

## **MEEK SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND NEW MEDIA**

**Will Norton, Jr., Professor and Dean**

**2015-16**

### **Undergraduate Programs**

#### **JOURNALISM**

This was another stellar year of student achievement. Details on the competition results are elsewhere in this report, but those wins reflect a school that has risen to the challenge of upheaval in the profession and embraced new forms of storytelling.

#### **Teaching**

The school has had a number of key accomplishments in curriculum development and instruction:

- A team was heavily involved in getting the university's new Digital Media Minor off the ground. Associate Professor Mark Dolan developed the school's first-ever media diversity course, which will satisfy the diversity requirement for journalism majors and also will be a part of the university's digital minor.
- Assistant Professor Cynthia Joyce received a 2016 SEED grant from the Department of Writing and Rhetoric to develop a new course in media criticism with a focus on new media forms.
- Dr. Kathleen Wickham lectured at the Sorbonne and at Rennes University on civil rights issues while she was in France conducting interviews related to her book, *The Time of Your Sorrow*, scheduled for publication in 2017.

- Outside the classroom, reporting projects involving many faculty members led to student reporting on American Indians, the Mississippi Coast 10 years after Hurricane Katrina and Oxford's Double Decker Festival (serving Tupelo and Memphis TV stations).

### **Scholarship/Creative Activity**

Although the journalism program continues to focus on quality teaching, faculty members also are ramping up their scholarly and creative contributions.

- Assistant Professor Alysia Steele produced the book, *Delta Jewels*, which was released in April 2015. This publication has received critical and popular success and has led to dozens of presentations throughout the nation.
- Assistant Professor Vanessa Gregory published two major stories in *Harper's* magazine: the memoir "Surviving a Failed Pregnancy," which appeared on the June cover, and "The Lottery," an investigation into labor trafficking in post-Katrina Mississippi.
- Dr. Brad Schultz authored three books, two book chapters and presented two research papers at academic conferences.
- Assistant Professor Cynthia Joyce completed her book, *Please Forward: How Blogging Reconnected New Orleans After Katrina*. It was the subject of a number of articles in the popular press and was covered in *Kirkus Reviews*.
- Dr. Samir Husni and Associate Professor Deb Wenger completed a book, *Managing Today's News Media: Audience First*, which is designed as a new type of media management text.

## **Service/Outreach/Honors**

A hallmark of the journalism program is its dedication to offering programming that has an impact on students, Mississippi and our discipline.

- Under the leadership of R.J. Morgan, the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association was host to about 300 students in the fall and almost 500 in the spring for day-long clinics on producing video, print and yearbook materials for their schools. This summer a revamped three-day high school adviser institute has an enrollment that increased from three teachers in 2014 to 22 this year. The institute orients new and experienced high school media advisers to their roles and the latest issues and innovations.
- The Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics once again offered stimulating programming on topics ranging from Hurricane Katrina to race relations on campus, state politics and sports. The Overby Center's programming often is incorporated into classes and always is open to the public.
- The school also benefits from engagement with the Mississippi Association of Broadcaster's Workshop, organized annually by Dr. Nancy Dupont, attracting top executives from throughout the state.

Several faculty received important recognition:

- Assistant Professor Darren Sanefski received the President's Award from the National Society of News Design.
- Assistant Professor Vanessa Gregory was awarded a Mississippi Arts Commission Fellowship in the category of Literary Nonfiction.

- Assistant Professor Alysia Steele was named the 2016 Preserver of Mississippi Culture from the Mississippi Humanities Council.
- Associate Professor Debora Wenger received the university's Summer 2015 Wow the Online World Grant for her work on Jour 101 Introduction to Mass Communications.

The school also was given an opportunity to hire an assistant dean for student services, and Jennifer Simmons has now taken on that role. Her efforts to improve advising and to begin expanding career-oriented offerings already has resulted in better retention rates and more streamlined advising services.

Finally, the school has been focusing on a detailed self-study in preparation for an accreditation visit set for fall 2016. Multiple faculty members have worked diligently to analyze the school's strengths and weaknesses under the leadership of Assistant Dean Charlie Mitchell.

## **INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS**

By the end of the 2015/2016 academic year, 948 students were enrolled in the undergraduate Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) program. This is an increase of 27 percent (from 747 a year earlier). Rapid growth isn't the goal, but a byproduct of a relevant curriculum, quality instruction and high student satisfaction.

To keep pace, two new full-time instructors were hired during the year. One has a Master's in Journalism, Digital Media and Public Relations, is completing an MBA, and was previously employed as a digital strategist by *The Commercial Appeal* newspaper in Memphis. The other has a Ph.D. in mass communications from the University of Florida, wrote a dissertation on social networking, e-

commerce and the perceptions of personal information online. He previously worked with, Accenture, an international management consulting firm. These hires bring the number of full-time IMC faculty to nine. Additionally, several Journalism faculty teach in the IMC program. Another 20 part-time faculty teach a variety of IMC courses.

This fast enrollment growth means the number of required and elective IMC course sections continues to increase. In spring 2015, 31 sections of IMC courses were offered. In spring 2016, that number had increased to 46. Much of the growth occurred in undergraduate writing classes, which are capped at 20 students a section in order to maintain (accreditation required) personalized interactions and hands-on instruction. Several IMC courses also are offered remotely to regional campus students in Southaven and Tupelo.

### **Curricular Enhancements**

A number of curriculum changes were made to provide more options for undergraduate students in both the IMC and Journalism programs:

- An optional public relations specialization was added. Students who take nine hours of specialized coursework will now receive this designation.
- Similarly, a new sports promotion specialization allows students to focus on communications, reporting, media and marketing in the ever-growing sports industry. An optional internship within the specialization allows students to get hands-on experience in the University of Mississippi Athletic Association.
- A “3+3” agreement was approved with the law school. It allows IMC and Journalism students to complete their required undergraduate coursework in

three years, begin their law studies in the fourth year, and graduate with both their undergraduate and law degrees in six years.

Undergraduate IMC students now also have the option of substituting computer science courses for the foreign language course requirement. This change is already proving popular because it is widely recognized that having a foundation of computer language and programming skills is vitally important in the marketing communications profession.

Several new IMC courses were approved during the year, including nonprofit communications, health communications, persuasion, 3-D modeling, motion graphics and designing interactivity. In addition, new elective courses were piloted in political communications, crisis public relations and photography. Another elective course examined the Coca-Cola brand (which culminated with a trip to company headquarters in Atlanta), and there's a new on-going elective that focuses on the Oxford-based Thacker Mountain Radio production.

### **Professional Involvement**

In addition to full-time and support faculty with extensive professional experience, students learned from a variety of guest speakers. Executives from Facebook and LinkedIn visited last year for "Data Day," designed to emphasize the importance of information and analytical skills in IMC. A variety of other professionals visited during the year, including a former market research executive from Procter and Gamble (who spent two weeks in both the fall and spring semesters working with students); and executives and leaders from FedEx,

InTransformation, iHeartMedia, North Mississippi State Hospital, Entergy Corporation, the FBI and other organizations.

An important aspect of the IMC program is the hands-on experience students receive working with real organizations, especially in the capstone campaigns class. Panera Bread (in a project sponsored by the Coca-Cola Foundation) Baptist Memorial Hospital, Blue Delta Jeans, Phillip Ashley Chocolates and Rust College partnered with students in the campaigns class last year. Students also worked with several other local companies in projects for IMC 390, which is an upper level copywriting course.

### **Students**

Students continually give the IMC program high marks for satisfaction. For the last six semesters more than 90 percent of the IMC students report being pleased with the degree program and would recommend it to others, and more than 80 percent report they would choose IMC as their major again. Thirty-five IMC students are in the Honors College. In Spring 2016, IMC faculty chaired seven honor's thesis projects and guided four independent study projects.

The first cohort of three IMC students, graduated in Spring 2013. More than 300 have graduated since then (160 last spring). In a survey sent one month after graduation to the Spring 2016 class, 95 percent of the students indicated they were pleased with the overall program; 90 percent responded that it prepared them well for the profession; 67 percent had interviewed for IMC jobs at two or more companies; 84 percent had received at least one IMC job offer; and 72 percent were already employed (either full or part-time, or had an internship). IMC alumni

are now working in agencies and marketing departments in New York City, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Memphis, New Orleans, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles and many places in Mississippi.

### **Faculty**

IMC faculty were published in the *International Journal of Integrated Marketing Communications*, and on the American Marketing Association website. Faculty presented at three academic conferences (one presentation paper was co-authored with a graduate student), and at several industry meetings.

As the program grows, more faculty members are needed. One search is concluding and a search is soon beginning for another tenure-track assistant professor. It is expected there will be additional hiring.

### **GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

#### **Primary functions, missions and goals**

The Meek School graduate programs are a traditional academic track, a professional track in journalism, and an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) track.

All three tracks attempt to prepare students for career choices to make the most of their opportunities. The professional track in journalism provides an opportunity to enhance existing journalistic skills and develop new skills for students seeking to excel in rapidly changing media professions.

The academic and IMC tracks continue their emphasis on applied strategy based on a strong foundation of theory, coupled with creativity and hands-on research skills.



At the close of the Spring 2016 semester, the graduate program had 51 students--four in the traditional academic track, six in the professional master's track, and 41 in the IMC track.

Three journalism students and 15 IMC students graduated. One IMC student left the program for a full-time job in the field. One student in the academic track has successfully completed his thesis defense and will graduate at the end of the Summer 2016 semester. Three more students in the first cohort will finish in the summer and fall of 2016.

Thirty-eight students have been accepted into the graduate program for the Fall 2016 semester. Ten students in the academic and professional master's tracks and 24 students in the IMC track have indicated that they will enroll.

The graduate program has instituted a priority deadline of February 15, which is in line with peer programs. This will allow the program directors to use a cohort model to schedule courses more efficiently. However, applications are still reviewed periodically after this date.

Although the academic track will remain an important part of the Meek School graduate program, it likely will continue to be the smallest of the three tracks.

The IMC track has continued its use of qualified adjunct instructors. The university's Director of Social Media, Ryan Whittington, taught IMC 505--Internet and Social Media. Meek School board member Kevin Seddon taught IMC 507 – Direct and Database Marketing. Mark Burson, Managing-Director of Corporate and Public Affairs at Burson and Marsteller, taught IMC 555 – IMC Campaigns. Maury Lane, president of Burson Campaigns, taught IMC – 580 Political Campaigns.

Debbie Hall, Director of Community Relations at North Mississippi State Hospital, taught IMC 580 – Crisis Public Relations. Faculty who regularly teach in the journalism program include Dr. Mark Dolan, Prof. Cynthia Joyce, Prof. Darren Sanefski, Dr. Kristen Swain, Prof. Curtis Wilkie and Prof. Charles Overby.

Guest speakers in graduate IMC courses include Natasha Gregoire, Global Reputation Strategies Manager at FedEx, and consumer research and branding consultant Leslie Westbrook.

**Additions and/or modifications in programs, etc.**

Brochures were developed for the IMC track and for the academic and professional master's tracks that will help efforts to recruit top students and bring attention to the graduate program. The Meek School was a silver sponsor of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi annual conference. This type of sponsorship can boost awareness of the program among individuals who would be likely to refer potential applicants to the program.

*Huffington Post* published a story about a 1919 race massacre in Elaine, Arkansas. The story was written by LaReeca Rucker, a student in the first cohort of the professional master's track.

Graduate student Jennifer Brown co-authored a research paper (on the use of interactive features and social media on the web pages of members of the U.S. House of Representatives) with Dr. Robert Magee. It was presented at the 2016 Southeast Colloquium of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

A writing workshop was led by Ace Atkins, a *New York Times*-bestselling novelist and former journalist, on April 19, 2016. Ashley Norwood, a professional master's track student, showed her documentary "The Fly in the Buttermilk" at the Overby Center Auditorium. She developed it in her Journalism 668/Narrative Journalism course and later expanded it to become her thesis project.

Assistant Professor Vanessa Gregory will teach the Journalism 668/Narrative Journalism course in the Spring 2017 semester. She is an accomplished writer and regular contributor to national magazines such as *Harper's*.

Dr. James Lumpp, the first faculty member in the IMC program and a teacher of several IMC graduate courses, retired after the Spring 2016 semester.

### **Recruitment**

One of the most striking features of the new professional master's track has been its diversity. The seven students in the track's first cohort of Fall 2015 included six women and one male. Among these were an African-American student, a Mexican-American student, a Chinese student, a South Korean student, and a Nigerian student. Among current and newly accepted professional master's students for the Fall 2016 semester are three students from Bangladesh, one student from Saudi Arabia, one student from Nigeria and one student from Dubai. The program continues to be attractive for international students.

The IMC program's other immediate goal is to increase the recruitment of qualified students. Producing a highly qualified cohort that is sought after by employers is the most effective way, long-term, to boost the program's profile, but

increasing the pool of qualified applicants will enable the program to boost enrollment while maintaining standards of excellence.

### **Magazine Innovation Center**

Each year experts are invited to participate in the Amplify, Clarify & Testify programs. ACT provides students with an opportunity to brainstorm with publishers, editors and CEOs of large and small magazine companies concerning the challenges that face the magazine industry in today's media world. Editors and executives from Hearst Magazines, Time Inc., Meredith, Reader's Digest Inc. and many others attend the ACT conference and interact with our students.

This year's speakers were Tony Silber, Vice President, *Folio*; Sid Evans, Editor in Chief, *Southern Living Magazine*; John Harrington, formerly *The New Single Copy*; Gil Brechtel, President & CEO, MagNet; Shawn Everson, CCO, Ingram Content Group; David Parry, President & CEO, TNG; Hubert Boehle, CEO, Bauer Magazines; Andy Clurman, CEO, Active Interest Media; Eric Hoffman, CEO, Hoffman Media; Joshua Gary, Vice President, Systems & Operations, MagNet; Brooke Bell, Director of Editorial Operations, Hoffman Media; Josh Ellis, Editor in Chief, *Success Magazine*; Liz Vaccariello, Editor in Chief, *Reader's Digest Magazine*; Dr. Naomi S. Baron, Executive Director, Center for Teaching, Research & Learning, Professor of Linguistics, American University, Washington, D.C.; Brian O'Leary, Founder & Principal, Magellan Media; Newt Collinson, Founder, Collinson Media & Events; James Elliott, President, The James G. Elliott Company; Daniel Fuchs, Publisher & Chief Revenue Officer, *HGTV Magazine*; Fred J. Parry, Publisher, *Inside Columbia Magazine*; Sherin Pierce, Publisher/VP, *The Old*

*Farmer's Almanac*; James Meyers, President & CEO, iMAGINATION; Scott Coffman, Senior Vice President, Retail, Lumina Media; Joe Berger, Joseph Berger Associates; Aaron Day, CEO, Trend Offset Printing; Ron Adams, Publisher & Founder, *Via Corsa*; Brandie Gilliam, Founder & Creative Director, *Thoughtfully Magazine*; Garrett Rudolph, Editor, *Marijuana Venture* magazine; Carey Ostergard, Deputy Editor, *Simple Grace*; Monique Reidy, Publisher & President, *Southern California Life Magazine*; Ryan Waterfield, Co-founder, *Big Life Magazine*.

The conference, in conjunction with the Magazine Innovation Center, continues to establish relationships with industry leaders, printers, advertisers and marketers by offering sponsorships that result in helping to support the program and magazine students as a whole. Plus the fee that attendees pay to attend helps offset costs and also contributes to the success of the magazine program and the MIC.

Sponsors for last year's conference were *Delta Magazine*; Democrat Printing; Hearst Magazines; iMAGINATION; MagNet; Morris Communications; Publishers Press; Shweiki Media; The James G. Elliott Company; and Trend Offset Printing.

The Magazine Innovation Center raised about \$65,000 and received \$35,000 in waived printing fees for the book, *The 30 Hottest Launches of the Past 30 Years*. It was published in partnership with the Media Industry Newsletter and sponsored by Fry Communications.

The center also published *Inside the Great Minds of Magazine Makers*. Trend Offset Printing (that printed and sponsored the publication) mailed 2,500 copies to leading magazine media companies

Amplify, the pilot issue of the center's magazine, was launched in conjunction with Publishers Press. Writers for the magazine are professionals and professors. It is designed by students in the Service Journalism program.

## **STUDENT MEDIA CENTER**

The Student Media Center excelled in its primary mission: providing an educational learning environment, work experience and leadership opportunities for students interested in media and business careers. More than 150 students were on the SMC payroll each semester, working for *The Daily Mississippian*, NewsWatch, Rebel Radio WUMS 92.1, *The Ole Miss* yearbook, theDMonline.com and other websites.

The SMC is a major recruiting tool for the university and the school. It benefited not only from faculty advisers who helped students improve their work on a daily basis, but also by publishing and airing content produced in Meek School classes. In fall 2015, students in IMC and journalism marketing and media management courses conducted research on NewsWatch and *The Daily Mississippian* and presented their findings and recommendations.

Students' editorial excellence was again a highlight of the year, with students on every platform winning major awards. The DMonline's coverage of the state flag issue at one point was one of the top trending topics in the nation in fall 2015. More resources were devoted to student online positions and digital media training. Advertising revenue, while not robust, increased slightly in 2015-2016. The SMC is experimenting with new options for online advertising to boost revenue.

## **Student Awards**

Meek School students were the recipients of first-place awards in two prestigious national contests: the Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence Awards and the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards.

“Land of Broken Promises,” a depth report examining the impact of the Voting Rights Act 1965 on the Mississippi Delta, won the RFK award for best college publication. This was the third Meek School depth report to win the coveted honor.

MSKatrina, a multimedia project published on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, won the SPJ’s top national award for Best Use of Multimedia. Meek School professors Nancy Dupont and Deb Wenger traveled with six students to the Mississippi Gulf Coast to report about efforts to rebuild after the hurricane.

In addition, *The Daily Mississippian*, for the second year in a row, was named a national finalist for Best All-Around Daily Student Newspaper. SPJ picks one winner and two finalists in each category.

Deja Samuel, a student photographer, was a national SPJ finalist for breaking news photography, and the “Land of Broken Promises” depth report was a national SPJ finalist for Best Student Magazine.

Cady Herring, a journalism and international studies major, placed in the Top 20 of the Hearst Journalism Awards, Photojournalism Picture Story/Series, for her photography from a faculty-led multimedia reporting course in Ethiopia.

In the annual Southeast Journalism Conference Best of the South contest, Meek School and SMC students won 28 total awards. Sudu Upadhyay, a Journalism major, was named College Journalist of the Year, the conference’s top

honor. Upadhyay is the second Ole Miss student to win this award in the conference's 30-year history. UM students won four more first place awards, five second-place awards, two third-place awards and eight other awards in the Best of the South contest. More than 40 universities in seven states participate in SEJC.

In the on-site contests that are part of the SEJC annual conference, students produce editorial content on deadline in competition with students from other universities. For the fifth time in the last six years, UM students were named Grand Championship Team for their overall performance in the on-sites. Students won three first-place awards and four second-place awards.

In the Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence four-state Region 12 contest (Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee), students won 22 awards. *The Daily Mississippian* won first place for best student newspaper. NewsWatch won first place for best TV breaking news, and students won 10 additional first-place awards.

In the Louisiana-Mississippi Associated Press Media Editors College Awards contest, Meek School students won a total of five awards, including four first-place awards for individual students and the DMonline.com.

In the Mississippi Associated Press Broadcasters Association contest for state colleges, Meek School students won 20 total awards, including best newscast for NewsWatch. Television and radio students won nine first-place awards, seven second-place awards and four third-place awards.

In the Public Relations Association of Mississippi contest, student Christina Figg won the Best of Show Award, the top PR award in the state. Tori Olker was named



the Outstanding PR Student. In addition, students won five Prism awards (the top award in each category), four excellence awards and three merit awards.

In the Mississippi Press Association Advertising Awards contest, *The Daily Mississippian* competes in the professional categories, not in the student categories, and Meek School students won a first-place award for *Rebel Guide*, the annual orientation guide.

### **Student Jobs/Internships**

Meek School and SMC students continued to land outstanding jobs, summer internships and fellowships. This year they will represent Ole Miss journalism at the *Denver Post*, ESPN in Los Angeles, BBDO Advertising, WLBT-TV in Jackson, WLOX-TV in Biloxi, Fox 13 in Memphis, the *Democrat-Gazette* in Little Rock, the Disney College Program in Orlando, Conde Nast in New York City, *Harper's Bazaar* in New York City, Columbia Publishing Course in New York City, Nissan in Atlanta, WTAE in Pittsburgh, Yelp in Chicago and others.