

Expressions

A SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATION 2015

Students 'Go Further' To Win Pilot Ford Competition



Understanding
Media Ecology

Public Relations
Properly Understood

Photography Now—
Toward a
Critical Practice

Inspiring thought. Perfecting Practice

The 2015 issue of *Expressions* is another showcase of faculty, student, and alumni accomplishments. From academic publishing, to acting in New York City, to an engaging career in photography, to completing a public relations internship in Dublin, this issue again shows the communications diversity and local and global reach of our talented community of communicators.

The 'Expressions' featured in this issue have a common theme of explaining specific aspects of communications. Professor Corey Anton of Communication Studies explains the meaning of media ecology. I offer an article about a proper understanding of public relations. Professor Anthony Thompson of Photography and Peter Zhang, Associate Professor of Communication Studies, co-author an article about the reason why photography is appropriately situated in a School of Communications.

These features, along with the other articles in this issue, once again express how all in the School of Communications work together to fulfill our motto of "inspiring thought,

perfecting practice" in our varied communication disciplines. I hope you enjoy it and that you share ideas you have for future issues.



Tim Penning, PhD, Professor of Advertising and Public Relations and Editor of *Expressions*

The past year has brought more positive changes to the School of Communications.

We are excited about the approval of the new Multimedia Journalism curriculum that combines the existing Journalism and Broadcasting major programs and adds essential skills and competencies for today's media environment. This program will be a leader in the state and region for multimedia journalism education, and will further our ongoing commitment to providing innovative cross-disciplinary digital studies across the School's programs and in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Renovations in the Lake Superior Hall building in 2014 expanded and updated digital workspaces and studios that support our teaching and learning, adding to the many appreciated investments made in our programs over the past several years by the institution. Our students, alumni, and faculty continue to get national attention for their scholarly and creative work that is well-deserved.

This issue also marks a change in the leadership of the School of Communications. This Spring, I will joyfully step back up to teaching full time, and Professor Vandana Pednekar-Magal will become the School's third Director. The School's faculty has accomplished many of the important goals we set for ourselves in our last planning period, and we are well positioned to continue improving our service to students and the campus community under Professor Pednekar-Magal's direction. In the coming months we will look to engaging our alumni and community partners in our next round of planning, as we continue our commitment to excellent academic programs that help our students succeed in their aspirations and live meaningful lives.



Anthony Thompson, MFA, Professor of Photography and Director of the School of Communications

COVER

Students at work on a photo shoot for a video they produced and promoted on social media to win a pilot competition sponsored by Ford, as part of the company's "Go Further" campaign.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS AND CREATIVE WORKS FROM SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS FACULTY

The faculty in the School of Communications engage in both scholarly research and creative expression. The following is a partial list of the work that has been published or presented in 2014.

Peter Zhang (Communication Studies)

“McLuhan and I Ching: An Interological Inquiry,” Canadian Journal of Communication 39, (3) (2014), 449-468.

This article explores under-examined resonances between I Ching and McLuhan’s work. It presents I Ching as a metamedium, shows that McLuhan’s four laws of the media have precursors in I Ching, and evaluates the relevance of I Ching in the age of digital mediation. The article illustrates that studying I Ching in comparison with McLuhan’s work opens up numerous opportunities for mutual illumination between the two.

“Meditations on Media Ecology,” China Media Research 10, (3) (2014), 94-104.

This article is an exercise in what Deleuze terms “nomad thought.” It proceeds on the assumption that media ecology McLuhan style is a nomadic mode of exploration. The textual strategy is acoustic resonance rather than visual connection. The article has come to fruition after a long period of meditation. The tacit invitation is for the reader to do the same in this age of fast ideas and conceptual clutter.

“Poetics Is Not a Subject but a Function” (with Eric McLuhan), China Media Research 10, (1) (2014), 59-71.

This dialogue is an exercise in McLuhanesque poetics. It proceeds in spurts, snatches, and sometimes, staircases. A nomadic sensibility runs throughout. The dialogue format only adds to the nomadic quality. As the interlocutors are populated, so the dialogue is pregnant – with bifurcations, divergences, unresolved tensions, and dangling thoughts that defy Aristotelian cataloguing. The imagined readers are interologists who are capable and fond of starting in the middle, dirt workers who have an ethical aversion against premature cleanliness or petrified narrow seriousness.

Valerie Petersen (Communication Studies)

“Mythic Rhetoric: Love, Power, and Companionate Marriage in Puccini’s Turandot.” Ohio Communication Journal, 52, 2014.

This essay explores the mythic story of Turandot and its relationship to love, power, and companionate marriage. It does so using a rhetorical perspective, specifically Kenneth Burke’s understanding of myths as “forward looking partisanship.” First, Burke’s understanding of myth is outlined and connected to the history and travels of Turandot. Then, a detailed rhetorical analysis of the 1998 PBS video of Puccini’s opera performed at the Forbidden City, Beijing, suggests why the Turandot myth seems to appear in certain places and moments, and what it might have offered to audiences, in this instance, on a spiritual level.

“Sex, Ethics, and Communication” at the Communication and Social Action Conference at Central Michigan University. Conference theme: Communication and Ethics, Mt. Pleasant, MI, March 2014.

This address was directly related to my book Sex, Ethics, and Communication: A Humanistic Approach to Conversations on Intimacy. In the address, I discussed sexual responsibility, vulnerability, the sex ethics diagram, the way sex is related to communication, and took questions from students and faculty attendees in Q&A.

Corey Anton (Communication Studies)

“Comprehending Orders of Intensionality: An Adaptation of Laing, Phillipson and Lee’s “Interpersonal Perception Method,” presented to the TOP PAPERS session for the Philosophy and Communication Division of the 2014 National Communication Association Convention, Chicago, IL, Nov.

This paper was included at the 2014 NCA, the 100th celebration, as part of a TOP papers panel for the Philosophy of Communication Division. The paper adapts and reconfigures the Interpersonal Perception Method (IPM), a couples-therapy questionnaire developed by Laing, Phillipson, & Lee, and provides a teachable model for systematically managing and minimizing different kinds of interpersonal confusion and conflict.

“Diachronic Phenomenology: A Methodological Thread within Media Ecology,” Explorations in Media Ecology: The Journal of the Media Ecology Association. 13, 1, 3-30. http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/eme.13.1.3_1

This article summarizes a qualitative research methodology within media ecology. It focuses upon emergent social and psychological patterns (largely “spill over” effects) associated with dominant media forms. It brings together and co-adapts

lines of media ecology and lines of existential phenomenology, walks through a wide range of examples and illustrations of critical media forms, and then briefly identifies possible future directions by considering recent developments within the fields of brain science and embodied cognition.

“Other People as Environments,” [2014 Media Ecology Association Presidential Address], In Medias Res, July.

This paper, originally delivered as the Presidential Address in Toronto in June 2014 at the Media Ecology Association annual convention, was subsequently printed in Medias Res. The address/paper stresses how other people are vital mediating factors in our personal, social, and professional lives. It explores the many different ways we have become ourselves, find ourselves, develop ourselves, and change ourselves though the mediating help of other people.

“On Death Acceptance,” In Stoicism Today: Selected Writings, Volume One. (Ed.). Patrick Ussher. 56-58.

This brief chapter is adapted from Anton’s 2010 book Sources of Significance: Worldly Rejuvenation and Neo-Stoic Heroism and is included in a collection of essays about Stoicism published in England. It addresses stoic orientations toward death and offers resources for recognizing and appreciating the value of life despite not having control over one’s ultimate fate.

“A Thumbnail Sketch of General Semantics,” In General Semantics: A Critical Companion. Deepa Mishra (Ed.). Delhi, India: Pencraft International. 20-36.

This invited chapter is part of a collection published in India that is introducing General Semantics to India. Anton’s chapter provides an overview of key concepts, shows how General Semantics can be understood as a fully Western scientific form of Buddhism, and identifies the places where general semantics scholarship/practices in the US can be found today.

“History, Orientations, and Future Directions of Media Ecology,” In Communication Connections: From Aristotle to the Internet. (Ed.). Keith Massie. 2nd Edition. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing. 145-156.

This chapter on media ecology, published originally in Anton’s 2011 book Communication Uncovered: General Semantic and Media Ecology, was re-printed for inclusion in an introductory communication textbook used here in the US, edited by Keith Massie. The chapter walks through the key thinkers, major media forms of interest, and many of the key concepts within the field of media ecology.

Timothy Penning (Advertising and Public Relations)

“The Influence of Public Relations on Relationship Content: A Content Analysis of Community Foundation Annual Reports.” PRism Journal 11 (1) (2014) (<http://www.prismjournal.org/homepage.html>)

This study investigates the influences on organizational-public relationships (OPRs) in terms of how organizations express relationships as a value. While much attention recently has been given to social media as a form of dialogic communications, the depth and genuine nature of an organization’s value of relationships is revealed in traditional communications where the nature of the forum is not dialogic and there is not an expectation of relational content as there would be in an online or social medium. A content analysis of community foundation annual reports shows that the presence of a public relations staff position can make a difference in whether organizations stress relationships with their publics in their self-evaluation. Specifically, when an organization has a staff position designated as public relations or communications and when a staff person is accredited in public relations (APR), there is a greater likelihood the organization’s annual report will stress relationships to the same or greater degree as financial metrics. The relative organizational power of the PR function and the asset size of the organization did not appear to cause a difference in relationship content.

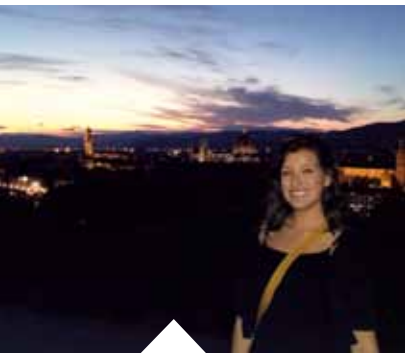
“PR Capacity on Nonprofit Boards. In “Public Relations Theory and Practice in the Nonprofit Sector”, (Richard Waters, Ed.) (2014) Routledge: London.

This chapter in a new book about nonprofit public relations integrates the literature on public relations with the discipline of nonprofit management. As such it examines the lens through which nonprofit managers view the role and value of public relations. With the help of GVSU’s Johnson Center on Philanthropy, nonprofit executives in Michigan were surveyed about the degree to which they sought PR expertise on their board. While a majority (76%) said that communications with stakeholders was a role and capacity sought in board members, only 11% indicated it was the most important board member ability. While 52% said they had at least one board member with PR education or experience, this may be due to the fact that 75% define public relations as “getting the word out.” The chapter offers discussion of these and other results and makes suggestions for future research into public relations being perceived as a management function in nonprofit organizations.

School of Communications Students Talk About the Importance of Studying Abroad

From Australia to New Zealand, many countries participate in helping students expand their minds internationally by providing study abroad experiences. In the School of Communications, many students with varying majors like Photography, Broadcasting, and Advertising and Public Relations have had the chance to study abroad.

Alicia Saragosa, majoring in Communications Studies, traveled abroad to Italy. She explained the importance for students to travel abroad.



“Many communications majors will be required to work with groups of diverse people, with differing perspectives,” said Saragosa. “I think it’s imperative to successful collaboration that you be open minded and self-aware of both yourself and your culture.”

There are a lot of factors to consider when traveling abroad, such as expenses and sometimes language barriers. The Padnos International Center can help students find the right study abroad program for them and methods to help reduce costs. Drianna Smith, majoring in Advertising and Public Relations, traveled to the United Kingdom and gives advice to students who may want to travel abroad as well.

“Take the chance,” said Smith. “You will make friends for life, and the experience alone will be worth the uncertain feelings you experience before. Being in a new place is scary but will help you grow to be more self-sufficient and you won’t regret it.”

Taking the first steps to study abroad can be an intimidating idea. Tiffany Cannon, a Broadcasting major, knew she wanted to go abroad, so she took that first small step towards her big adventure to Cyprus.

“You have to take that first step or you will never be certain,” said Cannon. “For myself, I just went to the study abroad fair, picked a place that interested me the most and pursued it. I told

my family, they told me to come up with a plan, and I was able to pursue one of my goals to go study abroad.”

Once they travel abroad, many students describe catching the “travelling bug” and desire to continue exploring the world. This happened for Kayla Lloyd, an Advertising and Public Relations major, who travelled to Costa Rica.

“I got the traveling fever,” said Lloyd. “After Costa Rica I went to Spain, and plan to travel a lot more.”

Leah Mitchell, a Health Communications major, travelled to London, England and had a piece of advice for students who want to travel abroad, but are still uncertain.

“If you don’t go out on a limb, you will never experience anything outside of the world that you already know,” said Mitchell.

LEFT: Alicia Saragosa studied in Italy during the summer of 2014.

Comments from School of Communications Students who Studied Abroad

“...studying abroad helped me to come out of my shell. I have always been social, but it helped me to be more assertive and take more risks.”

—Drianna Smith, Senior, Advertising and Public Relations, United Kingdom

“The best part about my experience abroad was not knowing what to expect.”

—Leah Mitchell, Senior, Health Communications, United Kingdom (London)

“Studying abroad is a priceless experience that has the ability to help you grow in ways that you may not have thought were possible.”

—Alicia Saragosa, Junior, Advertising and Public Relations, Italy

“The best part of my experience abroad was being immersed in the culture that we were learning about.”

—Madalyn Forshee, Junior, Journalism, United Kingdom (London)

Advertising and Public Relations Student Does Internship Abroad in Dublin, Ireland

Before graduating from Grand Valley with a B.A. in Advertising and Public Relations, Stephanie Kotschevar realized she had to fulfill a dream.

Kotschevar knew that the one thing she would regret about college was that she never went abroad. With an interest in international public relations, Kotschevar decided to take action and do an internship in Dublin, Ireland.

“I always wanted to go abroad,” said Kotschevar. “I had never been outside of the country and I wanted to experience another culture. I hadn’t considered going abroad for an internship, but I knew I had to try to go abroad or I would regret it.”

Kotschevar was accepted to do a full time internship in Dublin, Ireland in the summer before her graduation in December 2014. For two and a half months, Kotschevar worked for a public relations agency called Elevate PR. The agency gave Kotschevar experience working for large clients including Nokia: Ireland, Veuve Cliquot, and Hennessy. For these clients, Kotschevar organized press packs, wrote news releases and e-alerts, and created social media plans. Kotschevar described how working abroad not only gave her working experience, but also cultural understanding.

“Before travelling to Ireland I didn’t realize how much I didn’t know about the world,” said Kotschevar. “Working abroad gave me a great skill set, but also the opportunity to learn what it’s like to be immersed into a different culture.”

While working abroad, Kotschevar found times to travel outside of Dublin. She visited England where she attended the British Open in Liverpool, and Scotland where she hiked to

Arthur’s Seat. Even though she wasn’t able to travel outside of the United Kingdom, Kotschevar is determined to go back to Europe.

“I’m grateful for the time I was able to spend traveling outside of Ireland,” said Kotschevar. “Now I feel like I have to go back and visit all the countries I didn’t get to see, like Italy and Spain.”

Studying or interning abroad isn’t always an easy decision. There are a lot of elements to consider, like cost and homesickness. Kotschevar battled with both of these aspects, but in the end she said it was worth it.

“Deciding to go abroad was a hard decision for me because I am very close with my family and it’s not the cheapest option,” said Kotschevar. “But, financially there are options. The Padnos International Center really helped me understand what I could do to help pay for the trip. Talking to my family also wasn’t as hard as I thought it was going to be with widespread Wi-Fi access and Skype calls. I definitely understand how going abroad can be a hard and even scary idea but, in the end, going abroad was the best decision

I ever made. It helped me grow as a professional and as a person.”

ABOVE: Kotschevar drinks tea in her office at Elevate PR in Dublin, Ireland. The ornate door of the Elevate PR offices.



Journalism and Broadcasting Major Programs to Merge as Multimedia Journalism

Internet based digital platforms have transformed the media landscape. In this environment of digital media, videos and photo slideshows are common supplements to text stories among newspaper websites. Similarly, broadcast sites offer lots of video and texts.

Many news organizations offer interactive graphics and data visualizations. The traditional system of print, radio and television as distinct delivery platforms with the particular storytelling modes and styles is not dismantled but given way to digital media and story modes, as large

The new Multimedia Journalism major explores these complex changes in both traditional media and evolving multimedia delivery of news and information.

numbers of audiences move towards getting their news and information from digital sources.

“This transformed media landscape has forced journalism programs across the United States to reexamine the journalism education curriculum,” said Vandana Pednekar-Magal, Professor of Journalism, who helped create the proposed new major in Multimedia

Journalism in the School of Communications. “Many journalism programs have in various ways altered their curriculum from a silo system of teaching Journalism with emphasis on print, radio or television media, and have shifted towards multimedia storytelling.”

The new Multimedia Journalism major explores these complex changes in both traditional media and evolving multimedia delivery of news and information. The new program is still grounded in the liberal arts with emphasis on critical thinking and in the fundamental principle of free speech and an informed citizenry. It offers a range of instruction in journalism theory, practice, history and criticism.

The new program was created integrating two existing programs -- Broadcasting and Journalism--and enables students to build multimedia reporting and production skills. Students are guided to develop skills and abilities in reporting and production of stories on a variety of media platforms as part of required coursework.

“Graduates of the program will be able to have many tools to practice journalism, engage with their publics via freelance/entrepreneur journalism, and find employment in the changing ecology of news and information,” Pednekar-Magal said.

The new Multimedia Journalism major begins in the fall of 2015.



A group of students shooting a program for GVTV.



Aisel Alcedo, left, and Blair Thompson at work at the Whale radio station.



Renovations in Lake Superior Hall Improve Learning Environment for Photo/Film Students

New innovations on Grand Valley's campus are not an unusual sight, and the School of Communications is part of that albeit in a less obvious ways. In 2014 a new digital lab/workspace and classroom were built in Lake Superior Hall. School of Communications Director and Photography Professor Anthony Thompson said the new space was necessary to maintain quality instruction in the Photography program.

“The goal is to enable students to do strong work in the curriculum, foster instructor and student interaction, and provide a communal workspace for students.”

“The new digital space in the basement was created by renovating a chemical color darkroom and creating a digital color darkroom,” said Thompson. “The goal is to enable students to do strong work in the curriculum, foster instructor and student interaction, and provide a communal workspace for students.”

While the renovated space is being used to foster current photography students' creativity and classwork, the digital lab was also created for the benefit of future students.

“We hope students will have a greater sense of community and a more collaborative working style as a result of this physical improvements,” said Thompson.

A second renovated basement space is used by Film/Video students for editing. While a new building is in the long-range plans for the School of Communications, in the near future several smaller renovations and expansions will be done in order to provide a better learning environment for the students.

“We are looking at an addition to the Performing Arts Center that will support our students and program in Theatre, as well as students in Music and Dance,” said Thompson.

Students work on photography projects in renovated facilities in Lake Superior Hall.

Ad/PR and Film/Video Students Win Pilot Ford Content Competition

A team of School of Communications students from the Advertising and Public Relations and Film and Video majors participated in a pilot program of the Ford Motor Company and the Center for Emerging Enterprises during the past school year. The team from GVSU competed against teams from Calvin College and the Compass College of Cinematic Arts to create videos as part of Ford's 'Go Further' campaign. The mission of the 'Go Further' campaign is to inspire individuals who have been dealt seemingly insurmountable challenges, and refuse to give up.



"One of the best measures of how well our APR program is doing is when our students get a chance to match their output against other universities."

primarily by Frank Blossom, an affiliate professor of Advertising and Public Relations. Due to their publicity and social media strategies, their video received more views than the competing schools, as well as many of Ford's own videos. The final version of the student's video can be seen on Ford's 'Go Further' page: <https://www.youtube.com/user/FordGoFurther>.

Ford and Team Detroit professionals were so impressed with the story that they decided to enhance it and post it to their site. Ian Kast, the student team's director of photography, got to go



The GVSU Ford Team discovered one such individual in Copemish, Michigan who was the perfect inspiration for the project. David Milarch, the co-founder of Archangel Ancient Tree Achieve (www.ancienttreearchive.org), helps lead the organization and is dedicated to cloning the world's oldest trees before they are gone in an effort to replace the natural filter system and restore the health of the planet.

The professionals at Team Detroit (www.teamdetroit.com), Ford's advertising agency running the 'Go Further' campaign, said the subject of GVSU's video story was a great fit.

"The idea of sustainability is exactly what's trending," said Christine Ward, Team Detroit Art Director.

The student team included Atikh Bana, Chad Rodgers, Olga Sarayeva, Joseph Buckenmeyer, Ian Kast, Lindsey VanDenBoom, and Richard Iseppi. They were mentored

to Oregon to work on additional footage of David Milarch with tree species there. The entire student team went to Detroit in December to work with the professionals at Team Detroit on a re-edit of the video.

Blossom was pleased with how well the students performed.

"One of the best measures of how well our APR program is doing is when our students get a chance to match their output against other universities," Blossom said. "The Ford College Go Further Stories gave our students another opportunity to match up. They measured up very well, out performing the other universities and gaining worldwide praise for their video story."

ABOVE: Students Ian Kast and Chad Rogers work on a photo shoot. The entire student team with Affiliate Professor Frank Blossom after accepting the winning check from Ford.

Professor Creates Web Series about the Life of a Young Film Professor



When a professor goes on sabbatical, they have the chance to travel and explore a subject. John Philbin, Associate Professor of Film and Video Production, spent his sabbatical in the fall of 2013 writing an 8-episode, first season of a comedy-drama web series called Lucky Jay, which is about one college semester in the life of a young film professor. Philbin explained why he wanted to direct these webisodes.

"As a filmmaker who has directed both shorts and feature-length films, I wanted to try something different, like an episodic TV series," said Philbin. "Each webisode is 10 minutes long. I wrote the script during my sabbatical and then my students and I filmed it in the 20th Annual GVSU Summer Film Project in 2014."

The sabbatical period allows professors the opportunity to be creative with the subject they decide to research. Professor Philbin commented on how his sabbatical project is unique because of the online medium he chose to direct the first season of Lucky Jay.

..."there have not been any network TV series or web TV series on this subject that I'm aware of."

"There have been some novels written about academic life including Lucky Jim by Kingsley Amis, and Straight Man by Richard Russo," said Philbin. "There have also been some feature films made such as Wonder Boys, based on a novel by the same name. However, there have not been any network TV series or web TV series on this subject that I'm aware of."

Students can benefit from the work that professors complete during their sabbatical. Professor Philbin has already given students the opportunity to learn using his script for Lucky Jay and wants to continue allowing students to learn using his web series.

"The script I wrote and directed for Lucky Jay was produced by students in CFV 328/428 Summer Film Practicum or otherwise known as the Summer Film Project in the summer of 2014," said Philbin. "It was also edited by students in CFV 429 Post Production Practicum in the fall of 2014; the sound design was also done by students in CFV 482 Sound Design class in the 2015 winter semester."

The webisodes will premiere at Celebration Cinema North on April 24 and will go online May 1, 2015. at www.gvsu.edu/luckyjay. This will mark Philbin's 10th time directing the Summer Film Project.

LEFT: A poster for Lucky Jay.



UNDERSTANDING MEDIA ECOLOGY

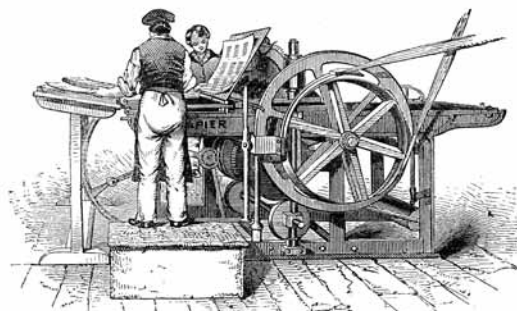
By Corey Anton

Media ecology is a deeply historical, meta-disciplinary, and robust qualitative approach to understanding both communication and the human condition. Some core ideas within media ecology are wrapped up in aphoristic statements such as, “The medium is the message,” “Media are environments, and environments are media,” and, “the user is the content of any medium.”

Consider a basic example.

The printed word is not so much a technology within an environment as it makes possible the kind of environment

we live in today. This refers not only to the facts of written laws and techniques for massive bureaucratic record keeping, for example, but also to the simple fact that illiteracy is nonexistent within wholly oral life. Literacy, a pervasive technology, has not simply added something to our world; it has changed both the world and us.



Although media ecology traces its roots to ancient history, it is perhaps best clarified in the writings of

Marshall McLuhan, Walter J. Ong, Neil Postman, Harold Innis, Lewis Mumford, Edmund Carpenter, Dorothy Lee, Eric

Havelock, Susanne K. Langer, Jacques Ellul, among many others. The actual expression, “media ecology,” emerged in a 1967 discussion between Marshall McLuhan, Eric McLuhan, and Neil Postman. Postman then started using it in public talks as early as 1968, and by 1971, New York University had launched a doctoral program by that name. Today, the “Media Ecology Association” (MEA), with its quarterly journal *Explorations in Media Ecology*, has representation at

The Internet, and especially web browsing, did not merely give more information to more people more quickly—it changed what information is and what “studying” means. The Internet also has altered what we mean by the word “authority” and/or “journalism,” and has changed our experiences of attention, friendship, and boredom.

means. The Internet also has altered what we mean by the word “authority” and/or “journalism,” and has changed our experiences of attention, friendship, and boredom. Just as automation continues to rework the nature of employment, so, too, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, biotechnology, and nanotechnology will soon enough become an integrated ground by which the very essence of humanity—and perhaps even life itself—will



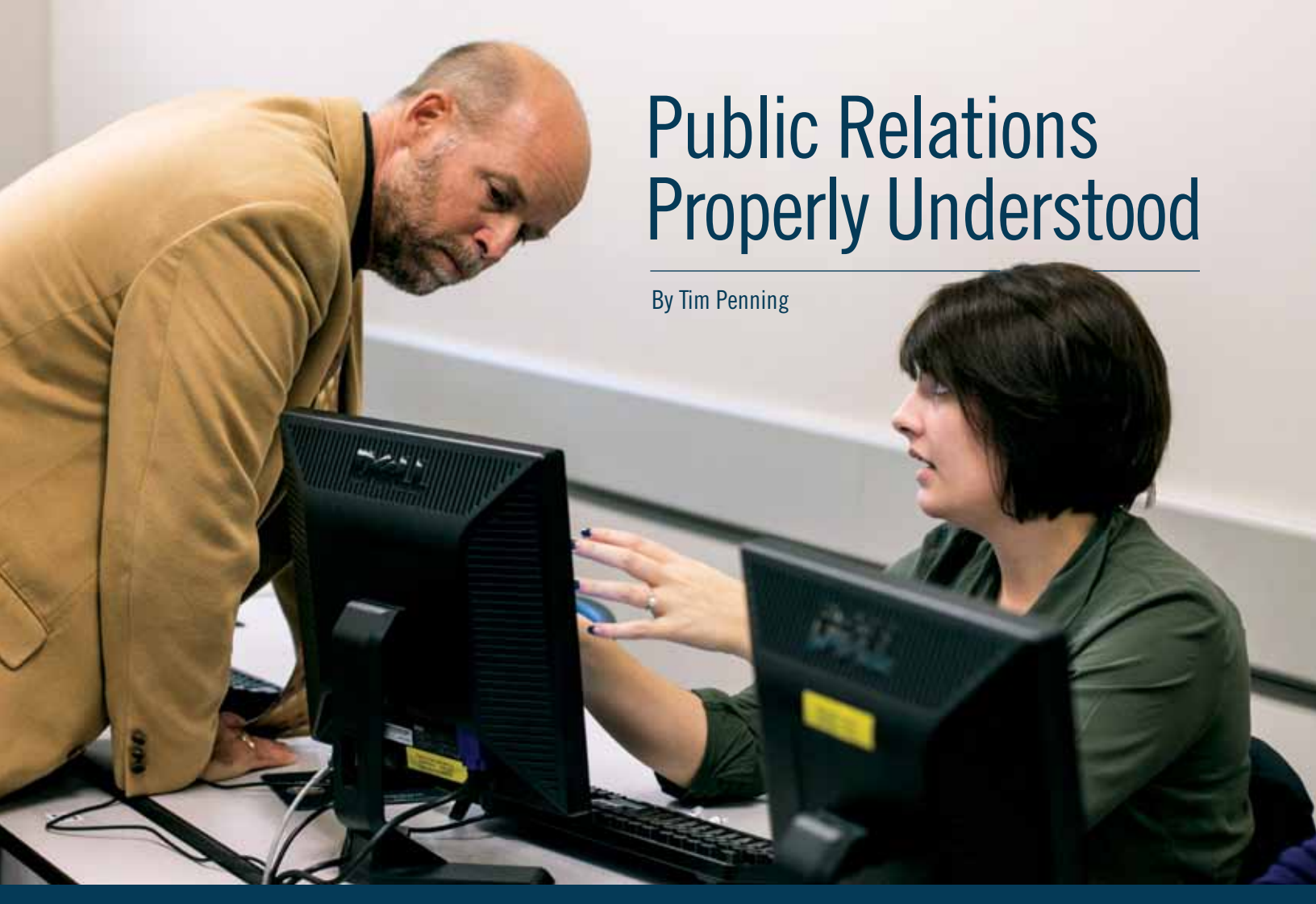
numerous regional, national, and international conferences throughout the year [www.media-ecology.org].

Media ecologists primarily attempt to understand and clarify how the on-going dynamics of culture and consciousness resonate with communication technologies. They seek to reveal the transformative powers that accompany dominant communication technologies. Photography, for example, changed the meaning of painting, the practice of tourism, and the depth of psychology. Television reorganized the layout of the home, altered sensibilities regarding privacy in family life, changed the delivery of news, and transformed what “informed citizenship” means. The Internet, and especially web browsing, did not merely give more information to more people more quickly—it changed what information is and what “studying”

have changed. A primary mission of the Media Ecology Association is to document and understand these significant shifts in conscious life and social organization.

Professor Anton is President of the Media Ecology Association in 2014-15 and a Professor of Communication Studies.

Anton says studying communication—from the earliest writing, to the printing press, to digital media—from a media ecology perspective contributes to an understanding of culture and the human condition.



Public Relations Properly Understood

By Tim Penning

Public relations is a profession that is not well understood. This is a fact made real to students in my Fundamentals of Public Relations course, where I ask them on the first day to define public relations and to share what they have heard others say that public relations is. I get a range of answers: public relations, they say, is about “getting the word out,” putting an organization in a “good light,” branding, communication, or “spin.”

The list I write on the board is long. I end it by summarizing that the public perception of the field of public relations is one that either minimizes or demonizes it. The field is minimized when people utter vague descriptors like getting the word out or publicity. The field is much more than that. More bothersome is when public relations is demonized as “spin” or other words that imply intentional deceit. While certainly some people do manipulate the truth, such behavior is neither practiced nor encouraged by most public relations professionals or educators I have encountered.

Nevertheless, this misunderstanding persists. Research on the field shows that public relations or “PR” is often used in media accounts as a pejorative adjective (e.g. “PR stunt”) or as a noun modified by a diminutive adjective (e.g. “just PR.”) The implication is that PR is never to be taken seriously. This is why Timothy Coombs and Sherry Holladay, both professors of public relations at Central Florida University, wrote their book “It’s Not Just PR: Public Relations in Society.” The book is a balanced view of the field, in which the use of PR for dishonest purposes is acknowledged, but so

is the tremendous social benefit of public relations to society in advocating points of view for all types of organizations (i.e. not just corporations) and in so doing enabling people to make more informed decisions.

There are many reasons why public relations is not completely or properly understood. One is that bad practitioners do exist, and they unfortunately give a bad name to all professionals in the field. But another reason is that there are people not in public relations—such as lawyers, politicians, and business executives—who communicate dishonestly and their misdeeds are called “PR”

even though they don’t represent the legions of legitimate practitioners. A third reason is the media cultivation of a negative stereotype about public relations. This is not just the news media, but the entertainment media as well. The University of Southern California has an ‘Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture’ project that also considers how public relations professionals have been portrayed in feature films and television shows since 1901 (http://www.ijpc.org/page/ijpc_pr_practitioner). It is nearly always in a negative fashion. Similar research shows PR being portrayed negatively in novels from the 1930s to the present. My own research on media portrayals of PR in the 1920s shows that the media stereotype began in the decade when the term “public relations” was first used to describe the profession. That media-cultivated inaccurate portrayal of public relations continues today.

So what is public relations? It is not merely publicity seeking. It is certainly not “spin” or intentional deception. No, the way

the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) defines it (see www.prsa.org), the way professors teach it, and the way the vast majority of professionals I know practice it, public

relations is all about building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their various publics. This includes two-way, ethical communication with everyone from employees, to customers, to volunteers, to community groups.

I’m confident our students can think critically about examples of public relations practice they encounter. They can discern legitimate and professional practice from

imposters in the field. They have a proper understanding of public relations. Ultimately, they practice it with excellence and ethics, to the benefit of society, in keeping with the mission of Grand Valley State University.

My own research on media portrayals of PR in the 1920s shows that the media stereotype began in the decade when the term “public relations” was first used to describe the profession. That media-cultivated inaccurate portrayal of public relations continues today.



Tim Penning is Professor of Advertising & Public Relations and past president of the West Michigan Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

LEFT: Tim Penning talks with student Rachael Vrugink about an assignment in the writing lab as part of his Media Relations Writing class.

ABOVE: Alumnus Adam Russo talks to Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) students about his career in PR and starting his own firm. Alumni often talk to current PR students about the dynamic profession.

Photography Now—Toward a Critical Practice

by Anthony Thompson and Peter Zhang

For well over a decade now, the photography major at Grand Valley has been the largest program in West Michigan, and among the largest in the state. An important aspect of the program's success has been its location in the School of Communications, both "administratively," but more importantly, as a location in thought and theoretical perspective. This location has both attracted students wanting a comprehensive undergraduate degree, and produced graduates with a range of critical, creative, and communication skills relevant in a wide variety of professions.

The strength of our program has always been in the combination of a university curriculum that values liberal education, a solid basis in traditional (and marketable) communication skills, an understanding of the critical theoretical perspectives of communication and visual culture studies, and significant practice in the medium. In other words, we have had as our aim the education of critical practitioners capable of informed and independent thought and able to navigate an increasingly complex global mediascape.

Critical practice in communication requires that we use a variety of perspectives to challenge our fundamental assumptions about the field of communication and the emerging mediascape. The Photography and Communication Studies majors are therefore inherently complementary, and this is true for all of the major programs within the school. Marshall McLuhan saw the "resonating interval" as where the action is. Our students are benefiting from the synergies between the major programs for sure, but also from the

productive tensions. As the mediascape undergoes both convergence and disruption, this fact becomes ever more relevant.

Not only has photography undergone radical technological change in the past 20 years, but the uses of images in media and culture, and the scholarship regarding those uses,

has also significantly changed and expanded. In the 1970s, critical theory began shifting the emphasis in the beaux-arts from traditional art history and aesthetic criticism to what has come to be known as scholarship in visual culture – scholarship which had a greater impact on the study, creation, reception, and evaluation of the "media arts" of photography, film, and video than on the traditional arts. Traditional programs in photography within

academic departments of art and design are now starting to do what we have been doing for decades in the School of Communications, which is to pay attention to scholarship in communication and in visual culture studies.

There is an historical affinity between photography and communication studies thanks to the works of critical theorists such as Walter Benjamin and Paul Virilio and writers such as Susan Sontag, who have profoundly informed both fields of study. Given the posthistorical shift from "line" to "surface" as the dominant medium of communication, scholars in the field of communication are paying more and more attention to visual communication. As time goes by, the relevance and necessity of terms such as "visual rhetoric" is becoming increasingly obvious.

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Communication studies scholars are also dedicating an increasing amount of energy on the study of the aesthetics, semiotics, psychic and social impact of photography. They have found it crucial to fight their way out of intensional conceptual edifices to study percepts and affects, partly by examining the logistics of perception with which photographers and other visual artists are singularly familiar. Terms in photography such as "framing" have long since become part of the working vocabulary of communication studies scholars. All of this indicates that the two fields of study have drawn on some of the same theoretical sources, informed and animated each other, and, at the moment, become hardly dissociable from each other.

Communication and cultural theorists such as Victor Burgin, John Berger, Allan Sekula, Erving Goffman, and Marshall McLuhan, among many others, offer important insights into the uses of photographs and film as densely coded cultural artifacts within such social institutions as advertising, journalism, art, and media. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall notes, communication scholars have also helped us to challenge the ideas of a photograph as an expression of the photographer's unique personality, as a transparent and "objective" presentation of a real scene, or as a purely formal object, and ask us to consider the deep moral and intellectual implications of various uses of images in global society today. The emerging field of "digital studies" seeks to further extend this scholarship today in a media-ecological way.

In the 1930s, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy said the illiterate of the future would be ignorant of the pen and the camera alike. Our age has been described as an age of postliteracy, which means literacy is being pluralized. Image literacy is becoming even more crucial for effectively navigating the symbolic world, as image making easily feeds into what Vilém Flusser provocatively calls a fascistic circuitry which programs people's desires and behavior. Exposure to critical theory across the majors in the school equips our students to break that circuitry, to be capable of prudently making and critically engaging media, and therefore less susceptible to being programmed by them.



Students critique each other's photos as part of a midterm review.

As has always been the case, the technical aspects of the digital media tools are more easily learned than the capacity for critical and creative thought. Reflecting on how we make meaning as media producers and receivers, how a chosen media form and product transforms the human environment, and the ultimate value of the environment created, is what is partly meant by critical practice.

Our students will continue to stay abreast of the technological changes in the dynamic and evolving digital mediascape. But it is the manifold, syncretic perspectives afforded by critical studies that will continue to prepare them to be sophisticated critical practitioners whatever technological changes may come, or whatever their future endeavors may be.

Anthony Thompson is a Professor of Photography and the Director of the School of Communications. Peter Zhang is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies.

Theatre Alumnus Takes Center Stage after Moving to New York City

Pursuing one's passion after graduation can be frightening. GVSU Theatre alumnus Scott Watson was familiar with this feeling when he decided to move to New York City to pursue his acting career. But Watson knew he was destined to act since the first grade and he would do what he had to do to make his dream a reality.



Scott Watson

"My first role onstage was as the Big Billy Goat in The Three Billy Goat's Gruff during the first grade at a British private school," said Watson. "I vanquished the bridge troll and as the audience applauded my goatly triumph, I knew I had found my passion."

After Watson graduated he began job hunting like most graduates. However with the Great Recession just ending in 2009, this was difficult. Watson then made the decision to take a chance and move to the Big Apple with the hope of starting his acting career.

"I learn by doing, and my education at Grand Valley was very hands-on and active," said Watson. "I appeared in 17 plays during my undergraduate education, while other universities send their students out into the world having appeared in only three productions or less."

"My job-hunt was proving futile during the recession in 2009, and my savings account was dwindling, so it was either move to New York or move back home and live in my parents' basement," said Watson. "So I chose New York, and I moved to Brooklyn with \$35 in my bank account and my first month's rent paid."

Two weeks later Watson landed his first job in New York. He is grateful for how the School of Communications helped him get where he is today.

"I learn by doing, and my education at Grand Valley was very hands-on and active," said Watson. "I appeared in 17 plays during my undergraduate education, while other universities send their students out into the world having appeared in only three productions or less. Most of all, my theatre education at Grand Valley gave me the gift of Shakespeare."

Watson also commented on what advice he would like to pass on to current students at Grand Valley.

"Probably the most important lesson is you have to take ownership for the quality of your own work," said Watson. "If you don't care about what you are doing, then no one else will either. You have to put in the time and dedication towards making an artistic goal a reality, and you must also accept responsibility if you come up short."

Watson stressed appreciation for how the faculty at Grand Valley helped him become the successful actor he is today.



Watson performing as Thurio in "Two Gentlemen of Verona."

"Never take for granted the time and effort that the faculty takes in helping to grow and develop you," said Watson. "It takes a special kind of person to spend that much of their time and energy towards the betterment of others, so do not take this dedication lightly. The entire faculty of the Theatre department at the time bears mention for their guidance and support especially Karen Libman, James A. Bell, Roger Ellis, Jill Hamilton, Alfred Sheffield, Ian Borden and Ben Cole."

Communications Distinguished Alumnus Shares from Experience in Theatre Production

Paul Collins, a 2008 graduate of the M.S. in Communications program, was honored at the Distinguished Alumni-In Residence Recognition Luncheon in October, 2014. The luncheon honored extraordinary alumni who were invited to come back to campus and share their post-graduate experiences with the Laker community. Each year several programs on campus are allowed to bring distinguished alumni back to be recognized and to interact with current students.



Paul Collins

Collins is currently an Assistant Professor for the College of Charleston, in South Carolina, teaching theatrical design and production. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater at University of Michigan, a Master of Science in Communications at Grand Valley State University, and a Master of Fine Arts in Lighting Design at the University of Iowa.

Collins boasts a resume of 37 and counting productions he has worked on. He started his undergraduate work in musical theatre performance, but immediately found his passion in the technical areas: working on a work-study assignment in the scene shop.

Collins credits Grand Valley for helping him get to where he is now. "The communications education is really what has helped to 'round me out'," said Collins. "From the very beginning of my undergraduate training to the end of my graduate education, my training has been very specialized. While I did spend some attention while in the communications program at GVSU in theatre related research and writing, the coursework and interactions with the faculty and student colleagues helped me to see the world in a different way."

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"I was more in the production end of the business- the interest in design came a little later, through interaction with my lighting and scenery design professors, Rob Murphy and Vince Mountain respectively," said Collins. Although Collins' path has had many twists and turns, he is content with the way it worked out. Collins wouldn't change the way that things went on his academic journey, and explains the importance of taking opportunities.

"I wouldn't necessarily do anything differently," said Collins, "but that's probably a product of rolling with the punches more than anything else. There are always different paths that you can go down, and the choices that you make when those paths present themselves are what define you as a person and a professional."

Collins offers advice to current and future students. "Take ownership of that thing you're doing," he said. "Once you're doing something for yourself, rather than for some taskmaster, you will achieve excellence at that thing."

Paul Collins spoke on campus in October 2014 as part of the "Distinguished Alumni in Residence" program.



Film & Video Alumnus Brings Production Firm Back to Grand Rapids

Dustin Foster, 2003 graduate of the Film & Video Production major, started Chop & Hue in May 2014 with partner Dan Wiltshire. Chop & Hue is a cutting edge creative space in Grand Rapids that offers a variety of services to its clients such as creative editorial, illustration & animation, and sound design.



Foster credits the School of Communications for giving him tools for success.

“What I learned from the SOC was the importance of creative collaboration, importance of theory, and how to not only look at work with a critical eye, but how to use feedback and critique to better your work,” said Foster.

Foster has worked on commercials for Toyota and Chase Bank at Chop & Hue. Additionally, Foster has worked as editor and

colorist for Sesame Street. Foster offers advice to current film and video students.

“You are a creative person, there is a reason you’ve chosen the program you’re in,” said Foster. “It’s OK to not know what you’re doing, it’s OK to not have the best work — but you’re only going to get better if you truly commit to the craft. Learn the theory of filmmaking — because only then can you understand how to bend the rules and find your own style.”

After working in Chicago for several years, Foster gathered enough experience and ideas to start his own business. He liked the boutique-style creative spaces, and used that as inspiration when starting his own business. Foster grew up in West Michigan, and knew that Grand Rapids was the perfect place for his business.

Dustin Foster in his production studio in Grand Rapids.

Advertising & Public Relations Alumna Salutes School of Communications for Preparing Her for Career in Naval Public Affairs

Jennifer Cunningham graduated from Grand Valley in 2003 with a degree in Advertising and Public Relations. Before graduation, Cunningham had never imagined she’d be working for the Navy. It wasn’t until five years after graduation that Cunningham even considered the possibility.

“I’ve been able to do some really interesting things in my career with the Navy that I would never have had the chance to do in previous jobs,” said Cunningham. “I’ve been in Boston during the 200th anniversary celebration of the War of 1812 and I’ve been a media trainer for more than 260 senior officers from 45 different countries. In my current job at the Navy Office of Community Outreach, I get to tell the Navy story by traveling around the country helping to plan Navy Weeks, admirals’ outreach events, and interview our own sailors so we can send

their stories back to their home towns. It is so incredibly rewarding.”

Cunningham returned to Grand Valley this past fall to meet with Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) members. She said that the classes that helped her the most included media relations, basic public relations classes, and journalism classes.

“If I had not become a well-rounded PR professional due to the great training at GVSU, I don’t think I would have been selected to become a public affairs officer,” said Cunningham. “Honestly everything I learned at GVSU helped me get my job.”

Jennifer Cunningham (center) on duty in San Diego.



Photographer Becomes First Alumni Speaker at the Fall Convocation

In 2014, the Freshmen Convocation had its first alumni speaker. Matthew LaVere, a GVSU alumnus who graduated with a degree in Photography, was asked to speak at the convocation about his experiences after graduation. He credits his education in the School of Communication and his hard work for helping him achieve the professional experience he has today.

“My education through the School of Communications taught me the importance of balancing technical and creative skill sets when creating a series of photographs,” said LaVere. “All of my photography professors encouraged us to own our projects and not look at them as homework or assignments. I



put 110 percent into every project and this work ethic allowed me to work alongside famous photographers across the U.S. and receive my own client work.”

After college LaVere worked as a photo assistant and helped photographers with various projects such as the Sports Illustrated August 2012 cover with Calvin Johnson and Matthew Stafford of the Detroit Lions and the Rolling Stone Magazine November 2013 issue featuring Eminem on the cover. As a photographer LaVere has been hired by Amway Global and Arcade Creative Group NYC, which is a division of Sony Music Entertainment.

LaVere understands what it feels like to be nervous about graduation. He encouraged current students to dream large.

“My advice to students is do not let fear conquer and paralyze your abilities to achieve success,” said LaVere. “Every one of you have all the ingredients here at GVSU to do what you want. As crazy as it might seem, do what you love and never settle with a status quo.”



LEFT: LaVere spoke with current photography students on campus this past semester. ABOVE: LaVere works on a portrait in his studio (top) and on a photo shoot for the Detroit Lions.

Consider Supporting the School of Communications

There are many ways to support Grand Valley State University. You can designate your gift specifically to the School of Communications by giving to any of the following funds. Learn more about giving to GVSU and the School of Communications at www.gvsu.edu/give



School of Communications Scholarship

The School of Communications Scholarship is designed to honor upper level School of Communications students who have demonstrated promise in their chosen field of study. Scholarship funds will be awarded on a competitive basis. The student must have declared a major in the School of Communications, be in good academic standing, and have completed a minimum of 30 credits at GVSU.

Dr. Margaret Proctor School of Communications Scholarship

The scholarship is intended to benefit School of Communications students who write in a vivid, direct and unique voice. It is designed especially with fiction-writing in mind, which includes writing for film and theater.

The Warren Reynolds Scholarship

The Warren Reynolds Scholarship is named in honor of the longtime sports director at WOOD- TV in Grand Rapids. Warren Reynolds, who died of cancer in 2000 and was a champion of charitable causes throughout the region, left a legacy of integrity in broadcast journalism. This scholarship is intended for students who exemplify these ideals and show a passion for electronic media. Preference will be given to students pursuing a career in sports broadcasting.

John J. and Marjorie E. Shepard Communications Scholarship

Established in memory of John J. and Marjorie E. Shepard, to support students in the Grand Valley State University School of Communications. It was their wish that a portion of their estate be designated for a scholarship to benefit students pursuing careers in broadcasting.

Calder Scholarship

An award of \$1000 applied to tuition for a student majoring in the fine arts (Including Photography, Film & Video, Theatre.) Applicants are nominated by academic units. Each unit may nominate up to three candidates. Applicants should be completing their third year of study. The Scholarship provides full tuition for their senior year. The committee awards one scholarship per year.

Dirk Koning Film/Video Scholarship

Dirk Koning was the founding Director of the Community Media Center in Grand Rapids and an adjunct faculty member at GVSU. Dirk was a media visionary, a passionate ambassador for public access, who believed that the airwaves belong to the people. He was an internationally recognized media activist and champion for free speech. Dirk died unexpectedly in 2005 at the age of 48. We have named this scholarship in his honor.

Scholarship moneys from this fund are awarded on a competitive basis to upper level Film and Video Production majors who have made or intend to make media that contributes to the improvement of society.

Frederick A. Chapman Endowed Memorial Public Relations Scholarship

This fund assists students in Public Relations who are committed to community service.

Friends of West Michigan Public Broadcasting Student Employee Scholarship

Two annual full tuition scholarships. Available to one TV and one Audio student, each of whom have worked at TV or radio stations WGVU/WGVK-TV or WGVU-Radio.

MCA-A Bill Rigstand Communication Scholarship

Annual \$2,000-plus Detroit-area internship.

Eastman Scholarship Program

Annual tuition and fees to Film and Video majors. (Requires going through Film/Video faculty.)

William J & Margaret G. Branstrom Fund Award for partial tuition.

For Photography and Film/Video students.

Joseph Ehrenreich Scholarship: Press Photography

5 \$1000.00 grants per year from the National Press Photographers Foundation. Students must submit a portfolio of their work demonstrating skill, versatility and potential. Financial need is also a criterion.



School of Communications by the Numbers Faculty Activity for 2014

- Academic Conference Presentations . . . 52
- Books 2
- Book Chapters 10
- Book Reviews 3
- Non-Refereed Journal Articles 8
- Refereed Journal Articles 18
- Other contributions (online). 5
- Community Engagement Projects 4
- Screenings. 5
- Script 1
- Audio project 1
- Film/Video project 2
- Exhibitions 5
- Play Script. 2
- Play Performance 5

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