

COM GRAD NEWS



Newsletter for the Graduate Program in Communication
at Illinois State University

Coordinator's Corner

By Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott

Welcome to the inaugural issue of our graduate program newsletter! I wanted to develop this newsletter as a way of singing the praises of our graduate program (we are doing a lot of great work!) and keeping students, faculty, and alumni updated on all of our amazing successes and activities. I hope that you enjoy reading it. I want to acknowledge my grad assistant this semester, Cimmi Alvarez who helped write content for this issue! I am so proud of what we created!

Many of you know that this is my first year as graduate coordinator of the program. It has been an interesting year for sure. It was way more work that I thought it would be but also such a cool experience getting an up-close view of the SoC leadership (grateful for Dr. Hunt for his unending guidance and support!) and the intricacies of the grad program (So many forms! So many policies! So many emails!). Let me take a moment to thank Patty Franz for, well, everything! I never knew how much work this woman actually did for the program . . . and now I am in awe! THANK YOU Patty!

This was a strange semester to be coordinator and to start a newsletter, mainly because we had to cut our in-person semester short. But the things we got done and the ways we kicked butt in just a few months -- WOW! As you will read in this newsletter, we gave awards, we won awards, we ate chili!! And we will do it all again next year, when we admit another successful class of grad students!

There are some of you reading this newsletter who I have never met. Others have taken classes with me, and some I know just from the hallways of Fell. One of my goals in taking on this role was to find ways to make and keep connections among people who have been involved with and impacted by our program in some way, even those I do not know. So in the fall, I said to myself, "We need a Facebook page!" So I started one (you can find it by searching Illinois State University Communication Graduate Program and ask to join!). I have typically used the page to post the awesome work we are doing, but I'm now using it as the platform for my "7-Week Stay at Home Challenge" to keep our students, faculty, and alumni connected while we are all at home during this strange time. Check out our Facebook page, enjoy the newsletter, and stay in touch with those in our program! Best wishes for happiness and health in the spring and summer months!

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FACULTY SUCCESSES

Here's What We've Been Up To

20th Annual Chili Cook-Off

On February 21, School of Communication grad students, faculty, and staff gathered for the 20th Annual Chili Cook-Off in the Legends Room of Redbird Arena. We had an amazing turn-out and ate way too much chili!



The top chili awards went to:

Most Unique Chili: Dr. Huxford

Tongue Burner: Steve Suess

Most Surprising Chili: Dr. Cheri Simonds
Chili with the Best Name: Alyssa Green (for "Chili Eilish")

Most Nostalgic Chili: Patty Franz

Best Student Chili: Bruce Lanigan

Best Faculty Chili: Dr. Zompetti and his partner, Buffy

Grad Students Giving Back

We have many outstanding graduate students in our program who give their time and energy to our program, but we don't have room to acknowledge all of them and their efforts! For this issue, we wanted to thank second-year master's student, Viraj Patel, for his contributions to the program. Viraj is the social chair for the GSA, the GA for Transformers, and helped plan Comm Week. He is always willing to step up and help in any way he can! Viraj said that the grad program taught him how to find, analyze, and summarize information. After completing the program, Viraj wants to be in the PR, Marketing, or Research fields, in a career that lets him process research to help consumers make better choices. About surviving grad school, Viraj wants everyone to know, "It's gonna be alright, genuinely."



GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The GSA had a busy year! We started pretty early in the fall semester with a stress relief event and a mock conference where our peers and faculty discussed their research. One of our favorite events, the Christmas party was enjoyed by many as we exchanged cookies and silly gifts.

Although our semester was cut short, we were still able to hold our annual chili cook off which went off without a hitch! We've had so much fun leading our peers as board members of the Graduate Student Association and look forward to passing the torch to the next cohort!

An Award-Winning Semester

Alumni Awards

Grad Student Awards

This spring, the faculty selected two of our outstanding alumni to receive alumni awards.

Ms. Nikita Richards has received the 2020 Outstanding New Graduate Alumni Award. This award recognizes significant accomplishment and leadership early in one's chosen professional or academic career, including involvement in civic, cultural, or charitable activities. In 2018, Ms. Richards was the first African American woman to earn the Outstanding Woman in Communication Award by the AWC. She received the 2019 YMCA Woman of Distinction Award and in 2020 won the Outstanding Service in Leadership Award. She was appointed to the IL Council of Women and Girls, is involved with Illinois' Heroes, works with the McLean County Foster Care Coalition, and sits on the ISU Alumni Board of Directors.

Dr. Scott Myers has received the 2020 Outstanding Graduate Alumni Achievement Award. This award is presented to alumni whose achievements in their field or vocation have received favorable statewide, national, or international recognition; who have received honors from associations or employers; or whose work has proven beneficial to a pronounced segment of society. Dr. Myers is a Professor and the chair of the Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University. He is an instructional communication researcher whose projects focus primarily on the role of communication in the instructor-student relationship. Dr. Myers has won several awards and was named an Outstanding Teacher in 2010. He was the past President and Executive Director of the Central States Communication Association.

Several students presented their work at the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) and the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) conferences.

Congratulations to Divine Aboagye and Cimmi Alvarez who won Central States Communication Association top paper awards .

At the University Teaching and Learning Symposium in January, two of our grad students were awarded impressive teaching awards! Mallorie Latora (pictured on the left), a second-year master's student and GTA, won the Outstanding Teaching Award, Master's Level I. Jillian Joyce Kaufmann (pictured on the right), a third-year Ed.D. student, won the Outstanding University GTA Doctoral Level I award.



The COM graduate faculty selected Divine Aboagye, a second-year master's student and GTA, as the Outstanding Graduate Student Award. This award goes to the student who faculty believe demonstrates excellence in teaching, research, and service.



Alyssa Hernandez (M.S. 2019) won the Outstanding Thesis Award in the School of Communication for her thesis titled, "'They Are Supposed to Be There for Me': Using Thematic Analysis to Understand Sexual Assault Disclosures in Hispanic Families" (advised by Dr. Miller-Ott). Her thesis was then selected as the College of Arts and Sciences James. L. Fisher Outstanding Thesis Award winner.

Faculty Successes

Our graduate faculty won many awards this semester! Many of our faculty won top paper awards from CSCA, including Dr. Blaney, Dr. Bratslavsky, Dr. Hopper, Dr. Huxford, Dr. Hunt, and Dr. Cheri Simonds. Congrats to them! Dr. Brent Simonds and Dr. Cheri Simonds won Best in Competition at the Festival of Media Arts (BEA) for Leading Instructional Discussions.

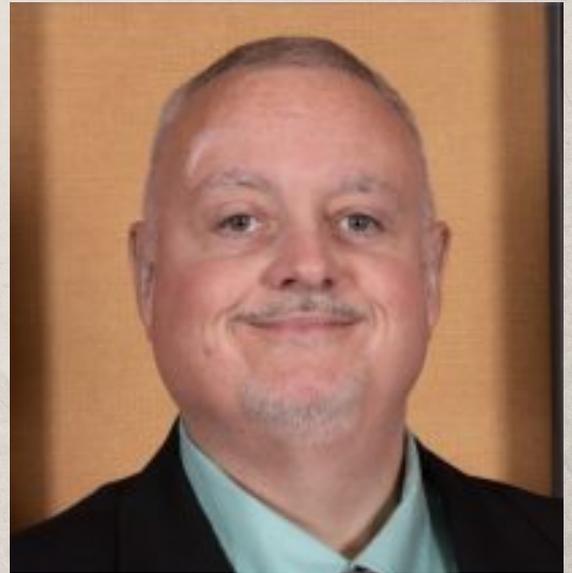
At this spring's University Teaching and Learning Symposium, two of our graduate faculty members, **Dr. Joseph Zoppetti** and **Dr. Lindsey Thomas**, won top teaching honors.

Dr. Joseph Zoppetti **Outstanding University Teaching Award**

Thoughts about winning the award: "The award actually motivates me to continue to develop. I firmly believe that we never stop learning and that there are always ways that we can improve."

Favorite part of the grad program: "I enjoy teaching graduate seminars because my students challenge me, and I learn from them all of the time."

Advice for grad students: "Cherish their time in graduate school. It goes by very quickly, but their time in graduate school can be some of their best moments and experiences!"



Dr. Lindsey Thomas **Teaching Initiative Award**

Thoughts about winning the award: "The process of compiling the nomination packets offered me an opportunity to reflect on what I am doing well and what I can improve upon."

Favorite part of the grad program: "I love working with graduate students and helping them build the foundational knowledge and skills that allows them to understand where their research findings fit in broader scholarly and lay conversations."

Advice for graduate students: "This is the time to try new things, a place to practice new skills, a space where you can mess up and learn how to become better."

If you are interested in making a gift to the graduate program or donating your time or resources, check out our website (<https://communication.illinoisstate.edu/graduate/>) or reach out via email (Aimee Miller-Ott, Graduate Program Coordinator, aeott@ilstu.edu)