

# THE SPEAK EASY

SUMMER 2022

## SCHOOL OF COMM. STUDIES UPDATE

By Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway, School Director

It has been an incredible year in the School of Communication Studies. We have returned, somewhat, to our business as usual while also remaining flexible amidst uncertain conditions due to COVID-19 and other local and global events. Even so, we continued to witness success in many areas. Our undergraduate students excelled in their RSOs on campus, found internships in many corners of the country, and delighted us with their energy and enthusiasm. Our graduate students were brilliant in the classroom, and were influential in helping us with recruitment and retention on and off campus. It's always such a joy to watch them grow as professionals/scholars/academics. We were able to travel to some conferences again during the past year, so our grad students and faculty enjoyed getting to participate in the discipline in this way, while also seeing our colleagues from across the country. And I know you're looking forward to reading the faculty updates in the pages of our newsletter.

One of the best things about this year, for me as School



Director, was simply seeing people again. I knew I enjoyed my colleagues and students, but maybe didn't realize how much I would miss them over the past couple of years. Simply being present is so meaningful, and I feel thankful every day that we are, for all intents and purposes, back.

We hope that each of you have fared well this year. Please do keep in touch with us; we love hearing from you, connecting with you, and welcoming you back on campus if you happen to be in the area. But act soon—it's possible that a new/renovated COMM building is just around the corner!

## PODCAST STUDIO

By Justin Young

Two years ago, I pitched the idea of a podcast studio to Sandy. Then COVID struck and most of the equipment sat in unopened boxes while everyone went remote. Thankfully, this school year we were back in person and with it an unused office was converted into our new podcasting studio.

Why does Comm. Studies need a podcasting studio? We live in an increasingly diverse, multimodal society. While, for example, The Speak Easy is a fantastic way to get news out, some audiences will prefer to watch a video, view an infographic, or yes, listen to a podcast. So, while our School does all sorts of cool stuff, we're keenly aware we might not be reaching all audiences with it.

The [Communication Studies podcast](#) tries to get that messaging out. Every few weeks, as host and producer, I interview someone related to the School. Maybe a faculty member one week about their history within the field, but a graduate student the next episode about their dissertation research. Some of the most fun episodes have been postmortems on the Kleinau Theatre shows getting to talk to the directors about the creative process from idea to

stage. It's a great way to chronicle the performance studies program.

The other regular podcast has been the [Saluki Gamescast](#), part of a wider project at [SalukiGames.com](#). Video games are traditionally underrepresented academically, and it's my hope to provide a space for students and faculty to explore and talk about them. That has brought CMST graduate students O.J. Duncan, Ryan Freels, and Alicia Utecht along for the ride as regular cohosts of the podcast, as well as occasional guests. Each week we talk about the latest news and our personal experiences with different games we're playing.

Finally, the podcast studio has found other uses, as well. Jonny used it for his podcasting class in the fall, with plans to turn students' final projects into a Kleinau show. CMST 101 instructors have used it as a way for students to prepare speeches. The hope is that its myriad uses can continue to multiply for students and faculty alike. The Communication Studies and Saluki Gamescast podcasts can be found on various podcasting platforms such as Apple, Google, and Spotify.

## REMEMBERING MARVIN KLEINAU

By Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway

Beloved Dr. Marvin Kleinau, faculty emeritus, passed away on Monday, November 22, 2021, at the age of 92. Dr. Kleinau's beloved wife, Dr. Marion Kleinau, was at his side.

Dr. Kleinau was born on August 31, 1929, in Geneseo Illinois. His interest in teaching led to him earning a B.S. in Education from Illinois State University in 1952, followed by an M.S. in Education from the same in 1960. After receiving his M.S. degree, he taught junior high school in Saybrook, IL, and then taught high school history and coached debate in his hometown of Geneseo, before being hired at SIU as the Director of the Forensics team with the (then) Department of Speech Communication. In 1973, he became an assistant professor, and was promoted to Associate Professor shortly after, in 1977, the same year he earned his Ph.D. in Speech Communication from SIU. He served as chair of Speech Communication from 1981, and eventually moved into the position of Acting Dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts until his retirement in the early 1990s.

His teaching interests included communication education, public address, and all forensics activities, including argumentation and debate, discussion, and individual speaking. As the Director of Forensics at SIU, he led the Little Egypt Invitational Speech Festival from 1963-1977. Dr. Kleinau's background in education served him well throughout his life. Evidence of this can be found in the numerous awards and honors for teaching, including the Pi Kappa Delta Coaching Award (1969), AMOCO Teaching Award (1978), Illinois Speech and Theatre Association Outstanding Educator Award (1978), Edith Harrod Award for Meritorious Service to Speech Education in the State of Illinois (1984), SIU Tenured and Tenure-Track Teaching Excellence Award (1978), and the SIU Distinguished Service Award (1993).

A number of offices and schools across the state of Illinois sought out Dr. Kleinau's educational and curriculum expertise, including the Committee on Education in Illinois, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and local schools in surrounding towns such as Cairo, Freeburg, New Athens, and Mt. Vernon. He actively presented his research at the Speech Communication Association (now National Communication Association), the Central States Communication Association, and the Illinois Speech and Theatre Association. That research included a variety of book publications offering instruction on judging debate, and several journal articles such as "Scene Location in Readers Theatre: Static or Dynamic" (The Speech Teacher, 1965) co-authored with Dr. Marion Kleinau.



In a 1978 Daily Egyptian article after his Teaching Excellence Award win, Dr. Kleinau remarked that "Good teaching starts with a lot of individual exchange between teacher and student, takes a lot of time and personal involvement and should continue into a conversation that never ends." In that same article, a former student said of Dr. Kleinau, "I had four classes with him and he was the best teacher I ever had." Indeed, his students remember him as a kind and generous person.

To say that Dr. Kleinau was active outside the classroom at SIU is quite the understatement. In addition to his teaching duties, he served in a variety of leadership roles both at the university, and in professional associations, including:

- Chair, SIU University Academic Priorities Committee (1982-1986)
- President of the SIU Faculty Senate (1978-1979, 1980-1982)
- Chair of the SIU Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee in the late 1970s
- President, Illinois Speech and Theatre Association and the Illinois Oratory Association
- President of the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors from 1977-1978

His long-standing commitment has been to introduce students to the fascinating world of communication, so he sought out ways to do just that. In 2018-2019, Dr. Kleinau

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## REMEMBERING MARVIN KLEINAU cont.

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met several times with current communication studies students to understand what types of support would benefit them, as he knew that the success of today's students is what will carry the discipline forward. To that end, and from these conversations, he recently established the Marvin D. Kleinau Communication Studies Undergraduate Advancement Endowment Fund through the SIU Foundation. This Endowment includes both a Marvin D. Kleinau Undergraduate Scholarship, meant to attract the brightest and best students to the School of Communication Studies, and the Marvin D. Kleinau Communication Studies Advancement Fund, meant to support students in their professional development activities. (It is not surprising that after each of these meetings, the students walked away feeling like they had just met with their own grandpa.) In addition to the steadfast support of the School of Communication Studies, the Kleinaus' support of the university also includes units such as the University Museum, the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, and WSIU. In 1986, Dr. Kleinau served as a moderator for an "across-the-world" telephone exchange between SIU and Moscow State University, which was broadcast on public radio stations throughout the country. He also hosted a public affairs program called "Inquiry," along with the popular high school quiz show "Scholastic Hi-Q," both on WSIU.

These positive marks in his academic record, though, only tell a portion of his story. Marvin took joy in serving others in the community, as well. He was a minister in the Community of Christ church (formerly Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints) and ministered throughout southern Illinois. He was also a member and past president of the Kiwanis Club of Carbondale. Those who knew Marvin remember his warmth, good-nature, and positive outlook. Over the past year, as he moved amongst hospital to rehab to assisted living facilities to his home, he sought out the good things, such as getting two desserts with his meals. Prior to the pandemic, he and Marion enjoyed their routine outings at local restaurants, where the servers knew their names and orders before they even sat down. He loved golf, watching (and critiquing) basketball and baseball on TV (he cheered especially for the Cubs, though in years when a world series win was out of the question, his loyalties went to the Cardinals), and keeping up with Saluki athletics. One knew Marvin was in the room by his boisterous laugh, his welcoming demeanor, and his uncanny ability to always see the bright side.

In a conversation with a collaborator at the SIU Foundation just a few months ago, Dr. Kleinau ended by remarking, "Life has been tough... but glorious, simply glorious."

## AN UPDATE FROM THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

By Dr. Craig Engstrom

It's been another fantastic year in the School of Communication Studies (CMST) for our undergraduate students. Our undergraduate program continues to deliver high-quality opportunities for our diverse students. Year over year, we've seen an increase in first-year students, transfer students, and SIU students who change their major to CMST. We've improved upon our graduation rates. Fall 22 is looking great too. We have a higher number of new first-year students, on-campus degree change students, and transfer students declaring Communication Studies as their major at this point of the recruiting cycle than we've had in the past five years.

Why are students choosing Communication Studies? Our passionate and compassionate undergraduate students, of course. They truly bring a spirit and energy that make our School fun and inviting to others. I believe I can speak for all faculty when I say they motivate our work and make it fun to teach.

We've worked hard over the past year, now that the pandemic is slowly inching behind us, to deliver high-quality experiences, more scholarships, and more funded professional development opportunities.

Here are just a few notable highlights:

We delivered approximately \$20,000 in funding through tuition waivers, scholarships, and special grants to our undergraduate students.

We again funded multiple PR students to attend The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations' Summit on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

We nominated and covered travel expenses for our students to participate in various travel opportunities, including the National Millennial and Gen Z Community. These are possible thanks to the external connections with PR professionals Dr. Nilanjana Bardhan has developed.

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## UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR UPDATE **cont.**

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Most of the funding for these opportunities comes from the generous endowment of Dr. Marvin Kleinau and the charitable donations—small and large—that we get from our annual SIU Day of Giving push. Each year we get a considerable volume of contributions—higher than any other College of Liberal Arts School, due to our social media and outreach efforts. It's not too late to give. Go to [Awards & Funds | School of Communication Studies!](#)

In closing, I want to thank Justin Young for serving as the undergraduate director while I was on sabbatical in fall 2021. I also want to say thank you to Monika Fudala, the

graduate assistant supporting our undergraduate director. She has helped me with many special projects and continues to deliver quality content on our social channels.

The undergraduate committee and others have laid the foundation for more mentoring, programming, recruiting, and retention efforts in fall 2022. I'm excited to see what notes we'll share with you next year.

## STUDENT COMMUNICATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) REVIEW

By SCO President Alex Lockwood

The Student Communication Organization (SCO) welcomed the return to in-person operations this year, as well as a large incoming cohort of graduate students ready to work towards professional development here at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Last year's SCO president and VP – Bolton Morales and Caleb McKinley-Portee—led stellar introductory sessions and transitioned the new executive committee smoothly in the first weeks of physical presence on campus in over a year. In the following months, SCO met and held discussions to plan for the future at the school, college, and university levels; and to keep graduate students informed about the state of the school as it transitioned through the final stages of the university reorganization.

In October, SCO participated in Communication Studies Day, a recruitment event hosted in the Faner Hall breezeway. Themed around Halloween, several members participated in the events, wore costumes, or made the effort to funnel students from their 101 classes to the event so that they might be recruited to the school. In addition to this in-person recruitment event, several members of SCO were interviewed for the School podcast program hosted by Justin Young. This provided a great opportunity to share not only the research interests of graduate students in the school, but also to talk about our passions, hobbies, and other pursuits that don't always fit neatly into the scope of academic work.

In April, SCO awarded the John T. Warren and Bryan K. Crow memorial scholarships to three students—Zoë Freedkin (M.A.), Ryan Freels (Ph.D.), and Feyisayo Arowolo (UG). This was SCO's first time awarding the Crow scholarship in person, and we are happy to continue working alongside the Foundation for these two scholars in proffering nominations for awardees. SCO now moves on to redouble its efforts on making up the fundraising deficit left

by the pandemic in the hopes of once again inviting speakers and other scholars to the campus for professional development seminars and networking opportunities.

This year was relatively quiet for SCO. Speaking from my own perspective, I attempted to foreground efforts at smoothly readjusting to being physically present on campus this year. For many of us, the coronavirus pandemic is an ongoing concern. The [National Council on Disability](#) reported in October of 2021 that people with chronic conditions, disabilities, or autoimmune disorders have been regularly underserved and had benefits curtailed since the start of the pandemic—a situation that continues in the present. With the university making the decision for this academic year to transition back to face-to-face learning with masks, then to briefly move online, then back to face-to-face, and finally to make masks optional, I wanted to leave space in SCO for graduate students to engage with the on-campus life of the school at their own pace. My hope going forward is that our organization will extend this ethic of solidarity and compassion, even as we continue to grapple with the toll that the pandemic continues to exact on us. I have full confidence that our membership this year worked with that compassion in mind. I would like to offer thanks to the executive committee—Janine Armstrong, Julie Hartung, Bolton Morales, Erin Hodgson, Alicia Utecht, and Carli Álvarez—for their dedicated service over the term. I would also like to thank our members who served on committees and councils, and our active members who participated in meetings in between their own coursework and professional development. I hope that next year provides ample opportunities for us to continue building a more resilient and supportive community of CMST graduate students at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.



## KLEINAU THEATRE YEAR IN REVIEW

By Jesse Snider

Hello! I'm Jesse Snider, doctoral student and Assistant Technical Director in the Marion Kleinau Theatre for our 2021-2022 season this academic year. For my last act as Assistant Tech Director, before moving to the full Technical Director position for our upcoming 2022-2023 season, I have been asked to share with you all a review of the events and productions that my co-workers in the Kleinau, Publicity Director Anna Wilcoxon, Technical Director Devin Collins, and I have had the privilege of supporting this past year, both backstage and otherwise. Though the ongoing pandemic has, let's say, "guided" us towards a more truncated season of shows compared to previous years, we are nevertheless unshakingly proud of the work done by the wonderful performers and speakers this year, and would like to spotlight them here for you.

For our first event of the academic year, as a part of SIUC Diversity Week, the Kleinau Theater hosted guest speaker Dr. Reynaldo Anderson on September 2nd for his presentation titled, "The City We Became." Dr. Anderson's presentation was an examination of the intersections of identity in the five boroughs of New York City, and how they relate to issues of intersectionality and how we as individuals embrace inclusivity. On September 11th, we put on the Graduate Student Spotlight Hour, a yearly event often used to showcase recent (or sneak peeks at future) works by graduate students focused on/in Performance Studies.

Our first full performance of the season, *Naked Stories: Tales of Queer Adolescence* in the 70s and 80s, took place on November 4th through 6th, during which Writer & Solo Performer T Brown, assisted by Co-Director Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook, took us on a profound storytelling sojourn through T's early life, expressing moments of tragedy, purpose, identity, and music. To close out the 2021 semester, we presented an Undergraduate/Graduate Spotlight Hour on December 3rd. This twice-yearly performance showcases both live and digital student performances derived from various Performance Studies classes this semester, such as (but not limited to) CMST 201 – Performing Culture, CMST 371 – Storytelling, and CMST 435 – Performing Scripted Podcasts.

In March of Spring 2022, we had two shows back-to-back! First, on March 18th, guest artist and SIU alum Dr. Colin Whitworth brought his solo show, *The Queer's Guide to*

*Country Music*, on tour to our stage. The next week, from March 24th through the 26th, current doctoral graduate student Shelby Swafford, also assisted by Co-Director Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook, presented *Reproductions: A Kleinau Theatre Archive Project*, a project as much a love letter to previous productions/performers in our theatre as it is to the Kleinau Theatre itself. In *Reproductions*, Shelby re-performed segments of previous performances, while also exploring the history of the Kleinau Theatre's origins, from empty "shell space," to a home-spun theater called the Calipre Stage, then renovated and re-named the Marion Kleinau Theater after the professor who originally claimed the space we now use for all manner of student and faculty performance.

On April 30th, we held our final event of the season, another Undergraduate/Graduate Spotlight Hour which, again, showcased both live and digital student performances created during the previous semester. New performances from CMST 201 and 371 made an appearance, as well as performances from "Media and Performance" and "Performance Methods." Immediately following the spotlight hour, after years of being unable to do so in person, the Performance Studies faculty hosted the Kleinau Awards Ceremony. This ceremony celebrates the performances of the academic year and various individuals who have made a significant impact on the Kleinau, as well as announcing the next year's performances and Kleinau Staff. Students Juno Blue, T Brown, Shelby Swafford, Devin Collins, and Anna Wilcoxon were each recognized for their excellent work over the past year, and doctoral students Alicia Utecht, Ryan Freels, and yours truly were announced as the new Kleinau Staff for the 2022-2023 theatrical season! It was an emotional night for many of us.

As we look forward to another, much more packed season for the 2022-2023 academic year, we at the Kleinau Theatre hope to see you back for another season of excellent performances! Below are links to our various social media accounts, which you can (and should!!!) follow to keep up to date on all things Kleinau Theatre. Thanks for reading!

Facebook: [facebook.com/kleinautheatre](https://facebook.com/kleinautheatre)

Instagram: [@kleinautheatre](https://www.instagram.com/kleinautheatre)

Twitter: [@kleinautheatre](https://twitter.com/kleinautheatre)

## SAYING GOODBYE TO TWO ALUMNI

This year, our program mourned the loss of two incredible alumni. Russell Jennings and Dennis Winters were graduate student colleagues, and supported one another through coursework and dissertation writing in the late 1960s. Both studied with Tom Pace, and realized a variety of accomplishments throughout their lives. Their loved ones share words about them here.

### Dennis E. Winters

August 21, 1937— June 14, 2021

Remembrance by Michelle LeFurge



In 1966, when Dennis Winters was choosing the school to earn his PhD, he wanted a school that would let him choose his own papers. Southern Illinois University Carbondale was willing to take the risk and they weren't disappointed. Dennis was as intense about his PhD work as he was about his debate coaching; it was all in. With strong leadership from faculty and colleagues, he embraced his PhD work. With Dr. Tom Pace as his dissertation advisor and Russ Jennings as his dissertation

partner, he created the opportunity to work with the Rev. Jesse Jackson in community action and urban tension.

Dennis came to SIU from Chicago, originally from Butte, Montana. He had taught undergraduates and coached debate at Eastern Montana College (now Montana State University at Billings), Minot State University, De Paul University and Wright Junior College in Chicago. Living in Chicago in early days of black/white confrontation, Dennis's scholarly interest had shifted significantly from indirect relevance of scholarship to social and political reality to scholarship that was directly situated towards a world of change. Out of this came his PhD dissertation, *A Community-Action Group's Definition of Urban Tension: A Situational Analysis through Public Address in Chicago*, Illinois, in 1967-68, along with a situational methodology for field studies and writings on urban tension.

After turning down a grant opportunity to study urban tension in Northern Ireland ("It would have torn me apart...I couldn't just study it, I would have to do something about it"), Dennis kept teaching, and built a successful consulting practice. He read and wrote on a wide range of topics where scholarship was meaningful in the real experience of clients, students, communities, and ordinary individuals. Dennis died June 14, 2021 at the age of 84 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His energy and his commitment to scholarship in situational reality will be missed by everyone who knew him.

### Russell Jennings

(remembrance by Tom Pace)

Today I received, along with other SIU colleagues, the death notice of Russell Jennings who passed away near Phoenix. His death brings about a special meaning as his close graduate school colleague, Dennis Winters, passed away earlier this year in Michigan. When I say close, I mean in scholarly terms as they wrote the early introductory portions of their dissertations (1968-69) together using materials in symbolic interaction from scholars at

the University of Chicago. These were the first of several dissertations out of this department touting field studies as a mode of applying theoretical constructs. Dennis was the first to study Jesse Jackson in the days the FBI sought Jesse's writing and his work at Operation Breadbasket. Russ spent time working and collecting information from an extra institutional group, a group often using violent means, called the Concerned Citizens of Cicero and

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## SAYING GOODBYE TO TWO ALUMNI cont.

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Berwyn. Their criterion for field studies was go where the researcher might need to sweep the floors to gain entrance to an institution in order to gather inside information, as opposed to an interview where a researcher is seen with a brief case and moves away to compile. Dennis and Russ were responsible for securing, getting grant money, and recording subjects who were brought to campus from Chicago during a semester workshop in the department. Some of these subjects had never been out of Chicago and some brought firearms with them believing they might need protection. Russ was a faculty member in the Department after his graduation. He was a great addition for many of our grads, and directed important dissertations during his time; he left us about 1973.

After Russ left SIU he became gained attention as the personnel trainer at the Intercontinental Missile site in Washington State. He then later taught Communication and directed dissertations at one of the first “on line” graduate programs in California. He ended up teaching at Glendale Community College before his eyesight failed him. Dennis organized an advocacy type of business where he directed extra institutional groups to gain chosen ends. He and his spouse Michelle spent three years in Saudi Arabia, where he was a ghost writer for the Prince. Later they came to Annapolis where Dennis taught at Maryland University and won teaching awards.

This is my “homage” to two student-colleagues who added much to my academic and personal life, and to the life of a Department and field of Communication.





## SPEAKERS FORUM REVIEW

By Bolton Morales

After last year's virtual Speakers Forum, the School of Communication Studies, in partnership with the Society for Civil Discourse, was excited to bring the event back to campus. The Speakers Forum gives precedence to undergraduate speakers to voice their ideas in five-to-six-minute speeches on the topic for the evening. Following these speeches, a short session of audience feedback emphasizes engaged discourse that the student speakers and those in attendance might pursue beyond the scope of the event. This year's theme was "Facing the Future: Remaking our World." The event took place on April 5th in the Student Center Auditorium and was [live-streamed](#) via the Communication Studies Facebook page.

The forum committee met throughout both the fall and spring semesters to plan the event, generate and deliver promotional materials, hold auditions, and select speakers. This year's speakers were: Lauren George (she/her), Sophomore; Porsche Garrett (they/them), Freshman; Abby Bolen (she/her), Freshman; Blessing Smithley (she/her), Freshman; Bella Meincke (she/her), Freshman.

Our first speaker, Lauren George, responding to the call, spoke on science literacy and was inspired by the opportunity to speak on a topic she is passionate about. She explains, "The topic of improving science literacy is important to me because as a young scientist, I want to ensure that my field remains inclusive and accessible. I believe having diversity and inclusion can only help improve science, and that must start by sharing science with everyone." The night's second speaker, Porsche,

emphasized fighting food insecurity. Porsche noted, "I don't think enough people fully realize the importance of healthy food in our lives and have a lot of misgivings about what healthy food or food insecurity looks like... and I'm really happy I get to spread some awareness about this issue." Abby Bolen spoke third on the topic of women in forestry and explains this topic is important to her because, "I am a woman in forestry and want to help make the industry more equitable for everyone interested in forestry." Blessing Smithley gave a persuasive speech on the displaced population and what the audience could do to get involved. She incorporated a QR code in her speech which directed audience members to the Carbondale Warming Center Facebook page. The last speaker of the evening, Bella Meincke, gave an impassioned speech on women's healthcare and access. Bella explained this topic is important to her because, "I've seen first-hand how lack of education and options for healthcare has impacted many of my fellow women and friends. As someone with the privilege I have I feel it's important to bring awareness to important topics and injustices like the disparities in reproductive health care." The crowd was able to ask questions and encouraged to enjoy light refreshments after the event.

We would like to thank Kalie Scanlan, Dr. Shelley Rawlins, and all the committee members for their commitment to ensuring the successful return of this event. As we continue to move forward, we hope to resume hosting two Speakers Forums throughout the year!

## LEAD Program Update

By Dianah McGreehan and Sandy Pensoneau-Conway

This past fall, Chancellor Lane announced the creation of L.E.A.D. SIU Carbondale, an initiative designed to identify, engage and mentor a select group of faculty and staff interested in learning more about higher education leadership and the complexities of operating a public university in today's world. L.E.A.D. stands for Leading, Empowering, Advocating and Developing talent for SIU Carbondale.

Eighteen talented faculty and staff from throughout campus participated in the inaugural cohort of the L.E.A.D. SIU Carbondale Initiative. The Chair of School of Communication Studies, Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway, and CMST PhD candidate, Dianah McGreehan, served as members of the 2021-2022 cohort.

Dr. Michael Molino, Associate Dean in College of Liberal



L.E.A.D. team



## LEAD Program Update cont.

Arts, personally wrote in his nomination letter that Pensoneau-Conway is “consistently a serious and dedicated administrator who has the best interests of SIU students and faculty at the forefront of her efforts.” Dianah McGreehan was nominated by SIU System President Dan Mahony, and the SIU System Vice President for Academic Innovation, Planning and Partnerships, Dr. Gireesh Gupchup.

“We are fortunate to have talented people at SIU Carbondale,” said Chancellor Austin Lane. “We want to provide them with professional development opportunities. It is beneficial to them and to the university. L.E.A.D. will foster the retention of a strong, effective work force while nurturing opportunities for professional growth and leadership within the university for the years ahead.”

This inaugural cohort was able to participate in monthly meetings with Chancellor Lane and other SIU Administrators to learn about topics in such areas as:

- Budgeting
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Organizational structures
- Career ladder
- Governance and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.
- Fundraising and development
- Enrollment Management
- Institutional assessment and research (Power BI dashboards)

In addition, members of group were able to participate represent SIU at a variety of events like the SIUC Men’s Basketball game and the Carbondale Chamber and University meeting. They will also join Chancellor Lane at an upcoming professional conference during the 2022 fall semester. A call for nominations for the 2022-2023 cohort will be sent out to the campus this summer. For more information about the L.E.A.D SIU program, please contact SIU Chief of Staff, Matt Baughman at [baughman@siu.edu](mailto:baughman@siu.edu)

## PRSSA UPDATE

By Haley Spiewak, President of PRSSA

As we look back on the 2021-2022 school year, the Public Relations Student Society of America had an unforgettable year. We have been focused on rebuilding and rebranding the organization after COVID and Zoom but have come back stronger than ever. Our executive board worked with both the School of Communication Studies and the International Student Council during the fall semester by creating social media campaigns, promotional videos, and raising awareness. Outside of client work, our very own Craig Engstrom hosted a LinkedIn workshop where our members were able to ask questions and improve their profiles to get more attention from recruiters. I attended the PRSSA National Convention as the Mid-Atlantic District Ambassador, Ashlyn Ege and Grace Schneider attended the Plank Center DEI Summit, and many of our members represented us at various RSO fairs early in the fall. We brought back our annual Friendsgiving to close out the semester, where each member was encouraged to participate in a potluck.

To kick off our spring semester, Eric Secrist from the SIU Career Development Center hosted a Resume Development and Career Job Search workshop where the members were able to figure out what would make them an ideal candidate for the job. And our final guest speaker of the year was none other than Dorothy Ballowe, a Marketing Communications Manager for The

Walt Disney Company, where she discussed the ins and outs of putting together campaigns for some of the largest film franchises in the world. This spring, we were excited to work with two brand new clients, the SIU Health Center and the Great Cardboard Boat Regatta. The students worked diligently within their respective groups. Here are a few quotes from various members: Carter Walton, Programming Director, says, “My highlight of the year was adapting my leadership ability to better fit the needs of the client. Basically, just coming into my own so that our group would get our work done and on time.” Maris Thornton, Secretary, expressed, “I’m incredibly glad I got involved with PRSSA when I did. It was an amazing opportunity to get to know my classmates and get some hands-on PR experience.”

As I pass the torch on to the next executive board, I offer them this piece of advice: learning to adapt and delegate are two of the most important skills a leader can possess. However, always remember to be the kind of person the rest of the members feel comfortable having a conversation with, you never know who is looking up to you for guidance. Thank you Jami, Grace, Ashlyn, Carter, Maris, and Mike, for being the best executive board I could have asked for! As we wrap up the end of the semester, we thank each member for their hard work and dedication. It can be stressful at times, but our members have the passion and perseverance to be successful in not only the public relations realm but any field they may choose to go into.

## WELCOMING OUR NEW FACULTY MEMBER

The School of Communication Studies is so excited to welcome new faculty member Dr. Dustin Greenwalt into our program. Dr. Greenwalt will start out teaching some of our undergraduate courses and helping to run the undergraduate program, and is also excited to participate in the life of our graduate students. School Director, Sandy Pensoneau-Conway, had an opportunity to sit down with Dr. Greenwalt (and by "sit down," we mean that they corresponded via email) to learn a bit more about him.

### Where are you coming to SIU from?

I'm coming to Carbondale from State College, Pennsylvania where I was teaching faculty and debate coach at Penn State in the Department of Communication Arts & Sciences. Before that, I completed my doctorate in rhetorical studies at the University of Georgia. I also did a master's degree at Baylor University in Waco, Texas and my undergraduate at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

### What are some of your research and teaching interests?

I really enjoy both teaching and research. In the classroom, I'm mostly interested in having engaging conversations with students and experimenting with activities designed to put ideas into practice. I've taught a number of different classes in the past, including classes about media and rhetorical criticism, environmental communication, social media, and public speaking. My absolute favorite thing to teach is social media platforms such as Tik-Tok because I often learn more about the subject from my students than the readings for the day.

My research program focuses on visual rhetoric, rhetorical theory, social movements, environmental communication, and food studies. Generally, I'm interested in how circulating rhetorics make us, and propel us to take actions and change the world. I have published about climate deniers, the climate justice movement, survey photography, the Philadelphia Flyers' mascot Gritty, and numerous other subjects. I'm currently completing a book about how food rhetorics created passive citizens before and during the Obama era.

### What are you looking forward to about coming to SIU and into the School of Communication Studies? About coming to southern Illinois?

SIU seems like a great place to work, and Carbondale seems similarly a great place to live. I'm really looking forward to being a member of an engaged department



that puts an emphasis on great teaching and research about performance and public discourse. SIU has a strong tradition in Communication Studies, and I'm hoping to continue it. Carbondale is an amazing college town, with great restaurants and a vibrant culture. Both the University and city put great emphasis on improving our ecological footprints which is something that's really important to me as both a scholar of climate justice and someone who enjoys the outdoors.

### What is your go-to potluck contribution?

Not to be a stereotypical vegan, but usually some kind of salad. Quinoa salad is a favorite, but really any kind of salad that has a grain, vegetables, and an acidic dressing.

### What are some of the items on your bucket list?

My bucket list is mostly travel-related. I've been to parts of Europe, but never France, so Paris, Marseille, and Bordeaux are right up there. I also really enjoyed the time I spent in Shanghai and would really like to see more of China, especially Beijing, and go to other countries in Asia. I hear that Vietnam and Thailand are fantastic to visit.

### If you had a quotation in your email signature, what would it be?

"A concept is a brick. It can be used to build the courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window." - Brian Massumi

## DJ JEFFRIES: FROM SPEAKERS FORUM TO COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION SPEAKER

DJ Jeffries (B.S., Organizational Communication, 2017) earned a master's degree in Adult Learning & Organizational Leadership from Columbia University's Teachers College in May. This accomplishment is noteworthy by itself; however, we are proud to share that his faculty and peers also nominated him to deliver [the student convocation speech](#).

We are not surprised that DJ earned this honor. As he notes in the speech, he worked a full-time job as a full-time student and joined as many activities as possible—from Student Senate and Black Student Network. His tenacity at Columbia University as a master's student reflects the same ethic of involvement he demonstrated at SIU. DJ was in the Marching Salukis, Saluki Entrepreneurship Corps, Stanford Innovation Fellows, USG, PRSSA, and CoLA Council (to name a few!). But perhaps we most fondly remember DJ for his powerful speeches at the annual Speakers Forum, where he spoke multiple times and where he says he honed his voice.

We are grateful that DJ continues to be very involved with the School of Communication Studies. He participates in our BrandU events, regularly speaks to our classes via Zoom, and donates to the SIU Annual Day of Giving.

When asked to give a few words of wisdom to our incoming and current CMST students, DJ said, “I am sure you’ve all heard, concerning college, that you are about to embark on the best years of your life. For some of you, that may be true. But depending on what you do with your time in college, these will only be the best years of your life—so far!”



*DJ Jeffries' 2022 master's degree graduation photograph*

That's undoubtedly advice for us all, no matter where we are in our careers.

DJ is currently the Human Resource Assistant Vice President – Global Diversity & Talent Management at Citi (Citibank) in New York City. This fall, he continues his academic journey as a doctoral student in Columbia University's Teacher College.

If you'd like to connect with DJ, the best starting point is LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/thedjjeffries](https://www.linkedin.com/in/thedjjeffries).

## PR and ROTC STUDENT, CARTER WALTON EARNS HIS WINGS

Some students take a break, some work internships or a summer job, and some attend a military camp at Fort Knox! As part of his service to the U.S. Army Cadet Command (ROTC), Carter Walton spent most of the summer at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment Advanced Camp.

Carter is a top-performing Public Relations student and campus leader. He will start his senior year with another significant accomplishment: A pin on his uniform for completing Air Assault School. During Family Day, his mother pinned his wings on his uniform (pictured).

“Carter is a model servant leader and is a wonderful contributor to our program,” says Dr. Craig Engstrom, “he is kind, humble, and hardworking. He will undoubtedly have a successful career in military leadership positions, public affairs roles, or both.”

The School of Communication Studies knows many alumni are active in the Military Reserves or are veterans. We appreciate your service to democracy.



*Carter Walton's mother pinning air assault wings on his military fatigues.*

Source: [@carter.walton](https://www.instagram.com/carter.walton) • Instagram

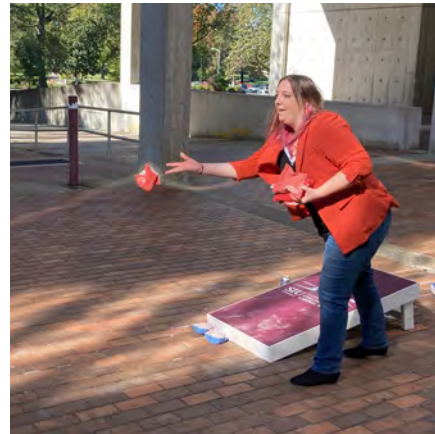


## CMST Photos





## CMST Day Photos



## UNDERGRADUATE AWARDEES

Elizabeth Toth Public Relations Student Award	Haley Spiewak
Dr. Albert Weitz Scholarship Fund	Aliyah Flowers
Dr. Albert Weitz Scholarship Fund	Amareya Doyle
R. Paul Hibbs Memorial Scholarship	Georgia Agan
R. Paul Hibbs Memorial Scholarship	Ashlyn Ege
R. Paul Hibbs Memorial Scholarship	Tadzia Lee
Dr. Tekla Story Award for Excellence in Performance	Juniper Blue
Bryan K. Crow Memorial Scholarship	Feyisayo Arowolo
Robert L. Carr Speech Communication Scholarship	Ashlyn Ege
Robert L. Carr Speech Communication Scholarship	Tadzia Lee
Marvin Kleinau Undergrad Scholarship	Keshaun Altman
Marvin Kleinau Undergrad Scholarship	Josie King
Outstanding Freshman in Communication Studies	Madilyn Gawrych
Outstanding Sophomore in Communication Studies	Skyler Davenport-Moore
Outstanding Sophomore in Communication Studies	Josie King
Outstanding Sophomore in Communication Studies	Alex Rubio
Outstanding Junior in Communication Studies	Keshaun Altman
Outstanding Junior in Communication Studies	Ashlyn Ege
Outstanding Junior in Communication Studies	Carter Walton
Outstanding Senior in Communication Studies	Jami Allen
Outstanding Senior in Communication Studies	Diazha Berry
Outstanding Senior in Communication Studies	Juniper Blue
Outstanding Senior in Communication Studies	Grace McGuire
Outstanding Senior in Communication Studies	Grace Schneider
Outstanding Senior in Communication Studies	Taylor Thrasher

## GRADUATE AWARDEES

Ronald J. Pelias Excellence in Graduate Student Service  
 John T. Warren Excellence in Graduate Student Research  
 Elyse Pineau Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching  
 Outstanding Faculty Award  
 Bryan K. Crow Memorial Scholarship  
 John T. Warren Memorial Scholarship

Janine Armstrong, Alex Lockwood  
 Shelby Swafford  
 Alicia Utecht  
 Dr. Todd Graham  
 Ryan Freels  
 Zoë Freedkin

## KLEINAU AWARDEES

Master's student Newcomer Award  
 Marion Kleinau Achievement Award  
 Marion Kleinau Literature in Performance Award  
 Marion Kleinau Literary Adaptation Scripting Award

T. Brown  
 Devin Collins  
 Shelby Swafford  
 Dr. Melanie Kitchens O'Meara

## DR. TODD GRAHAM NAMED OUTSTANDING FACULTY

Dr. Todd Graham was named the Communication Studies Outstanding Faculty for the 2021-2022 academic year. Todd has been a member of the faculty for over 20 years now, and in that time, has taught thousands of students—a huge impact on our program.

His trademarked tagline is “America’s Debate Coach.” He’s known around the country—perhaps in some parts of the world—as a presidential debate analyst and pundit for CNN and many other cable news networks. And now, he can add “Outstanding Undergraduate Teacher” to that list. He’s been nominated by students every year since at least 2017. Todd tends to err on the side of humility when talking about his teaching accomplishments, but we know a different story. There is so much he can brag about but doesn’t. For example, in addition to doctoral and masters committee service and peer-reviewed publications, he also volunteered as an instructor for the Future Scholars Program; earned the Dean’s Award for Excellence from the College of Liberal Arts early in his career; has written over 75 articles for CNN.com; has been interviewed literally thousands of times about debate and persuasion by regional, national, and international press, bringing a lot of positive PR to our program; earned 6 of the most prestigious debate awards and honors in the U.S.; and coached teams to 15 national debate championship titles of various kinds. All of this contributes to his outstanding teaching. And when you read this and think about his successes in the classroom, you realize this award is overdue. Then, when you hear what students

have to say, you will realize that this award is long, long, long overdue.

It is his interpersonal communication course that consistently earns him high praise. Here are just a few notes from students’ nominations in his interpersonal Communication course from Spring 2022, which highlight his personality, passion, and pedagogical accomplishments as an outstanding teacher:

- Todd is a very genuine person. Doesn’t overload students with work and is very understanding of life issues that get in the way of school. He keeps lectures entertaining and pushes students to work hard.
- Todd is very outgoing, and he goes out of his way to make sure that we understand what he stretches us to learn. He brings so much good energy to class, and I am beyond inspired by him. I can tell he genuinely loves what he does and puts his [full energy] into lectures. He’s a professor who makes everyone excited to go to class to see what’s next. He’s so in touch with the world, and he shares it with his students. I am grateful to have someone like him to learn from.
- Todd is an amazing professor who is clear, concise, and extremely passionate about his trade.

Congratulations Dr. Graham!



## FACULTY UPDATES

**Dr. Randy Auxier** writes “I was fortunate enough to have sabbatical roll around in fall 21, although it had been delayed a semester by the pandemic. That unexpected delay led to a new experience –I taught two sections of 101 on-line in the spring and learned much that I never intended to learn at all. It’s good for us to have experiences like that, no? I spent the summer finishing my book *As Deep as It Gets: Movies and Metaphysics*, which will appear any day from Open Universe/Carus Books. I spent all of August and September in Italy, as a visiting scholar at the Umberto Eco Institute, University of Bologna. I worked on a book treating Eco’s semiotics in relation to C.S. Peirce and pragmatism, the working title being *The Sign and the World*. While there, I was invited to speak at universities in Urbino, Calabria, Milan, Venice and of course Bologna, where I presented chapters written for this book. Returning home for only five days, I went to Poland for October, November, and December, where I worked primarily on a book on Josiah Royce. I was able to speak at institutions in Berlin, Prague, Budweis, Wroclaw, Jelena Gora, Lublin, and Warsaw during this part of the trip. I also worked on some new popular culture stuff about the rock band Queen, for a book I am co-editing and scheduled to be out this year. In all it was a productive time and I am glad to have had the opportunity to make these journeys and meet so many people.”



**Dr. Nilanjana Bardhan** continued to teach courses in intercultural communication and public relations and advise MA and PhD students. Over the past year, she co-published (with Dr. Craig Engstrom) an article in the *PR Journal* titled “Diversity, inclusion and leadership communication in public relations: A rhetorical analysis of *Diverse Voices*.” She also completed her co-authored book (with Dr. Karla Gower) titled “The role of leadership in building inclusive diversity in public relations.” She continued to serve on the SIU-C Chancellor’s Task Force for Diversity and Inclusion and on the SIU systemwide Diversity Advisory Council. She also continued to serve as a board member of the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations and co-chair the Center’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee. One of the main charges of the committee is to organize an annual summit on DEI in Chicago which brings together public relations leaders and practitioners, educators, and students. She is currently preparing to guest co-edit special issues for two journals – the *Journal of Public Relations Research* (flagship journal for public relations scholarship) and the *Journal of Public Relations Education*. Both issues focus on diversity/inclusion/equity in relationship to public relations pedagogy, practice and theory building.



## FACULTY UPDATES cont.

Faculty member **Dr. Craig Engstrom** was awarded a sabbatical in fall 2021. Upon returning, we noticed he looked refreshed and relaxed. When we asked him what he did from summer through fall, he summed it up with a nice rhythmic sentence: Writing, relaxation, and repair.

In terms of his writing and research projects, he finished work related to a grant on education technology and submitted the final report to the funding organization. He attended several workshops on Open Education Resources (OER). These workshops pushed him to deviate from his original sabbatical plan to prepare a book proposal for a traditional publisher. He decided to write chapters for an OER book instead. During the four months of his sabbatical, he completed a comprehensive literature review, outlined the book, and wrote four chapters of the 10-chapter book. He plans to finish the book—*Crafting Business Communication Competence through Real World Cases*—by January 2024. He hopes this free book will be adopted by instructors teaching business communication and case studies courses. He wrote and submitted an article, “In-demand instructional communication competencies,” which he submitted to *Management Communication Quarterly* (a top-tier journal). The paper received an invitation for revision. The paper is currently under the second review.

When it came to relaxation, Engstrom jests that this is where he was most productive. In July, he rode his bicycle across the state of Iowa with over 20,000 other riders as part of the 48<sup>th</sup> [Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa \(aka RAGBRAI\)](#). The event is described as a seven-day moving county fair. “It’s camping, concerts, ice cream, pie, beer gardens (if that’s your thing) and more – all day, every day,” Engstrom notes.

In early October, he also took a 15-day RV trip with his parents to see the Northeast’s fall colors. The trip meandered from Carbondale to campgrounds in Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, Connecticut, Maine, and New York. He cycled about 300 miles of state park, national forest trails, and beaches along the way. He



snapped this photo from the RV, where we can see that he and his parents’ dog, Kali, are enjoying the sabbatical lifestyle.

When asked what he thought of his first sabbatical, Engstrom noted, “It was amazing, constructive to reset from burnout.” He added, “A sabbatical provides a focused time for research, away from administrative and teaching routines. It was very nice to have focused writing time again. I hadn’t had that in 12 years—since graduate school. The pace of the experience and the trips provided a lot of needed mental repair. It was helpful to have some time to work on some passion projects and my emotional well-being. I am very grateful for having the fortune and privilege to travel with my parents, cycle, and write without interruption.”

These days, he’s not looking as relaxed as he did in January. But we can tell he’s still fully recharged.

## FACULTY UPDATES cont.



**Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook** is delighted to have completed his service as the editor of *Text and Performance Quarterly* and looks forward to a summer of his own sound-work and performance projects, including scripting a solo show (Ways to Say Goodbye) for next year's Kleinau season. During the 2021-22 academic year, he had the pleasure of co-directing two shows by advisees: T Brown's Naked Stories and Shelby Swafford's Reproductions. Each of these experiences reminded him of why he does what he does and enriched his life. From a university perspective, he served as the chair of the Graduate Council's Educational Policies Committee. In perhaps the least predictable event in his life, he appeared in two episodes of the eighth season BYU-TV's reality series Relative Race, which reunites adoptees with birth families. Through this series, he met the two children of a late half-sister he didn't know he had, and the experience is part of the subject matter of his upcoming performance.

**Dr. Todd Graham** writes, "I'm getting quite comfortable teaching the Persuasion (CMST 326) course. The students really appreciate learning the theoretical concepts of persuasion and then applying them to their everyday lives. Plus, with disinformation, propaganda, and conspiracy theories flourishing, I'm constantly updating my lecture notes and examples. Aside from that, I still love teaching Interpersonal Communication (CMST 262). Outside of class, I've rededicated myself to improving my bowling game, which is still a work in progress."



## FACULTY UPDATES cont.



In the fall, **Dr. Jonny Gray** developed a new class titled “Performing the Scripted Podcast.” In the spring, he took over teaching the graduate seminar in “Performance Methods.” He also taught his standard courses in “Visual Rhetoric” and “Communication and Popular Culture.” This March, he participated in SIU’s contribution to the Global Teach-In for Climate Solutions. In April, he presented a workshop on “Performing Nature” at SIU’s EcoArts Symposium. He also participated in the post-pandemic resurrection of the Beloved Puppetistas and the first in-person All Species Puppet Parade to celebrate Earth Day since 2019. He continues to host and produce approximately 48 original, hour-long episodes of “Isn’t It Queer” annually, aired on local community radio WDBX and released as a podcast. This past year saw Jonny finish his term of service on the Elder Council for Gay Spirit Visions. He also helped start the SOIL Sisters, a Mission House for the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, where he manifests as Sister Mothra Stewart. As part of his community service as a SOIL Sister, he will be starting an oral history project titled “Queer SOIL,” collecting and preserving narratives from local, long-standing members of the LGBTQ community. While the pandemic has curbed much of his interest in travel abroad, it has intensified his commitment to local community service projects, particularly at the intersections of queer and environmental education and advocacy.

**Josh Houston** is enjoying the challenges and opportunities associated with converting existing courses into online learning opportunities for students in the School of Communication Studies and beyond. At the same time, Josh is researching the historical and contemporary role of public relations in persuasion and propaganda in the United States. This work is at the core of a new course, *PR Spin Class*, Josh plans to offer in the spring of 2023. The course will pair online content with a traditional fitness-related spin class format in the SIUC Recreation Center, with both students and instructor on bikes. This innovative format is just one of the ways that the School of Communication Studies is providing students with both a quality education as well as memorable personal experiences.





## FACULTY UPDATES cont.



**Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway** writes: "I have thoroughly enjoyed continuing in my role as School Director, working with such great faculty, students, and of course Laura Sims, who many of you know as our office administrator. This past year, I co-chaired the campus group Network Empowering Women (NEW), as well as the planning committee for the virtual Advocates and Allies: The SIU 2022 Conference on Women. One of the best parts of my job is when I get to interact with our students, both current and incoming. Our CMST Day event in the Fall was a great way to engage students across campus—it was fun, too, since many of us dressed up in our Halloween costumes. One of my favorite days (in my life) was getting to do goat yoga in the Faner CoLA Dean's office courtyard. I tried to recruit the goat into our major, but it had other plans to focus on agricultural management. I had the opportunity to partner with my PhD advisee, Carli Álvarez, in offering LGBTQ cultural sensitivity training to a number of groups on campus and in the community, and with PhD student O.J. Duncan to offer the same to the Boys and Girls Club of Carbondale. My former advisee, Dr. Darren Valenta, and I published a chapter in the 2nd edition of the *Handbook of Autoethnography*, "Embracing Autoethnographic Anxiety: The Joyous Potential of Pedagogical Relationships." I was honored to be elected to serve on the National Communication Association's Teaching and Learning Council, which I'll remain on for the next couple of years. And when I'm not in the building, I'm continuing my work with the Rainbow Cafe LGBTQ Center, serving as a volunteer, the board treasurer, and lead for the newest RC program, Adulting While Queer (AWQ)."

This year **Dr. Shelley Rawlins** presented her work on legal and communicative tensions among protest activities, gun rights, and private property at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry conference. She continues her research about collective action, strangers, and communication across public and private contexts. Currently, she has an article under review at the journal, *Communication and Democracy*. Dr. Rawlins is grateful for her supportive colleagues and graduate students in the School of Communication Studies.





## FACULTY UPDATES cont.

**Dr. Rebecca Walker** welcomed her first official class of nine new graduate students this last year, in her second year as Director of Graduate Studies for our program. She enjoyed getting to know many of these new students in person while teaching her graduate Feminist Theory seminar in Fall 2021. While she missed attending several regular conference and performance festival events that were canceled once again due to COVID-19, she did enjoy returning to in-person classes this past Fall. She also looks forward to returning to many of those conferences and performance festivals in person in the 2022-2023 academic year. She is currently working on an upcoming solo show, tentatively titled, *False Starts*, about her own issues with stuttering and disability issues in general. She is excited about some of her forthcoming publication projects, including a chapter on Tourism as a performance methodology in the soon to be released, *The Routledge Handbook of Performance Studies Research Methods*, co-edited by her colleague Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook, and SIU alum Dr. Jake Simmons.



**Justin Young** has had several projects that he focused on this school year. First, as always, has been PRSSA. The [SIUprssa.com](http://SIUprssa.com) has continued to grow with student work. Members worked with a variety of organizations this year, including the Cardboard Regatta and Student Health Center. Check out the PRSSA update for more on that.

Second, as part of the special topics course in the spring he offered Video Games: Art, Culture, and History of a Medium. The class chronicled the history of video games from the 1860s to present day, as well as looking at their cultural impact along the way. Thanks to a grant from the College of Liberal Arts, Justin was able to purchase a variety of equipment for the course—including a virtual reality headset for students to test out.

Third, the video games class, along with PRSSA, organized our first Playing for Pets event. Students and faculty joined together to play and livestream games for 24-hours over two days to raise money for the St. Francis CARE animal shelter. They raised over \$600 with fifty plus participants.

Fourth, Justin launched and hosted two podcasts—the Communication Studies and Saluki Gamescast podcasts. You can read more on those in the podcast studio article.

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## Charitable Giving

If you would like to contribute to a variety of school events, student professional and academic development opportunities, or any of our scholarship and award funds, please visit our school giving page at <https://cola.siu.edu/communicationstudies/giving/> or contact school director Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway ([sandypc@siu.edu](mailto:sandypc@siu.edu)). Our alumni and friends make a world of difference! Thank you.

