

THE SPEAK EASY

Summer 2023

CMST Director Column

By Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway

It is once again time to put together the *Speak Easy*, our annual opportunity to take a focused look back on the year we've had in the School of Communication Studies. I have to thank editors Carli Álvarez and Scott Jarmon for their assistance in this difficult endeavor, as we do so much. The numbers that quantify some of what our faculty and students have accomplished tell us only one story (see p. 15, though I'm certain I've missed something).

What this impressive list cannot articulate are the conversations that went into each of these publications, the behind-the-scenes (and often thankless) work that goes into what might lead someone to be nominated for an award in the first place, the incredible (and increasing) labor on each of our committees, the mentoring, the laughter, the tears, the worries, the triumphs and challenges. Yes, it's been a difficult, impressive, exciting year in our School.

Most excitedly, we are welcoming two new tenure-track faculty this year (see p. 2). Ms. Bhati and Dr. Ivey will bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to both our undergraduate and graduate programs, and we are so thankful to have them. This has happened in part due to the great leadership of our new CoLA leader, Dean Joddy Murray, who is just finishing up his first year at SIU. Under Dean Murray's leadership, we have been able to increase our faculty numbers, take advantage of a number of internal grants and awards, and have overall felt like the work we do in our School is seen, valued, and appreciated.

And still, it seemed like a weekly occurrence that I would hear from someone (myself included), "This has been the hardest year yet" or "our students are struggling so much this year." It's clear to me that the ways the world paused just three years ago when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, will continue to affect us for years to come. Many of the students entering our college classrooms in the Fall spent much of their high school online. Their formative years were spent with a level of uncertainty and strife that many of us don't face during such years. And we even saw that a bit over this past year. What is certain, though, is how proud I am of our faculty and graduate teaching associates for the ways they center their students. I have witnessed them asking questions about how we might best support our students, how we can use the resources on campus to create a meaningful and enrich-



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ing experience for those in our classrooms, and how our research can touch others' hearts and minds so as to further highlight the role of communication in changing our worlds for the better—in and out of the classroom.

One of the great pleasures I've continued to have as your School Director is in connecting with our alumni. Hearing stories of our faculty and students from 30 and 40 years ago brings me great joy, as I get a glimpse of "how things were," and how our School has an extraordinary foundation upon which we will carry on into the future. I hope the things you read in this edition of the *Speak Easy* uplift you, bring you happy memories, and remind you of the important role you have played throughout the years in carrying your School forward. Please know that I welcome your emails, phone calls, messages, and visits. Enjoy!

Two New Faculty Join the School of CMST

By Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway

The School of Communication Studies is pleased to welcome Sakshi Bhati, new tenure-track faculty member in PR and Leadership. Sakshi is currently completing her Ph.D. in Leadership Communication at Kansas State University, with a dissertation titled "Let's Talk Mental Health: Analysis of Immigrant Women's Culturally-Centered Mental Health Perception and Identifying Modifiers in Interventions through Community Engagement." She received her MA in Communication in 2020, and her BS in Communication in 2018, both from Pittsburgh State University. Thus, she is no stranger to small towns!

Sakshi is coming to SIU with a great deal of experience in community-based research methods. Her research incorporates leadership, public relations, and health communication. Regarding the latter, previous research she has done has looked at the health-seeking behaviors of international students, particularly regarding mental health and feelings of belonging. We are looking forward to her bringing her interests and methods to our program and surrounding community.

Sakshi sure wowed our faculty and students when she came to visit campus. She taught a lesson on the role of PR leaders in social media and influencer relationships. She even had students take a look at a few local Carbondale/southern Illinois micro-influencers. Needless to say, the students loved it, and appreciated the discussion of how leadership intersects with PR and social media. Her practical training in leadership has positioned her to facilitate leadership development workshops, particularly as they incorporate DEI topics. She will be an energetic, committed, and well-resourced person to help us grow a program in Communication, Advocacy, and Leadership (which we hope to have approved and in the catalog starting Fall 2025).

On a more personal note, Sakshi loves exploring new activities and experiences. She is a huge Rusty Lake games fan, and likes solving puzzles including pattern recognition and jigsaw. This means she will do well in navigating Faner Hall if she ever finds herself there! In her free time, she loves painting and being outdoors. Fun Fact: she has played soccer at the national level in India.

Sakshi shared, "As I embark on my life in Carbondale, I

am excited to be joining the esteemed faculty in the Communication Studies program and I am ready to explore the Southern Illinois beauty. So long Kansas, hello Little Egypt."

Welcome Sakshi, we're really glad you're joining our faculty!

We're also ecstatic to welcome Dr. Christina Ivey as a tenure-track assistant professor, starting in the Fall. Dr. Ivey will also serve as our Introductory Course Coordinator for all sections of CMST 101. We were able to persuade Dr. Ivey away from their current position at Boise State University, where they have served on the faculty since 2019. Dr. Ivey received their PhD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2016, and MA from Kansas State University in 2012. They've received multiple teaching honors and awards, including Communication Studies Graduate Assistant Teacher of the Year—twice! They have publications in journals such as *Journal of Autoethnography* and the *Texas Speech Communication Journal Online*.

Dr. Ivey has a background in working with the introductory course, having served as assistant introductory course coordinator at the University of Nebraska Lincoln under Dr. Bill Seiler. This served her well when she started at Boise State, where she was able to advise and work with masters students, and looks forward to working with our graduate students at SIU. She has a background in critical communication pedagogy, and is looking forward to contributing to the multiple areas in the program. I know our students are excited to have her on their committees!

Dr. Ivey told us, "I am ecstatic to be joining SIU in the Fall. I have wanted to be here since graduate school, and it's nice to finally be home. I can't wait to work with the talented faculty and students!" On a more personal note, Dr. Ivey enjoys going to drag shows, participating in community theatre, and playing video games. She even built her own gaming PC during the pandemic! And we can't forget her cat Berkeley, who we also hear is excited to move to SIU. Welcome Dr. Ivey (and Berkeley)!



Sakshi Bhati



Dr. Christina Ivey

“You can count on kindness”: Kindness Campaign

By Dr. Nilanjana Bardhan

It all started in the PR Cases and Campaigns class in spring 2022. I don't quite remember how the conversation led up to it, but our then incoming PRSSA president Ashlyn Ege was certainly instrumental in getting people excited about this idea. I think she mentioned she had seen something similar to a kindness campaign on TikTok. We all just started talking about how a kindness campaign would be perfect for a campus attempting to return to some semblance of normalcy after Covid-19. And what an awesome way to promote our PRSSA chapter and bounce back from the pandemic!

We started developing concrete plans. Ashlyn is a leader. She is able to build enthusiasm in her team and get projects off the ground. I stepped in on an ad hoc basis to advise the Kindness Campaign portion of PRSSA's work. The joy and excitement which this work seemed to create among the students was just delightful. The sense of community and camaraderie that had been sucked out of our lives by the pandemic was flowing

back in. And then there was Brody (team member Garrett Dino's adorable golden Lab) who became the mascot for our campaign. Brody sported a cool bandana and gave away free wags and kisses during our on-campus events.

We spent August and September last fall planning the year-long project and then launched it in October. And as every good PR student knows, we need to get the press involved to gain visibility for our hard work. The [Daily Egyptian did a beautiful spread](#) on our kick-off event. Since then, the Kindness Campaign has been on a roll and PRSSA has been spreading kindness and good vibes through their monthly events and social media. What a fabulous way to spring back after Covid-19, give back to our campus, and for students to apply what they learn in their PR and other communication courses to do good in the world. Kindness is contagious!

Undergraduate Program Update

By Dr. Dustin Greenwalt

It's been a great year to be a Communication Studies Saluki! We have maintained one of the largest majors in the College of Liberal Arts while offering numerous educational opportunities for our students both inside and outside the classroom. The 2022-2023 school year was also a year of change, as we have been looking to adapt our majors to the university re-organization as well as changing student preferences and expectations.

Our innovative Public Relations curriculum, and the associated Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter, continues to be a major draw for students. Professor Josh Houston designed a new 'spin' class that involves content in crisis management and exercise in a literal spin class, encouraging students to amplify their bodies' learning potential while engaging with important material. Students reported that this was one of the most productive, enjoyable, and educational classes they have taken at SIU. Our PRSSA chapter continues to do great things as it encourages students to implement the lessons learned from their classes in specific contexts.

Our courses in communication studies more generally continue to provide students with award-winning teaching and opportunities to critically examine, and perform amidst, the world around them. Our teachers include recent winners of University and College-level teaching awards while our classes continue to provide a curriculum aimed at cultivating a greater sense of how communication shapes their identities and experiences. Under-

graduate students also played a major role in productions at the Marion Kleinau Theatre, as many of our students take to the stage to express themselves and help tell innovative stories.

Our program also continues to be at the forefront of SIU's mission in supporting student success and the University's emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. With your help, we were able to award over \$10,500 in scholarships to our undergraduate majors! The scholarships we award are crucial to supporting student success and we appreciate all that you do to help. Additionally, our School continues to emphasize DEI through course content, informal mentoring programs, and initiatives designed to help students navigate the bureaucratic university.

There are also big changes coming to our majors in the coming years as we seek to stay at the cutting edge of undergraduate education. We are very excited to implement a recently approved "3+3" program with the SIU School of Law, which will allow students to graduate with bachelor's and law degrees after six years of education. The School, through the addition of new faculty and courses, is also aiming to expand our offerings in leadership as a potential area of study in order to give our students every advantage on the job market. Finally, we are excited about forthcoming rearrangements of our curriculum aimed at both making the University easier to navigate for students and actualizing our position as a standalone school with multiple programs. Stay tuned for more news in the near future.

Student Communication Organization (SCO) Update

By Janine Armstrong, SCO President

The Student Communication Organization (SCO) has been a major part of the SIUC Communication Studies program for decades. Each year has its own sets of challenges and triumphs. The previous SCO president, Alex Lockwood, said he hoped that the 2022-2023 school year would offer “ample opportunities for us to continue building a more resilient and supportive community of CMST graduate students at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.” With this in mind, SCO set out to make the 2022-2023 school year the best year possible.

SCO got to work from the very beginning of the fall semester. In August, during orientation week, SCO revised the secretary and librarian positions. Additionally, the intercultural relations officer and the social director positions were merged into the new position of event planner. Not long after the revisions, the 2022-2023 SCO positions were filled.

In September, faculty invited graduate students to attend the monthly faculty meeting as observers. Typically, the SCO president is the only graduate student that attends faculty meetings. However, faculty wanted to give graduate students the chance to see how faculty meetings work and what is discussed. School Director Dr. Pensoneau-Conway stated that graduate students, especially those going into academia, should get the full experience of faculty meetings to prepare them for their future careers. Several students joined over Zoom and expressed thanks for the opportunity.

During the fall semester, the SCO executive board created and completed several goals. SCO librarian Mario Sanders played an active role in further developing the SCO library by collecting books and journals. Treasurer Bolton Morales discussed fundraising ideas. And Event Planners India Hagen-Gates and Frankie Kimmel organized events throughout the fall to help graduate students connect and socialize with each other including a trip to Rendleman’s Orchard, a hike along the Green Earth pumpkin glow walk, and several happy hours.

SCO got even busier during the spring semester. At SCO meetings, Vice President Zoë Freedkin began announcing upcoming scholarships from campus and community organizations. Secretary Julie Hartung set up an online database for the minutes. This kept with the goal of ensuring that future SCOs would be able to have easy access to what past SCOs did. Librarian Sanders encouraged CMST faculty to make book recommendations to expand the range of topics available in the SCO library.

In February, President Janine Armstrong hosted a brown bag on the prelim process. Dr. Rebecca Walker, OJ Duncan, and Caleb McKinley-Portee contributed by sharing what doctoral students can expect. The event was attended by every doctoral student who had not gone through the process. Several students stated that the brown bag demystified the process and helped them

to know about potential highs and lows.

In April, Event Planners Hagen-Gates and Kimmel brought alumnus Dr. Tony Adams to campus for a pro-seminar. Before the prosem, Dr. Adams had lunch with grad students and held open office hours. Then that afternoon, Dr. Adams discussed his life and research during his talk “Marginally Academic: Learning, Living, and Laboring as a First-Generation Queer.”

In May, Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook presented a brown bag on publishing. Dr. Gingrich-Philbrook spoke on finding journals, submitting manuscripts, revising works, co-authoring, and handling disagreements with editors. Publishing can be daunting, but Dr. Gingrich-Philbrook made the process seem more manageable.

Also in May, SCO awarded the John T. Warren Memorial Scholarship to Janine Armstrong (Ph.D.). This scholarship is awarded to an individual for research-related expenses, as well as professional development (certifications, conference fees, webinars, etc.). Unfortunately, there were no nominees for the Bryan K. Crow Memorial Scholarship. Given Dr. Crow’s research in the area of family communication, gender and sexuality studies, media studies, and intercultural communication/Irish culture, the Bryan K. Crow Memorial Scholarship aims to help students whose area of study can be located in one or more of those areas. Alongside the Foundation, SCO is dedicated to recognizing the long-lasting inspiration from these two scholars through the awarding of these scholarships.

At the end of the school year, CMST brought several candidates to campus to fill a position in PR & Leadership and a position in Communication Pedagogy. SCO members played an active role in meeting the candidates, escorting the candidates around campus, and asking questions. Afterwards, SCO gave faculty feedback on the candidates and voted for their top choices.

The 2022-2023 has been a busy school year. I would like to thank the executive board for their hard work. I would also like to thank other SCO members who served on various committees within CMST and across campus. SCO is unique in that CMST graduate students have a voice and a vote. Working behind the scenes as president has really made that clear. I’m honored that my fellow graduate students put their trust in me to lead them this year.



PRSSA Update

By : Liz Davis and Kendra Gregory

The 2022-2023 Raymond D. Wiley's chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) worked with a variety of clients and gained a lot of experience this year! Producing publicity and planning events for an in-house campaign, an RSO on campus, a local business, and two nonprofit organizations provided the students with fantastic opportunities for learning, networking, and resume building.

Throughout the fall semester, PRSSA worked with two clients: the Carbondale Science Center and SIUC's American Sign Language (ASL) club. The Science Center PR team, led by the 2022-2023 vice president, Carter Walton, filmed and created promotional videos, started a "Meet the Team" social media campaign, and created other social media content for events and fundraisers. The ASL Club's PR team, led by the 2022 historian, Elizabeth Davis, created promotional flyers and social media content, planned a silent game night, and helped spread information about ASL.

During the 2022 fall semester, President Ashlyn Ege created a year-long campaign to spread positivity and kindness through small acts of generosity and events called the Kindness Project. This project's mission was to increase the visibility of PRSSA and pursue the idea of kindness being contagious. This campaign started in October with the "What is Kindness?" event where people were asked to answer what kindness is and how they have been shown kindness in their lives. This semester, the campaign also had a slogan competition and a movie night!

During the spring semester, PRSSA worked with three clients: the local business Thill's Flowers and Gifts, the Kindness Project, and Carbondale's Community Fun and Fitness Relays. With account head and 2023 PR director Elizabeth Davis, the group working with Thill's Flowers and Gifts researched and pitched many product and event ideas, created social media content, and hosted a collaborative event with the Kindness Project. This event included spreading kind messages to strangers to help brighten their day, as well as selling Valentine's Day roses from Thill's to share with loved ones.

The Kindness Project started the semester off successfully with its first collaboration event with Thill's Flowers and Gifts. This group, along with the campaign manager and 2022-2023 secretary,



Kendra Gregory, pitched ideas, created budgets, and organized logistics for the final two events of the Kindness Project campaign. In April, this team held the Kindness Rocks! event. This event invited students to paint positive messages on rocks and spread them throughout campus to find and post on social media. A portion of these rocks were sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts, offering a prize to students who found their rocks. The last event for this campaign was the Campus-Wide Chalking event, where people on campus filled the sidewalks with kind messages and positive images to encourage students through the end of the year.

Carbondale's Community Fun and Fitness Relays was one of PRSSA's half-semester clients. This nonprofit organization held a variety of athletic races, which PRSSA, led by 2022-2023 treasurer Alexis Parchman, helped promote through a social media campaign, flyers, and outreach. They were able to secure volunteers from John A. Logan College and SIU to help with the event through their volunteer social media campaign. This group also wrote two press releases for this event, and with their combined

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PRSSA Update cont.

efforts, reached an untapped demographic for the Senior Citizen Walk. Several members even attended the races to volunteer and take promotional photos. Outside of client work, PRSSA has helped its members develop their skills by hosting a guest speaker, Jaclyn Ferguson at Publicis Media, to discuss internship opportunities in public relations and the benefits of taking on an internship role. PRSSA also collaborated with SIU's Career Development Center for an informative workshop on attending a job interview.

Near the closing of the spring semester, PRSSA, along with Sankalp Sharma, the 2022-2023 National PRSSA Vice President of Chapter Development, developed a new position on the Executive Board – Diversity Officer. This will be a position held by Khalil Johnson, who will hold the responsibilities and duties of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within PRSSA. This position will be encouraging representation in leadership positions, speakers, and events, as well as

staying informed about trends and best practices in DEI within the public relations industry and sharing this knowledge with PRSSA members through workshops, trainings, and other educational resources. Additionally, this role will be maintaining close relationships with members and ensuring everyone from all backgrounds feels comfortable and included in the chapter.

During the spring semester, PRSSA had a total of 17 members, and is going to continue to work hard to expand their club back to pre-COVID-19 conditions with their new executive board members: Kendra Gregory as President, Elizabeth Davis as Vice President, Khalil Johnson as Diversity Officer, Josie King as PR Director, Mary D'Haeze as Secretary, and Jermaine "Bloom" Williams as Treasurer. PRSSA looks forward to the upcoming semesters and the opportunity to build their skillset and gain experience that will aid their futures!

NMGZ Conference By Keshawn Altman

As a member of the National Millennial and Gen Z community, I recently had the opportunity to travel to New York City for an exciting and immersive experience in the world of public relations. During my visit, I had the valuable chance to meet with top executives in this field and visit some of the most reputable PR companies in the world.

One of the most exciting parts of this trip was meeting with executives from Padilla, one of the top 10 independent PR and communications firms in the United States. During our meeting, I had the chance to learn more about the company's innovative approach to communications, as well as their work with clients in a variety of industries, from healthcare to the arts.



I also had the chance to visit Nielsen, a global measurement and data analytics company that helps clients understand consumer behavior across a variety of industries. During the visit, I learned more about the ways in which Nielsen's research and insights can help companies better understand and target their audiences.

Finally, I visited R/GA, a creative agency that works with clients across a variety of industries and has been recognized as one of the most innovative companies in the world. During my visit, I had the chance to hear from executives about their approach to creativity and innovation and learn about some of the exciting projects they have taken on in recent years. I also got to see my first AI machine, and I was blown away with the amazing things that it could produce.

Overall, my trip to New York City was an incredibly enriching experience, and I came away with a deeper understanding of the world of public relations and the many exciting companies and opportunities within this field. I'm very thankful to the School of Communication Studies, and specifically, the Marvin Kleinau Undergraduate Development Fund, for providing the resources for me to make this trip.



Faculty and PRSSA President and Vice-President welcome students at our August 2022 Undergraduate Kickoff.

Kindness Campaign

By Carter Walton

The idea for the Kindness Campaign started like all great things start, with a determined leader with a brilliant idea. Ashlyn Ege, our incredible president, and honored student leader, had seen a Tiktok where the user talked about how spreading kindness, even something as simple as a smile, could make someone's day and possibly even start that person on the path to a better life. Ashlyn mentioned this Tiktok in Dr. Bardhan's PR Cases and Campaigns class, which sparked the whole operation.

By the end of the semester, the previous E-Board chose Ashlyn to be the President of PRSSA, and I would become the Vice President. With Ashlyn's leadership and Dr. Bardhan's guidance and support, the group would begin planning the campaign. Our first meeting was about a quarter into the Fall 2022 semester. At this point, the Kindness Project was not an official client of PRSSA, so it was being worked separately outside of regular meeting hours by an all-volunteer group of students. Two junior transfer students, Kendra Gregory, and Liz Davis, would significantly shape the Kindness Project in the Fall.

We worked on two major events in the Fall. The first was a Kindness Table, where students would draw a question from our kindness basket and then answer the question on a video or bulletin board for those passing through Faner Breezeway to see. This event was a success, and everyone involved had a great time. Our other event was Christmas Movie Night. This event was not as successful, but the team learned from our mistakes and adjusted accordingly for the next semester.

After returning from winter break, the Kindness Project

became a full-time "client," in PRSSA. This action allowed students to focus their PR skills wholly on the project and proved to be the right call. Kendra became the head of the Kindness Project, with Ashlyn providing guidance and assistance when needed.

The events in the Spring were all great. The first was a collaboration event with another PRSSA client, Thill's Flowers, in DuQuoin. This event was a success and generated social media interactions for PRSSA and sold all Valentine's Roses for Thill's, so all goals were met here. The next event was the Kindness ROCKS! Event. Where students would paint stones with kind messages and hide them around campus for others to find and share on social media. Participants enjoyed this event as well, and the turnout was great. Finally, the last event was the Kindness Chalking Event which was a smashing success! The group gave sticks of sidewalk chalk to students for them to write or draw kind messages across campus, post on social media, and tag our pages. The event got 600+ new reactions on our socials, and only 100 were followers, so the reach was great!

Due to ROTC requirements and finishing my degree, I could only participate a little in the Spring semester with the Kindness Project. But the Kindness Project was never my show. Ashlyn, Kendra, and their fantastic team were the main driving forces behind the Kindness Project and its success. I'm just proud to have been along for the ride with such outstanding, hardworking leaders who believed in something bigger than themselves and made it happen.

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Kindness Campaign

By Carter Walton

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To Ashlyn, this campaign is a prime example of how all great things start with planting a seed so it can bloom into something extraordinary. You should be proud of everything you have done, not just for us and PRSSA but for SIU. You are an inspiration, and it has been amazing to watch you grow over the last two years into the fantastic leader you are today. I am proud to have been by your side for the ride.

To Kendra and the Kindness Team, you took Ashlyn's idea and made it a reality. And most importantly, you all had a blast doing it. Khalil, Bella, Mary, and Kennedy, you guys should be proud of everything you have

done and take your lessons and experiences gained here to continue working hard and bringing great things to those around you.

Finally, to PRSSA and the CMST School, I appreciate everyone and everything you have done for me during my time at SIU. I have learned many valuable lessons and have always had the support of those around me while doing it. I wish you all the best and look forward to seeing what new and great things will come from these organizations.

Thank you!

—Carter J. Walton

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations annual DEI summit

By Irene Lutterodt

Being a part of The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations annual DEI summit and mentoring Gala was a remarkable experience that I will always cherish. As a communication scholar, my thirst for knowledge and growth is never-ending, and this event provided an ideal platform for me just to do that. This experience taught me that diversity and inclusion are not only important for individual wellbeing, but also for organizational success. It made me realize that when we embrace our differences and collaborate towards a shared objective, we can build a more equitable and inclusive world.

The discussions centered on intersectionality and inclusion were especially insightful, and I was fortunate to hear excellent advice from PR professionals, scholars, and educators. One of the key takeaways that really resonated with me was the importance of always asking questions. I've always been a curious person, and this event reinforced just how valuable that trait is in PR and communication. Asking thoughtful questions can help you gain insights, clarify expectations, and build relationships.

Another takeaway that really stuck with me was the importance of being intentional about self-learning. As PR professionals, we need to constantly stay up to date with the latest trends and best practices in the industry. By being intentional about self-learning, we can expand our knowledge and skillset, which can ultimately make us more effective in our roles.

Learning to navigate the word "no" was another valuable takeaway. In PR and the communication field, rejection is a common occurrence, and it's important to know how to handle it effectively. Rather than simply

accepting "no" as the final answer, we need to ask "why" and understand the reasoning behind the decision. This can help us identify areas for improvement and better understand the needs and expectations of our stakeholders.

The emphasis on mentorship at the event was truly inspiring. As someone who has never had a mentor before, I am aware of how valuable their guidance and support can be. The discussions at the event highlighted the importance of being passionate about mentorship and actively passing on information to the next generation, as this is crucial to the growth and development of the PR and communication industry.

My sincere gratitude goes to Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway, Dr. Nilanjana Bardhan, and those who give to our various Communication Studies funds; those gifts helped send me and other students to this invaluable event. They gave me the opportunity and provided me with the resources needed to attend the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations annual DEI summit and mentoring Gala. It was truly inspiring to hear from so many talented and dedicated Communicators, PR professionals, scholars, and emerging leaders. I am enthusiastic about putting into practice the valuable lessons I gained from the DEI summit and mentoring Gala, and I am committed to my personal and professional ongoing growth and learning as a communication scholar.

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations annual DEI summit

By Herty Tinadu

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations is an organization that focuses on promoting leadership and mentoring in the public relations industry. It was founded in 2005 and named after the late public relations leader Betsy Plank. The center offers various programs, such as the Milestones in Mentoring Awards, the Champions for PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) program, and the Fellowship for Educators.

My name is Herty Tinadu, an International Graduate student with the School of Communication Studies and I had the opportunity to attend the 2022 DEI Summit in Chicago and this event was a life changing moment for me. Attending this event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with other professionals in the public relations industry and gave me the mandate to establish new connections, collaborations, and potential job opportunities.

In addition to this I had the chance to listen to experts who shared their insights and knowledge about industry trends, best practices, and emerging issues such as DEI in the PR field. This event created a professional platform for me where I was able to build a community of public relations professionals who are committed to leadership and mentoring. By this, I was able to get a mentor who has been nothing short of amazing and very conscious with helping me grow my educational and professional career in the PR and Communication field.

A few takeaways from the summit which will forever remain with me:

- As an individual learn to blaze your path.
- Negate Imposter Syndrome in all situations.
- As a PR or Comms person, do not give your cli-ents what they want, give them the best idea.
- And finally, never underestimate the power of a mentor in your career.

Generally, the Plank Center provided a wealth of resources for professionals in the public relations industry, including research, case studies, and best practices which helped attendees including myself stay up to date with the latest trends and developments in the industry. It also enhanced my skills, helped me build a network, and gain exposure to new opportunities in the public relations industry which will in turn advance my career and achieve my professional goals.

I am grateful to my professors Dr Sandy Pensoneau-Conway and Dr. Nilanjana Bardhan, and the generous donors to the School, for granting me this amazing opportunity to attend such a prestigious event which has been very impactful in both my academic and professional life.

To sum it all up I would like to share some key quotes from speakers at the summit.

- Dreamers do not let dreamers dream alone – Teneshia J. Warner
- Get involved and learn to advocate for yourself – Jene Wheelless



Graduate Studies Update

By Dr. Rebecca Walker

Academic year 2022-2023 was a very busy one for our talented and hard-working graduate students! In terms of research, as a group, our graduate students gave over 32 conference presentations across eight different academic conferences and festivals. These included trips to NCA, CSCA (Central States Communication Association), OSCLG (Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender), the International Symposium on Autoethnography and Narrative, the Midwest Bisexual Gay Transgender Asexual College Conference, the SIU Conference on Women and the Petit Jean Performance Festival. They also chaired six panels and served as panelists and discussion leaders across several others. Three of our graduate students had papers on top paper panels, including Caleb McKinley-Portee, who won both the Top Inclusive Paper award and the Gustav Friedrich Award for Top Student Paper in the Communication Education division of CSCA. A special shoutout goes to doctoral candidate O.J. Duncan, who in their work with the Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) was able to double the funding that graduate students get per year from that body to help finance all that travel! Finally, big kudos to Janine Armstrong and Shelby Swafford, who each debuted publications this year, in *Feminist Pedagogy* and the *Handbook of Disability and Communication*, respectively.

Our performance studies graduate students gave over 13 individual performances, including the creation of two one-person original shows and one full-cast adaptation of a novel. In addition, they participated in two guest artist workshops, one guest artist show, and performed across three spotlight hours. Throughout the course of the year, our graduate students defended

one set of prelim exams, five dissertation prospectuses, two thesis prospectuses, two final research reports, and three successful dissertations (congratulations to Dr. Alex Davenport, Dr. Alex Lockwood, and Dr. Brooke Oehme!). In their roles as teaching and research assistants, they taught over 53 courses, ran tech and produced 11 different shows in the Marion Kleinau Theatre, and published a new edition of [Kaleidoscope](#), our in-house graduate student journal. A very special mention to T. Brown, who ran our Speaker's Center this past year as part of his assistantship, and grew the center from only a few visits a semester to 28 in the Fall and over 57 visits this past Spring semester! In addition, our graduate students served as keynote speakers, organizers, planners, invited lecturers, and featured speakers at over 23 different campus and regional events this last year. Finally, a special mention to Alicia Utecht, who received the COLA Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award (Ph.D.) and the GPSC Outstanding Graduate Teacher Award, as well as to Dianah McGreehan, who received the 2023 GPSC Research and Creative Activities Award.

We were excited to welcome five new graduate students into our cohort last fall, and extend that same excitement to an additional six new graduate students who will join us in August 2023, as well as our two new faculty members who our students are excited to work with in the future. Congratulations to all our current and incoming graduate students, and I am grateful for the honor of working with each of you as you fulfill your academic dreams!

—Dr. Rebecca Walker

Associate Professor & Director of Graduate Studies

New Partnership with Law School

By Dr. Sandy Pensoneau-Conway

A new partnership with the SIU School of Law will provide an incredible opportunity for undergraduates. After over a year of working together with the Law School to build out the curriculum, understand the details, and get approvals from the requisite committees, a 3+3 program will officially start in Fall 2025.

A 3+3 program allows undergraduate students the chance to earn both a Bachelor of Science in Communication Studies and a Juris Doctorate. Students who major in Communication Studies, and choose the "general" specialization, will have the option in their junior year to apply to the SIU School of Law. If they are accepted into Law School, their first year of law school can double as their last year of undergraduate

courses. Successful students will not only save a year of their time, but will also save a year of tuition and fees.

Both the Communication Studies faculty and the Law School faculty were nearly unanimous in their support of this partnership. Communication Studies advisor Steven Sawyer is confident the 3+3 has a positive outlook for growth: "This new program will be of great benefit to students seeking a career related to law. Communication Studies is a great major for future law school students - I've already had several who expressed interest in this exciting program."



L: Faculty and grad students enjoy lunch during the Fall 2022 orientation potluck.



R: Kendra Gregory and Ashlyn Ege pose after receiving awards.



Above: Graduate students enjoy one another's company at our annual welcome back celebration, this year at Attucks Park.



Above: PRSSA executive board members speak at our August undergraduate kickoff.

Below: Grad students Herty Tinadu, Irene Lutterodt, and Alicia Utecht have fun at our annual CMST Day in the Faner Breezeway.



L: Alumnus Dr. Tony Adams snaps a pic with grad students India Hagen-Gates and Frankie Kimmell



R: CMST students enjoy decorating pumpkins at our annual CMST Day.



Guest Artists and Scholars

Sister Unity/Bennett Schneider

In October 2022, Fine Arts Activity Fee (FAAF) guest artist, Bennett Schneider, brought L.A. Sister of Perpetual Indulgence, Sister Unity, to the Kleinau stage to share stories drawn from Hindu mythology, Grimms' fairytales, and the contemporary socio-political landscape in *Drag Nun Ruins Story Time*. Bennet teaches by combining ritual, spirituality, gay history, queer theory, and practical theater in a variety of venues which have included: UCLA, The Hollywood Bowl, the Lee Strasburg Theater Institute, Radical Fairy gatherings, various Men's Gatherings, Highways Performance Space, and other theaters and universities. Sister Unity also joined local Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, the SOIL Sisters, to attend Vulture Fest in Makanda, IL.



Dr. Jade Huell

In March 2023, Fine arts Activity Fee (FAAF) artist in residence, Jade C. Huell, offered a lecture/performance titled "Tales from the Epidermis: Re-flections on Performing (S)kin," where she interrogated and irritated the skin's surface through history, story, and sensorial production. She also collaborated with SIU performance students to create *Skintimate Encounters*, a group performance of their writing, reflecting, moving, and creating around issues of and associated with their skin experiences. Dr. Huell is an associate professor of Performance Studies at California State University Northridge. Her research rests at the intersections of live performance practice, African American Studies, and Memory Studies.



Dr. Tony Adams

In April 2023, Student Communication Organization guest, Dr. Tony Adams, returned to SIUC as the first Marvin Kleinau Speaker. Dr. Adams offered a lecture titled "Marginally Academic: Learning, Living, and Laboring as a First-Generation Queer." In addition to his lecture, open to anyone across campus and in the community, he spent a full day with the School of Communication Studies, serving as a guest teacher in CMST 301i: Communicating across Cultures, talking with graduate students during a Brown Bag Lunch event that was co-sponsored with the Graduate and Professional Student Council, and holding office hours for one-on-one visits with students. Dr. Adams is chair of the Department of Communication at Bradley University, and is recognized as a Caterpillar professor. Dr. Adams' research interests include sexual diversity and LGBTQ+ concerns such as stigma, social support, and self-disclosure. Underlying all his research is a commitment to identifying social injustices, challenging harmful cultural norms, and improving relationships. Moreover, Dr. Adams is an alumnus, having received his MA from our program in 2003 under the advising of Dr. Lenore Langsdorf. Dr. Adams' visit was supported through generous funds from Professor Emeritus Dr. Marvin Kleinau, as part of the Marvin Kleinau Communication Studies Advancement Fund.



Book Nook

[Narrative and Grief: Autoethnographies of Loss](#)

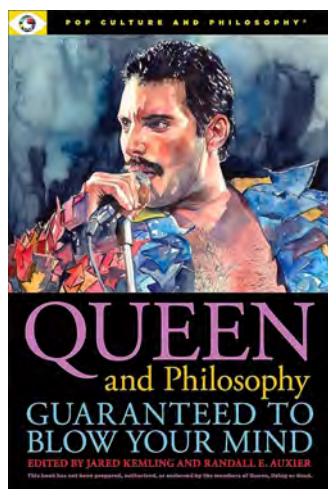
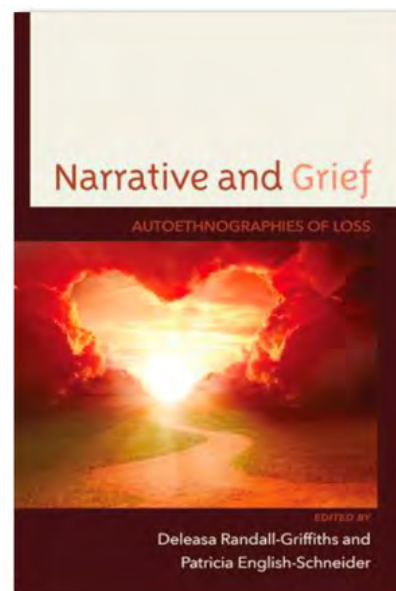
Editors (and alumni): Deleasa Randall-Griffiths (MS 1987, PhD 1997) and Patricia English-Schneider (2000)

Grief and loss are fundamental aspects of the human experience. *Narrative and Grief* examines the desire to make sense out of the nonsensical by exploring specific stories of loss and grief, spanning from the loss of a parent, child, or partner, loss within larger family systems; and ambiguous and anticipatory loss to broader cultural aspects of grief. The autoethnographic essays in this book reflect on the unique

and individual experiences of each contributor's story. Simultaneously, these essays reveal that although each grief experience is unique, it is also collective, evoking broader cultural themes related to loss and grief. Scholars of communication, sociology, and family studies will find this book of particular interest.

The book features essays from a number of School alumni and friends, including: Nathan Stucky, Lesa Lockford, Deleasa Randall-Griffiths, Lori Montalbano, Ronald J. Pelias, Jonthan Gray, Kristi Treinen, and Meggie Mapes.

30% discount code: LXFANDF30



[Queen and Philosophy: Guaranteed to Blow Your Mind](#)

Editors: Jared Kemling and Randall E. Auxier

This is a collection of cutting-edge philosophical essays on the rock group Queen, founded in 1970 and originally featuring lead vocalist Freddie Mercury. Queen's reputation and fan following continue to grow in the twenty-first century.

A few of these insightful and pro-

vocative chapters include:

- Origins of Queen's unique style in prog rock, vulgarity, and lower versus higher Romanticism
- Queen's view of love, friendship, and erotic relationships
- Three timeless Queen songs, "We Will Rock You," "We Are the Champions," and "Don't Stop Me Now" and Socrates's behavior in the Apology, to understand the "rocking" nature of philosophy

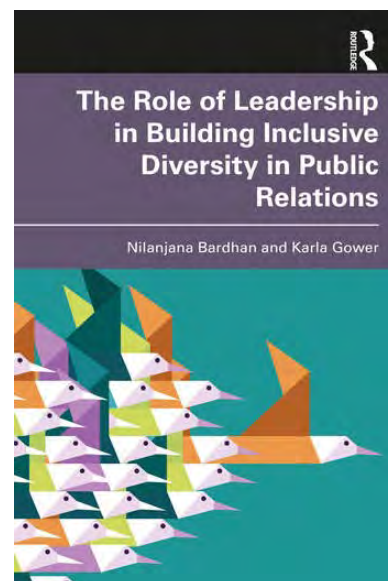
[The Role of Leadership in Building Inclusive Diversity in Public Relations](#)

Authored by: Nilanjana Bardhan and Karla Gower

This book focuses on the relationship between leadership and diversity, inclusion and equity within the US public relations industry. The authors argue that there is ample research evidence that diversity and inclusion efforts cannot succeed without leadership support that commits to and assumes responsibility and accountability for the structural and cultural changes required. Drawing on literature from three different areas – public rela-

tions, diversity and inclusion/equity in US societal and organizational contexts and leadership – the authors build a conceptual framework and model for inclusive leadership in public relations that addresses industry dynamics.

The book is timely as a resource for public relations scholars and as a supplementary text for advanced courses in public relations principles, theory, management, leadership and diversity. It also provides practitioners theoretical guidance on how to improve diversity, inclusion and equity in their organizations.

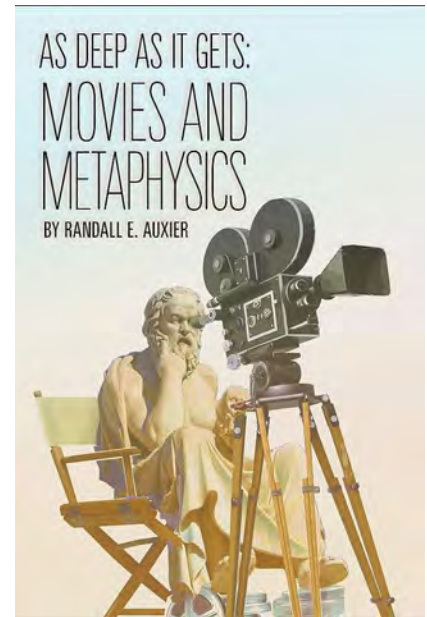


Book Nook cont.

[As Deep as it Gets: Movies and Metaphysics](#)

By Randall E. Auxier

A lot of thought goes into making Hollywood films and television series. The best artists of the twentieth century chose this medium over the arts they would have practiced in previous centuries –the painters, sculptors, writers, musicians, actors, and most of all the director, the master auteur, packed up their gear and went west. As time has gone on, television and movie-making converged into one huge canvas for all that creative thinking. Let's think about some of the best things that got thunk in the last hundred years, see if we can uncover the deeper layers of that thinking and sling a little philosophy at the screen.



[Research Methods in Performance Studies](#)

Authored by: Craig Gingrich-Philbrook and Jake Simmons

Research Methods in Performance Studies offers a unique approach for readers to engage with performance research and methods in practice. It examines ways of making performance, researching performance cultures, researching performers who themselves are engaged in research, and conducting research in the context of enduring and emergent themes of performance studies inquiry.

This book features the work of eighteen scholar-artists currently working in performance studies who demonstrate—through applied projects—various methods for conducting performance research.

The result is a wide array of novel scholarship including activist performance, slam poetry, video performance, stand-up comedy, adaptation for the Broadway stage, naturecultural performance, intersectional performance, performances of cultural and material preservation, and many others.

Faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and performance practitioners alike will benefit from the approaches to performance studies research methods articulated by the scholar-artists featured in this collection.

CMST Awards and Acknowledgements

Congratulations to all those who received awards during the 2022-2023 Academic Year!

School of Communication Studies Awards

Ronald J. Pelias Excellence in Graduate Student Service Award	O.J. Duncan
Elyse Pineau Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching Award	Frankie Kimmell India Hagen-Gates
Outstanding Faculty Award in Communication Studies	Josh Houston
John T. Warren Memorial Scholarship	Janine Armstrong
Marion Kleinau Achievement Award	Alex Lockwood
Marion Kleinau Literature in Performance Award	Shelby Swafford
Tekla Story Award	Diazha Berry

External Awards

Outstanding Leadership and Service Award, SIU	Ashlyn Ege
Student Employee of the Year, SIU	Kendra Gregory
GPSC Research and Creative Activities Award	Dianah McGreehan
Outstanding Scholar in Performance Studies and Autoethnography, Central States Communication Association	Sandy Pensoneau-Conway
Distinguished Service Award, Performance Studies Division of the National Communication Association	Jonny Gray
CoLA Outstanding Scholar Award	Randy Auxier

Other

Jonny Gray, CoLA Pedagogy Exploration Incentive Fund grant recipient	Jonny Gray
Nil Bardhan, CoLA Summer Research Incentive Program recipient	Nilanjana Bardhan

A Year In the Numbers

- 15 awards (recipients and nominees)
- 10 conferences and professional development events
- 33 committees in the college, university, discipline, and community (does not include school level committees)
- 14 journal review boards
- 57 lectures, interviews, and speaking engagements
- 36 conference presentations and other conference activities
- 13 published book chapters
- 2 published monographs
- 9 published journal articles
- 3 edited books published
- 1 translation of a previously published book



Above: Grad student Zoë Freedkin receives a Kleinau award from Dr. Rebecca Walker

CMST Faculty Bios

Josh Houston enjoyed offering most courses online this year and continues working to improve content and delivery in Public Relations and Organizational Communication courses. The Communication and Leadership course is growing in popularity and enrolling students from across campus and beyond. In the spring, Josh debuted his PR Spin Class. This multi-disciplinary course combines a focus on the role of a PR spokesperson with exercise on stationary bikes in the SIUC Recreation Center. The year was a busy one, but extremely rewarding.



Nilanjana Bardhan continued to focus on her primary areas of intercultural communication and public relations. She is enjoying learning more about diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and leadership and finding ways to connect this literature with her primary areas of interest. She continues to serve on the board of the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations and co-chair its DEI Committee. She worked on organizing the Center's fourth annual DEI summit for PR professionals and students which was held last November in Chicago, and several of our undergraduate PR students attended. She also continues to serve on the SIUC Chancellor's Task Force for Diversity and Inclusion and on the SIU systemwide Diversity Advisory Council. For the latter, she served on a committee which worked on developing an inclusive language guide for SIU's campuses. Along with her colleague Dr. Juan Meng at the University of Georgia, she co-edited a special issue of the Journal of Public Relations Education on DEI, mentorship and leadership in the PR classroom. She is also teaching a special topics course in Spring 2023 titled "PR, Leadership and DEI" which she is enjoying immensely. And in Fall 2022, she worked with the students of our PRSSA chapter on planning and launching a year-long Kindness Campaign to raise the chapter's visibility. She is now looking forward to working on a co-edited book on leadership, culture and communication.

CMST Faculty Bios

Rebecca Walker led recruitment efforts for the graduate program by attending this year's NCA and ensuring the School had a strong presence at the NCA Grad Fair, as well as arranging Zoom calls and campus visits for interested graduate students. Along with her two other colleagues, she was excited to return to the Kleinau Stage for the first Faculty Spotlight Hour since the COVID-19 pandemic upended university life a few years ago. She is currently conducting research for an article examining the QAnon movement as a type of multi-modal, online role-playing game, as well as working on ideas for upcoming solo and cast shows. She was excited to continue teaching the undergraduate Storytelling class as well as the undergrad-grad hybrid Adaptation and Staging class this past year, and enjoyed offering her Special Topics seminar on Tourism and Communication online this summer.



Justin Young writes, "This year has been busy with PRSSA and research. PRSSA had a great year working with both campus and local clients. At the time of me writing this the Saluki Gamescast podcast has recorded 45 episodes with faculty and graduate students. You can listen and see other videos and articles at SalukiGames.com. My research has mostly focused on video game compilations and how they interact with nostalgia studies. Otherwise, holding the fort while battling the forces of evil wherever they roam. "

CMST Faculty Bios

Dustin Greenwalt writes: "I had a busy first year in Carbondale! In addition to acclimating to a new university and town, I performed the duties of Coordinator of Undergraduate studies for the School. You can read more about those duties in the updates on our academic programs. Overall, undergraduate recruiting has proven promising as more students realize the value and quality of education that SIU provides. I also developed and taught classes on the American environmental movement and popular culture while maintaining an active research agenda. I presented work at the National Communication Association and Central States Communication Association annual conventions, and you could also find me at the Conference on Communication and Environment in June. I also have a forthcoming essay in *Explorations in Media Ecology*, some book chapters and essays in the works, and have made progress on a book manuscript about food rhetorics' stylizations of consumer-citizens during the Obama era."



Randy Auxier writes, "Hi all. A busy year as always. I spent all of October, November, and December at the University of Wroclaw in Poland, commuting to Warsaw on weekends to teach there as well. It was a great experience and has opened the door for negotiations with nine other universities for on-going international exchange for our students and faculty in the College of Liberal Arts. I managed to finish co-editing *Queen and Philosophy*, which appeared recently, and also co-writing *Wicked Words: Messages from the Dark Side*, which is under review at Bloomsbury. This is a suitable textbook for courses in dark communication. There have been several articles and book chapters, and I was fortunate to be chosen by the College for the 2022 award in scholarly achievement. I am humbled that my colleagues have chosen me for a three year term as the William and Galia Minor Professor in our School. And recently I have resumed editing the Library of Living Philosophers, something I did previously from 2001-13. "

CMST Faculty Bios

Sandy Pensoneau-Conway writes, "This year, I've had the pleasure to continue serving as the School Director, a position which I am humbled to hold. We've had incredible conversations about how we might grow our program in the near future, and we are so excited to welcome two new faculty members starting in the Fall. In my role as director, one of my favorite things is connecting with alumni all over the country, which I was able to do both at our usual disciplinary conferences, along with attending the Chicago Saluki Takeover events. I also continued as the coordinator of the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program here at SIU. Outside of those roles, I have enjoyed serving on the Teaching and Learning Council for the National Communication Association, and presented my work at NCA, CSCA, and the Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Asexual College Conference (affectionately known as "The Big Gay Conference"). I was honored as the Outstanding Scholar in Performance Studies and Autoethnography from CSCA, which I was very touched by. Off campus, I had the great pleasure of continuing my work as a board member (treasurer) and volunteer for the [Rainbow Cafe LGBTQ Center](#), and checking off a bucket list item—season tickets to the Fabulous Fox Theatre in St. Louis! And I still enjoy living in this beautiful geographic area with my partner Chad and daughter Grayson, who will be starting at Carbondale Community High School in August."



The main courses I teach are Interpersonal Communication (CMST 262) and Persuasion (CMST 326), which have increased in importance in recent years. Students appreciate the renewed focus of Interpersonal Communication (face-to-face) as a balance to the growing rise of computer-mediated communication (messaging, social media, email). And the Persuasion course has never been more relevant. The first section of the course examines different techniques and theories of persuasion while the second half of the semester addresses the recent upswing in the darker sides of persuasion (propaganda, disinformation, conspiracy theories, cults, etc.). Finally, with my extensive debate background, I've been asked to continue my role as a contributor for CNN by analyzing presidential debates during the 2023-2024 campaign.

CMST Faculty Bios



Dr. Jonathan Gray had a productive academic year. In the fall of 2022 he co-devised and directed “Soundstory” for the Kleinau Theatre, a project that worked with the School’s podcast studio as a tool for devising live and mixed media theatrical performance. He also published his autographic (autobiographical comic), “Linework,” in the anthology *Narrative and Grief: Autoethnographies of Loss*, published by Lexington Books. As Fine Arts Activity Fee representative, he oversaw bringing two guest artists to the Kleinau: Sister Unity’s “Drag Nun Ruin’s Story Time” and Dr. Jade Huell’s residency producing “Skintimate Encounters.” He was also happy to see two of his advisees receive their doctorates this year, Alex Davenport and Alex Lockwood

Going into the 2023-2024 academic year, Jonny is excited to take over the role of Technical Director in the Kleinau Theatre. He also looks forward to serving as convener for the 2023 Fall Gay Spirit Visions Conference titled “Queer Bodies/Gay Spirit” and featuring performance artist Tim Miller. Jonny will continue to serve as the School’s Fine Arts Activity Fee representative and will be coordinating two CMST alumni as guest artists: Dr. Elizabeth Whitney and Dr. Charles Parrott.

Craig Engstrom joined the Center for Teaching Excellence as its director in July 2022. In this role, he is excited to bring concepts of instructional communication to a wide range of teaching workshops on in-person, hybrid, and online modalities. He continues to teach courses for the School of Communication Studies, including a new course this fall called Communication for Career Development, which will focus on translating communication coursework into workplace opportunities. He maintains active research on the topic of communication training with the latest publication in spring 2023 in *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*.

website: <https://craigengstrom.ninja>



CMST Faculty Bios

Craig Gingrich-Philbrook completed a year's service as the chair of the SIUC Graduate Council. His co-edited (with Jake Simmons) volume *Performance Studies Research Methods* came out this year, from Routledge. Although health concerns last year led to the cancelation of his show *Ways to Say Goodbye*, it will be on the Kleinau Theatre schedule for spring 2024. He spent his summer meeting new family members and serving as his cat Donut's chosen location for napping





L: Student speakers at the Spring 2023 Student Speaker's Forum.



R: Grad students Herty Tinadu and Frankie Kimmell play cornhole at CMST Day.



Above: Our students are always thankful to those who make scholarships and professional development opportunities available.



Above: Faculty members Todd Graham and Rebecca Walker get in the Halloween spirit with CMST friend Patrick Anderson at CMST Day.



L: Grad students Herty Tinadu and Irene Lutterodt share laughs in the lobby.



R: Alums Nanci and John Burke catch up with school director Sandy Pensoneau-Conway at the NCA conference.



Undergrads Kendra Gregory, Liz Davis, Ashlyn Ege, and Mary D'Haeze (left) and grads Janine Armstrong and O.J. Duncan (right) celebrate the end of the semester.



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PRSSA: [@PrssaSiuc](#)



school: <https://academics.siu.edu/comm-media/communication-studies/https://cmst.siu.edu/>
or
<https://cmst.siu.edu/>
PRSSA: <https://www.siuprssa.com/>



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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). We have many more funds than what is listed on the page. Our alumni and friends make a world of difference!

Thank you!

