing together for about 12 years looks at whether these networks have actually had an impact, as opposed to just swapping resources and stories.

What are some of the difficulties of collaboration?

Eradicating a social problem may require stakeholders or approaches that are at odds with one another. This is something I observed, for instance, in my research on

coalitions opposing gender-based violence. Even though we can all agree that gender-based violence is bad, if I'm working on bringing attention to the problem in terms of policy, maybe I'm looking for survivors to tell their stories. If I represent a legal organization, that's the last thing I want to do, because I want to protect survivors' identities.

Also, in general, it's really challenging to measure organizational efforts in terms of whether it has been successful in combating a social problem, let alone the effectiveness of interorganizational efforts.

What could help make these collaborations work better?

One of the things that I feel passionate about is bringing funders into the conversation—and here I'm talking primarily about government funders and private foundations because they really love collaboration. The problem is that they don't necessarily fund the infrastructure to support it.

We found some positive examples of this. For example, a group called the Chicago Benchmarking Collaborative that we feature in the book shares their experience of getting a funder to actually provide a common database where they could track their outcomes.

Another challenge is leadership. All the leaders already have jobs, so you need somebody to actually facilitate the network process. We address differences between power and resources among the organizations themselves. If you're a small, niche organization, how can you be assured that your voice will have the same weight as an organization that is better known or better resourced?

What advice would you give to organizations that want to form a network?

There's no one-size-fits-all formula. We do recommend pathways to achieving social impact based on network resources and constraints, but ultimately, networks have many choices to make.

Every organization and individual has an agenda. We suggest that network leaders should acknowledge that fact, as well as expressing a commitment to the collective goal. That can actually help individuals and organizations increase their own opportunities.

Finally, networks should only be used when you have an opportunity to innovate, because if an organization could solve the problems on their own, they would.

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