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## Major move Public Relations advances from 'concentration' to full 'major' for Fall 2021

**B**eginning with the fall semester 2021, Public Relations will officially become the fourth major offered by the Department of Communication Studies.

While the department has continued to graduate hundreds of students with a public relations “concentration” for their baccalaureate degree in Communication Studies, an actual PR major has not existed until this time. The move to advance PR to a full major was approved by the department’s faculty in 2018, and given final approval by the California State University system in 2020.

The move to make Public Relations into its own major was precipitated by a 2017 Executive Order from Chancellor **Timothy P. White**. White’s order required programs as large as the PR concentration (in terms of units needed to be completed) either needed to be reduced in size, or promoted to a full major.

“For our students, there will be no difference whatsoever in their program of study,” said Dr. **Gerri Smith**, chair of the Department of Communication Studies. “We will still require 48 units of study in a broadly-based degree that meets the standards from the Commission on Public Relations Education.”

The biggest difference students will notice is that upon graduation, they will now receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Relations, rather than one in Communication Studies.

“The Public Relations major at Sacramento State is designed to prepare students to assume professional entry level roles in the practice of PR,” said Dr. **Timothy Howard**, a PR professor at Sac State since 2006. “We help students to understand the integration of public relations and marketing, help



*Public relations majors and members of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter pose during a visit with the PR and marketing staff of the Sacramento Republic FC.*

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# Faculty Fellows program

**F**aculty in the Department of Communication Studies have been active in the College of Arts & Letters Faculty Fellows program started three years ago.

Professors request consideration for the program that allows for more focus on advising and student interaction. During the just-completed 2020-21 school year, Fellows met with about 75 percent of all of the College of Arts & Letters first-year Hornet Launch students to welcome them to campus, lend a listening ear, confirm their schedules, and prepare them for fall.

Faculty Fellows, who are officially associated with Students Achieving Greater Excellence (or SAGE) program, served 2,747 Arts & Letters students virtually this academic year.

Faculty Fellows from Comm Studies for the upcoming 2021-22 school year will be **Molly Dugan**, **Dan Janos** and Dr. **Andrew Stoner**. Fellows from the just-completed 2020-21 school year were Dr. **Kimberly Aguilar** and Janos.

Dr. **Mark Ludwig** and **Phil Reese** served as Faculty Fellows for the 2019-20 school year.

# Internship program grows

## Workshops added to help prepare students

**I**nternships remain an important component to the overall program of study for students in the Department of Communication Studies. **Stu VanAirdale**, lecturer, is the coordinator for the internship program in addition to his duties as faculty adviser to *The State Hornet*. Under his leadership, the program has expanded to include workshops meant to help prepare students for both internships while still completing their degree, and after graduation.

This spring, the new workshops offered covered time management skills, job searching tips and how to write a professional cover letter and resume. “The workshops were designed to provide tools and time to develop career-readiness skills and promote overall student success,” VanAirdale said.

VanAirdale said the Internship Office works with local and regional partners to develop high quality internship opportunities appropriate for Communication Studies, Film, Journalism, and Public Relations majors. “An internship can be a first step toward finding a job after college,” VanAirdale said. “It can help students develop skills and establish a professional network.”

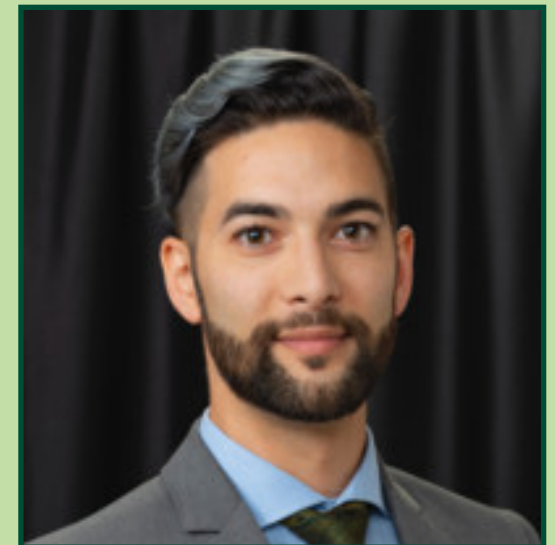
Assisted by graduate student **Owen Young**, VanAirdale also developed a bi-weekly newsletter with program updates, including new internship opportunities. The program was also relocated on the Canvas course management system where students go every day for their classes.

Despite the restrictions imposed because of the pandemic, many employers demonstrated flexibility and allowed students to fulfill job requirements online. VanAirdale said he was pleased internship opportunities remained strong throughout the recent restrictions.

For more information about the program, email VanAirdale at [vanairsdale@csus.edu](mailto:vanairsdale@csus.edu).



**STU VanAIRSDALE**



**OWEN YOUNG**

## A NEW KIND OF GRADUATION CEREMONY

On May 21 and 22, Sacramento State University offered a new alternative to traditional Commencement ceremonies at Golden 1 Center, necessitated by COVID-19 safety concerns and guidelines.

Nearly 4,000 graduates registered for 'Carmencement' representing a significant portion of the Class of 2020's 8,563 graduates and the Class of 2021's 9,047 graduates. Students who graduated or will graduate in Fall 2019 through Summer 2021 were also eligible to participate.

Graduates were joined by family and friends in elaborately decorated vehicles, singing, cheering, and horn-honking along the route that took about 55 minutes to complete.

Graduates wearing caps and gowns popped up through sun roofs, leaned out car windows, and whooped from inside stretch limousines as the parade wound its way through a campus decked out for a most unusual Commencement ceremony.

Communication Studies faculty participated in the day's events. Some photos from the day are featured on page 16 of this newsletter.

## Communication Studies faculty news

- **Sigrid Bathen**, emeritus faculty, was recently featured on a *Capitol Weekly* podcast to talk about her continuing coverage of mental health issues in California.

- **Dr. Carlos Flores**, assistant professor, attended the Rhetoric Society of America's Ninth Biennial Institute. He was selected to take part in a seminar titled "Rhetoric, Culture, & Technology." He is also attending a weeklong workshop titled "The Trouble with Publics and Counterpublics."

- **Dr. Cheng Hong**, assistant professor, was lead author on "To support or to boycott: A public segmentation model in corporate social advocacy" for the *Journal of Public Relations Research* (co-authored with Dr. **Cong Li** of the University of Miami). She also co-authored "Choice matters: Responses



She will also be presenting two papers at the International Communication Association Conference: "Internationalization and identification in influencer endorsement: Does consumer expertise matter?" and "Social distancing: Threats and efficacy among university students in seven nations."

- **Dr. Jacqueline Irwin**, professor, was to have presented papers on the top panels for the Rhetorical Theory and Criticism and Sports Communication Interest Groups at the cancelled 2020 Central States Communication Association Conference.

- **Dan Janos**, associate professor, curated the film series for Crocker Art Museum of Sacramento titled, "The (Un)Expected City." The virtual event was a collaboration between the Crocker, the Center for Sacramento History, the City Film Office, and the Office of Arts and Culture and featured short films by local creators and a live panel discussion.

Janos' animated film, *Flora My Dear*, continues to be featured at film festivals across the country. Most recently, it screened at Annapolis Film Festival in Maryland as well as Film Fest Petaluma/Anderson Valley Film Festival in California.

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## FACULTY NEWS

to political information vary in randomized vs. selective exposure contexts" for *Mass Communication and Society*. Co-authors were Dr. **Juliana Fernandes** of the University of Florida and Dr. **Nicky Lewis** of the University of Kentucky.

Hong also presented two works at the International Public Relations Research Conference. She presented "When authentic leadership engages employees: Testing mediating effects of employees' attributions of CEO activism" (co-authored by Dr. **Grace Ji** of Boston University) and "CEO as 'Chief Crisis Officer' under COVID-19: A content analysis of CEO open letters using structure topic modeling" (co-authors Dr. **Jiangmeng Liu** of Seattle University and Dr. **Bo Ra Yook** of Fairfield University).

# Mixing 'big data'

Professor **Diego Bonilla** and Dr. **Rodolfo Mata**, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, have published a well-received generative video poem titled "Big Data."

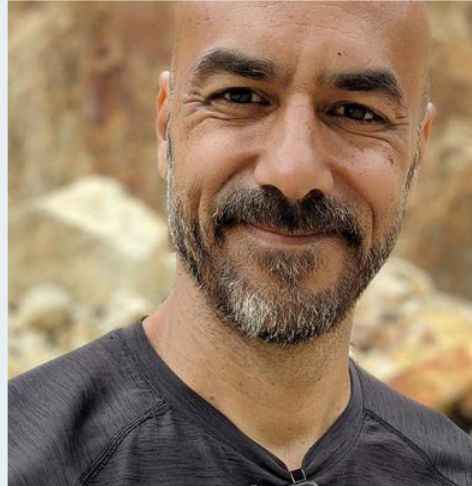
As Dr. Bonilla explains, "The poem demonstrates, by offering an endless number of different semantically and grammatically correct video poems, audiovisual media that can be created on-the-fly to satisfy specific human-determined parameters."

The generative poem, "Big Data," can be found online at <https://modular.film/bigdataenglish>. To date the poem has been selected in more than a dozen competitive festivals across the globe. In addition, it has been exhibited in the U.S. and Turkey. The poem was published in *FLAT*, an academic journal from the UCLA Department of Design Media Arts and Carnegie Mellon University School of Art, and the *Electronic Literature Collection* of the Electronic Literature Organization. The poem has been reviewed by *Excelsior*, the Mexican national newspaper.

The Electronic Literature Organization has recognized 'Big Data' as one of three finalists for the Coover Award for best electronic literary piece for 2021.

Some of Bonilla's early poetry has been included in the *Lit(e)Lat Anthology*, Vol. 1. His poem, "Universales" (from 1996), presented in the midst of an always different visual display, and "Autoretrato" (from 1999) features the always varying construction of the piece includes changes at the sentences' grammatical level.

A third electronic piece, a poetry book co-authored by Bonilla and **Jesus del Toro** titled "Liber Rotavi" has the unique characteristics that it changes depending on the time of day in which it is read. The anthology is published online.



**DIEGO BONILLA**



## Graduate program continues to grow

The master's degree program in Communication Studies continues to grow and attract more students.

A total of 35 students are currently completing their course work and program requirements, and another 20 students have been accepted for the Fall 2021 cohort, according to Dr. **Shawna Malvini Redden**, graduate program coordinator.

Members of the Spring 2021 cohort are **Elizabeth Boyer**, **Monet Bradford**, **Madeline Inman**, **Mikus Losbergs**, **Christine Shelby**, **Alayna Short**, and **Zach Thonen**.

- Three graduate students – **Bethany Davis**, **Beth Ruyak** and **Andrea Yarletz** – presented their research at the Sacramento State Student Research Symposium. All three submitted videos highlighting their projects and then answered questions from a live panel of faculty jurists.

Ruyak won First Prize for her paper, "**Bob Dylan: An ever-present ghost of our past, present, and yet to come,**" while Yarletz won Second Prize for her paper, "How the Black Lives Matter movement communicates empathy, division, and raises awareness."

- **Ana Mercado** had a paper accepted for presentation at the upcoming Popular Culture Association conference.

- **Jamison Warren** was named the winner of the Vande Berg Graduate Scholarship in Communication Studies.

## Supporting 'Give Sac State Day'

Alumni, faculty, students and staff in April helped complete the most successful "Give Sac State Day" ever - with \$339,925 raised from almost 1,300 donors.

Donors from the Department of Communication Studies provided 14 separate gifts, qualifying for a \$250 scholarship gift from the family Dr. **Sheree L. Meyer**, dean of the College of Arts & Letters. These gifts were part of \$20,445 raised from the college overall.



# Faculty news —

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- **Kathryn Kasic**, assistant professor, is directing and producing sequences for a BBC-1 program, “*How to Save Our Planet*,” narrated by Sir **David Attenborough**. The program focuses on positive solutions for the problems of the planet and will premiere later this year.

- **Donna Knifong**, lecturer, presented at the 2020 National Communication Association Convention. She was on a panel invited by the NCA Diversity Council that was titled “Best Practices in Addressing Hidden Disabilities.” She also presented a workshop, “Listening to Students,” at the International Listening Association 2021 Conference.

- Dr. **Shawna Malvini Redden**, associate professor, is the co-author of “Everyone’s ‘uncomfortable’ but only some people report: Privacy management, threshold levels and reporting decisions stemming from coworker sexual harassment” with Dr. **Jennifer Scarduzio** of the University of Kentucky and **Jennifer Fletcher** of Arizona State University. It was published in the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*.

Malvini Redden’s first book, *101 Pat Downs: An Undercover Look at Airport Security and the TSA* comes out in June 2021 from Potomac Press.

Malvini Redden was elected second vice president of the Western States Communication Association and will be planning the Undergraduate Research Conference and Grad Fair at the 2022 convention. She is also vice chair-elect of the Organizational Communication Division for the National Communication Association.

- Dr. **Mark Ludwig**, professor, has written a chapter for a new book, *The Internet and the 2020 Campaign*, edited by Dr. **Jody C. Baumgartner** of East Carolina University and Dr. **Terri L. Towner** of Oakland University of Michigan. Ludwig’s chapter is titled, “What’s the issue with Instagram? Issue communication and the 2020 Presidential election.”

- Dr. **Fred Molitor**, lecturer, published “Very low food security among low-income households with children before and shortly after the economic downturn in California from COVID-19” in *Preventing Chronic Disease*. Molitor also had three abstracts accepted for presentation at the Nutrition 2021 conference in June.

- Dr. **Kikuko Omori**, assistant professor, recently published a cross-cultural comparison about the relationship between narcissism and selfie posting on social networking sites. Co-authored with **Mike R. Allen**, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the article “Narcissism as a predictor of number of selfies: A cross-cultural examination of Japanese and American postings,” was published in *Communication Research Reports*.

- **Phillip Reese**, assistant professor, wrote an article about mobility trends in California during the pandemic. Titled, “Cell phone data reveals how COVID-19 made us hunker down, and start moving again,” the article appeared in *The Los Angeles Times* and *U.S. News and World Report*.

The Sacramento Press Club named a different story by Reese, “High poverty neighborhoods bear the brunt of COVID’s scourge,” as a finalist for Best Public Health Reporting in their 2021 journalism awards.

Reese and Sacramento *Bee* education reporter **Sawsan Morrar** earned a second-place award from the California Journalism Awards for a story about the prevalence of inexperienced teachers at low-income schools in Sacramento.

## FACULTY NEWS

- Dr. **Andrew Stoner**, associate professor, has released two new books in 2021. *Wanted in Indiana: Infamous Hoosier Fugitives* was published in April by The History Press, and *Dear Abby, I’m Gay: Newspaper Advice Columnists and Homosexuality in America* is coming in July from McFarland Publishers.

Stoner also has a new book scheduled for release in 2022 from the University Press of Mississippi titled, *Fear, Hate and Victimhood: How George C. Wallace Wrote the Trump Playbook*.

- Dr. **Kristen Tudor**, director of debate, successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, “Trust and communication in higher education: How leadership communication shapes faculty trust in administrators.” She was recently awarded her doctorate in educational leadership from the College of Education at Sacramento State University, receiving the Doctoral Student with Distinction award.

- Dr. **S. David Zuckerman**, professor, appeared on KCRA News in Sacramento as an expert assessing domestic terrorism threats to the California Capitol following the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol in January. Zuckerman also appeared on Voice of America Bangladesh for a story about interfaith connections during Ramadan.

# Three faculty members pen new books

Three faculty members have recently completed manuscripts for new books coming out:

## **101 Pat-Downs: An Undercover Look at Airport Security and the TSA**

By Dr. Shawna Malvini Redden, associate professor



Two million people fly commercially every day in the United States, and every single passenger must interact with members of airport security. Why do travelers put up with long lines and invasive screenings? Why do Transportation Security Administration officers (TSOs) put up with the disrespect and anger directed at them?

Malvini Redden asked these questions for years—interviewing passenger

and security officers alike, taking note of everything from carry-on bananas to passengers who fumed when their water bottles were confiscated. Malvini Redden encountered a range of passengers: the entitled business travelers; the parents with toddlers; the hot mess, travels-once-a-year, can't-figure-out-how-to-get-through-the-security-checkpoint-without-crying flier. The answers, Malvini Redden admitted, were far more complex than she anticipated.

The book is the story of Malvini Redden's research journey, part confessional, part investigative research, and part light-hearted social commentary. In it she illuminates common experiences in airport security checkpoints specifically focused on emotion and identity.

## **Wanted in Indiana: Infamous Hoosier Fugitives**

and

## **Dear Abby, I'm Gay: Newspaper Advice Columnists and Homosexuality in America**

By Dr. Andrew E. Stoner, associate professor

To most, famed killer John Dillinger is the very picture of an Indiana fugitive, but the state has seen many fascinating criminal characters on the run. Stoner's book examines other cases of fugitives who have produced startling headlines across the nation.

Included are 40 fugitive cases of the twentieth century, including a 16-year-old fugitive later executed by the state of Nevada, one fugitive passed himself off as a small-town cop while on the run, and a well-spoken Indiana killer became the first fugitive captured as a



direct result of the TV show "America's Most Wanted."

In his other book for 2021, Stoner attempts to answer the question: What role did America's newspaper advice columnists play in shaping and forming societal attitudes toward LGBTQ people throughout the 20th century?

Advice columns served the important dual function of providing advice and satiating the curious about the people around them. They also often provided the first mention of homosexuality outside of newspaper crime blotters. Their influence could be wide and impactful, as more than 100 million readers regularly read the columns.

Stoner's book chronicles some of the most popular and widely circulated newspaper columnists between the 1930s and 2000, including *Ann Landers*, *Dear Abby*, *Helen Help Us!*, *Dr. Joyce Brothers*, *The Worry Clinic*, *Dear Meg*, *Ask Beth*, and *Savage Love*. It examines the ideological function these columns may have served regarding the place and understanding of LGBTQ people in America.

## **I Ate All The MuffinTops: Stories of Shame, Hunger and Freedom**

By Dr. Elaine Gale, professor

Gale's new nonfiction book of humor essays (with the working title listed above) is scheduled to go to auction late summer.

It has already been officially endorsed for publication by internationally known writer **Andrew Solomon**, National Book Award winner.

In reviewing the manuscript, Solomon wrote: "**Elaine Gale** writes with incandescent wit and rapturous energy about our inner lives, our outer lives, and the disjunction between them. It's easy to be distracted from the depth of her investigation by her sense of humor and the warm spirit that leaps off the page, but her writing succeeds at every level; it is eminently readable and always substantive."

## STRONG ACP SHOWING BY STATE HORNET

The *State Hornet* had a strong showing at the Associated Collegiate Press Spring National Journalism Convention.

Ten *State Hornet* staffers attended the three-day virtual conference.

The awards won by Sac State journalists were:

- *First place – Website.* (For schools with enrollment 10,000 or larger).
- *First, third and sixth place – Photojournalism.* **Sara Nevis** was the first place winner, and was recognized along with Visuals Editor **Patrick Posuniak**.
- *Third and fourth place – Multimedia News Feature.* **Nevis, Ian Ratliff, Dominic Vitiello, Isabelle Juarez, and Rahul Lal** were recognized.
- *Fourth place – Broadcast News Show.*
- *Third, seventh and tenth place – Election Coverage.* Noted was work by **Nevis, Lal, Posuniak, Ratliff, Max Connor, Madeleine Beck, Christopher Wong, Camryn Dadey, Mercy Sosa, Milan Cebebe, Samaha Samy, and Vince Ybarra.**
- *Third, ninth, and tenth place – Podcast.* **Connor, Robbie Pierce** and **Rose Vega** were honored.
- *Seventh and ninth place – Broadcast News Story.* Named were **Connor, Pierce** and **Vega**.
- *Seventh, and tenth place – Social Justice Reporting.* **Nevis, Ratliff** and **Estefany Nunez** were awarded.

“Overall, this was a very strong showing by Sacramento State,” said **Stu VanAirsdale**, faculty adviser to *The State Hornet*. “This was amidst a strong national competition, including many campuses also in the California State University system.”



STUDENT NEWS

## Anti-racism statement viewed as first step

An anti-racism statement recently adopted by the faculty of the Department of Communication Studies is viewed as an important first step in addressing systemic racism issues that persist in society, and on our campus.

The statement was drafted by members of the department’s Anti-Racism and Social Justice Work Group formed in 2020 in response to growing concerns.

It is expected a set of department-wide expectations will be further reviewed and adopted in the Fall term.

The statement adopted is printed below:

“The Antiracism and Social Justice Work Group of the Communication Studies Department was established in Fall 2020 to help develop, support and activate antiracist policies and practices in our department and at Sacramento State.

“We appreciate and hope to build on the University’s own efforts to fight racism. The primary goal of our work group is to improve the lives and experiences of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) students, faculty and staff on campus.

“This statement is intended as an expression of support and solidarity with our BIPOC members of the campus community as we fight racism at Sacramento State, as well as a way to initiate campus-wide conversations about immediate changes and propose actionable suggestions to activate such changes.

“The events of 2020 have made it impossible to ignore our responsibility to be antiracist, especially now that we see the extent to which racism is systemic within our larger culture. Both on and off-campus, we witness our BIPOC students, faculty, staff, and administrators enduring a cycle of racism, silence, and contrition that demands a more urgent and wide-ranging reckoning. We hear their frustration and anguish describing microaggressions, inequitable academic policies, and white-centered curricula in departments campus-wide. For example, at an April 2021 teach-in hosted by the California Faculty Association and the Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice, presenters showed evidence of systemic racism reflected in everything from police response to academic hiring to administrative policy at Sacramento State.

“We were pleased to hear President **Robert Nelsen** devote a portion of his 2021 spring address to cataloguing some of the “bottom-up” efforts to build a more inclusive and antiracist campus. He cited committees that are developing metrics that will help us keep ourselves accountable. We welcome this introspection and move toward accountability.”

# Communication Studies alumni news

## ALUMNI NOTES

- **Bryce Avalos**, BA '16, is a trainer in the Licensing Training Division for the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

- **Kim Burleson**, BA '17, is a video production coordinator for the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) in New York City.

- **Ronnie Escorpiso, Jr.**, BA '16, has been named a Risk and Compliance Project Specialist for Uber based in Phoenix, AZ. He recently moved from Las Vegas where he served as a board member for the Southern Nevada Asian Pacific Islander Queer Society.

- **Joan Kudin**, BA '08, is the senior public information officer for the Sacramento County Employees' Retirement System.

- **Walter "Willy" Linares**, BA '07, was elected to the city council in Rohnert Park, CA, a city of more than 40,000 residents in Sonoma County.

- Former student **Sam Long** is a pitcher for the San Francisco Giants. He previously played for the Tampa Bay Rays.

- **Aranza Mora**, BA '20, is a reporter for KFBK Radio News in Sacramento.

- **Anna Perez**, BA '16, is a police sergeant for the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

- **Savannah Porter**, BA '20, is communications coordinator for the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, an affiliate of the California Farm Bureau.

- **Salvador Ruiz**, BA '20, is an account coordinator at Prozio Communication in Roseville, CA.

- **Michael Sanchez**, BA '18, was recently named corporate recruiter for Quick Quack Car Wash in Roseville, CA. The company has more than 100 locations in five states.

- **Jazzmen Simms**, BA '14, is a store director for Nugget Markets, Inc., which is now operating 15 stores across Northern California.

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AVALOS



BURLESON



ESCORPISO



KUDIN



LINARES



LONG



MORA



PEREZ

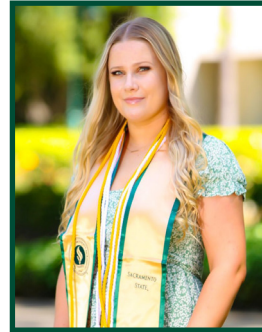


# Communication Studies alumni news

## ALUMNI NOTES

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- Dr. **Damariye Smith**, MA '16, recently completed his Ph.D. at the University of Memphis and has been appointed an assistant professor of Contemporary Black/African-American Rhetoric and Media Studies at San Diego State University.
- Former student **Brianna Washington** is a government affairs official for Honda North America's Washington, DC office.
- **Lisa Wrightsman**, BA '05, is the managing director of Street Soccer USA.



PORTER



RUIZ



SANCHEZ



SIMMS



SMITH



WASHINGTON



WRIGHTSMAN

## Major move for PR —

• continued from page 1

students to compose, develop and analyze a variety of messages, and help students develop their competencies in writing, problem solving and critical thinking.”

Public Relations has remained a popular pursuit among Communication Studies students. Annually, about 20 percent of the more than 1,300 Comm Studies majors are pursuing a public relations program of study. The program is further enhanced by a robust internship program and a large, award-winning chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).

Along with Howard, two other full-time faculty teach in the PR major, including Dr. **Cheng Hong** and Dr. **Andrew Stoner**. Two lecturers, Dr. **Alan Ray** and **Trinette Marquis**, also teach a variety of PR-related courses.

The other majors offered by the Communication Studies Department remain Communication Studies, Film and Journalism.

## CommConnect

*Do you have news to share?*

A new position, a promotion or other career activities in your life?

Communication Studies alumni are invited to share your news with us for future newsletters - either via our Facebook page, or via email to: [Andrew.Stoner@csus.edu](mailto:Andrew.Stoner@csus.edu)

We hope to hear from you!



# Making history, breaking barriers

**B**ertha Gaffney Gorman, BA '73, knows something about breaking barriers and making a little history along the way. As the first full-time black female reporter in the newsroom of *The Sacramento Bee* (from 1971-78), Gorman opened new doors and pathways for many journalists who followed her.

No one could blame her if she was feeling a little *deja vu* along with her pride this year as her granddaughter, **Amanda**

**Gorman**, inspired millions with her poem, "*The Hill We Climb*,"

recited at the Jan. 20 inauguration of President **Joe Biden** and Vice President **Kamala Harris**.

Amanda, a 22-year-old resident of Los Angeles, is one of four of Bertha's grandchildren, and she expresses pride about all of their accomplishments and lives. Amanda made history as the youngest person ever to read a poem at a Presidential inauguration, and followed in the footsteps of other famed poets also so honored, including **Maya Angelou** and **Robert Frost**.

"I was just blown away," Bertha told one reporter after watching her granddaughter nearly steal the show amidst the pageantry of the day, including the presence of former Presidents **Barack Obama**, **George W. Bush**, and **Bill Clinton**. "She did it, she really knocked it out of the park, she really smashed it."

Bertha said she was particularly impressed with how Amanda's poem tied in so closely with inaugural remarks from President Biden. Amanda Gorman was invited to participate in the festivities by the First Lady, Dr. **Jill Biden**, who had heard her speak at the Library of Congress in 2017. That year Amanda was named the nation's first National Youth Poet Laureate.

In the aftermath of Amanda's appearance, Bertha's phone rang often with reporters and well-wishers wanting to speak with her. Bertha recently participated in a Sacramento Press Club interview

about storytelling conducted by **Molly Dugan**, professor. Amanda's prominent role in the Presidential inaugural "is an opportunity for all girls, but especially Black girls," Bertha said. "The fact that she is unapologetically Black and she's a brilliant young woman, it just moved my heart

when I saw the response. The response was just over the top."

Bertha says her family is blessed, and counts her own noteworthy career in



At left, **Bertha Gaffney Gorman**, and at right, her granddaughter, **Amanda Gorman**, National Youth Poet Laureate, reciting her poem, "*The Hill We Climb*," at the January Presidential inauguration in Washington, DC.

## ALUMNI NEWS

journalism and public affairs as evidence of that. Following her stint at *The Bee*, Bertha worked as director of Local Government Affairs for the Lockheed Martin Corporation for just under 15 years, served four years as Associate Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency (under both Governors **Gray Davis** and **Arnold Schwarzenegger**), and since 2012 has been president and CEO of the Life Expansion and Education Project in Sacramento.

In her current position, Bertha oversees a program dedicated to teaching life skills and providing educational opportunities to women and poor communities in Mombasa, Kenya.

As for her pride in her grandchildren, Bertha adds, "I'm just over the top with pride ... my entire family is proud."



## SPJ offers special COVID-19 panel

A special COVID-19 panel was presented by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) in March. Specifically focused on how Sacramento State has responded to the pandemic, panelists included President **Robert Nelsen**, ASI President **Noah Marty**, and **Max Connor**, editor-in-chief of *The State Hornet*.

## Comm Studies student awarded

The Faculty Senate announced winners of the 2020-21 Faculty Endowment Scholarship Awards. One of the undergraduate awards recognizing academic achievement and future promise was given to **Meagan Elia Nachand**, a Communication Studies major.

## PRSSA conducts virtual auction

The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) offered its first-ever virtual auction as a fundraiser in the Spring semester. Gift items, special services and other prizes were offered to help fund PRSSA scholarships, professional development opportunities, graduation stoles, and support for a local charity.

## Student panel takes on 'Zoom'

A student-led panel and discussion about seeking academic success via Zoom was conducted in April. Communication Studies students **Raeann Cardoza** and **Ayyah Al-jibouri** were panelists discussing how to avoid Zoom burnout. The moderator was PR major **Excell Brown-Russell**.

# New opportunities

## Communication Studies TOPSS program offers educational opportunities for prison inmates

**A** new concentration for a General Communication degree will allow incarcerated state prison inmates to become university students en route to a college degree.

Known as The Opportunity Program Sacramento State (TOPSS), the first cohort of students at both the Folsom and Mule Creek correctional facilities were enrolled in Spring 2021. Coordinated for Communication Studies by Dr. **Gerri Smith**, department chair, faculty members Dr. **S. David Zuckerman** and **Kathleen Lucier** were among the first instructors to teach classes.

Delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, online instruction in two Communication Studies and two General Education classes were offered. Eleven dedicated students signed up to participate in the first semester, while as many as 20 students can be accommodated each term depending on available faculty for both in-person and online instruction.

"TOPSS students will pursue the identical degree roadmap for the BA in Communication Studies (General Communication)," Smith said. "Our hope is that this initial program will lead to more opportunities for degree options in the TOPSS program."

The TOPSS program is based on a similar program already operating in Southern California via Cal State Los Angeles. "This program for incarcerated students is proving impactful in their lives," Smith said.

Objectives for the program are to:

- Improve student awareness, understanding, and practice of communication in professional and social interactions;
- Enhance the traditional citizenship role in the democratic process; and
- Train students in communication skills in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy.

For his part, Zuckerman helped coordinate a special book drive to help Folsom and Mule Creek develop library materials focused on communication studies issues.

"You can't know how precious these materials are to our incarcerated students," Zuckerman said. "The prison libraries are very under-resourced, especially when it comes to anything the students can use as academic sources for their college and university courses. As such, the students are grateful, as are the librarians."

The program is expected to continue this fall with even more students enrolled, and the hope of in-person instruction possible once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.



*Folsom State Prison at Folsom, CA.*

# Lambda Pi Eta induction ceremony

## NEWSLETTER OF DEPT. OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Sacramento State University  
5014 Mendocino Hall  
6000 J. St.  
Sacramento, CA 95819

**DEPT. CHAIR:** Gerri Smith

**OFFICE STAFF:** Katrina Roose,  
Vicenza Weeks, Aleah Fisher

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### PART-TIME FACULTY:

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### GRADUATE ASSISTANTS & TEACHING ASSOCIATES:

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### NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Andrew Stoner

### COPY EDITORS:

Molly Dugan, Gerri Smith, Stu VanAirdale

**T**hirty-one new members were inducted into the Lambda Pi Eta honorary in May, with four new pledges also welcomed.

National Pi Eta is the official communication studies honorary of the National Communication Association, with more than 180 active chapters at colleges and universities across the United States.

Among the activities for the 2020-21 school year, chapter members raised \$1,000 for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, according to chapter advisor, Dr. **Elizabeth Earle**.

New inductees included:

**Jasmine Ascensio  
Melissa Becker  
Lauren Burke  
Savannah Dorado  
Elysse Fresquez  
Gammenia Jolley  
Dannon K. Lowe  
Ariana Ponce Martinez  
Ana K. Mercado  
Megan E. Nachand  
Alana Ramsay  
Corrina Rodacker  
Camille Sapiera  
Sierra Danielle Slather  
Lucas Kaitas-Wilson  
Shani Akilah Isoke Zuberi**

**Sage Beamon  
Jeanne Swafford Brewster  
Eugene Dehoney  
Taylor Elgin  
Jocelyn G. Romo-Gutierrez  
Brandi E. Kroll  
Christopher A. Marotta  
Bianca Mataka  
D'Adonis Moquette  
Savannah Potter  
Raeanne Redmond  
Sharon Rodriguez  
Alyssa Simoes  
Deborah Swanson  
Heidi R. Woods**

The four new pledge members are:

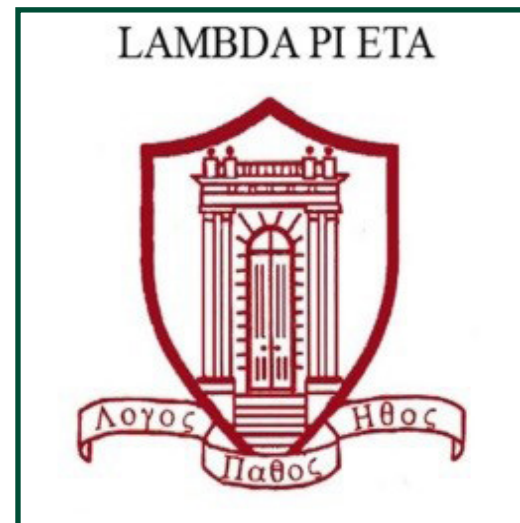
**Marissa Fernandez  
Nicole Oneto**

**Marissa Johnson  
Marin Pergo**

Lambda Pi Eta students must have completed at least 60 semester hours in college, at least 12 semester hours of study in the discipline of communication, have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0, a GPA in Communication courses of at least 3.25, be currently enrolled as a student in good standing, and display of commitment to the field of communication.

The six goals of Lambda Pi Eta are to recognize, foster, and reward outstanding scholastic achievement in Communication Studies; stimulate interest in the field of communication; promote and encourage professional development among communication majors; provide an

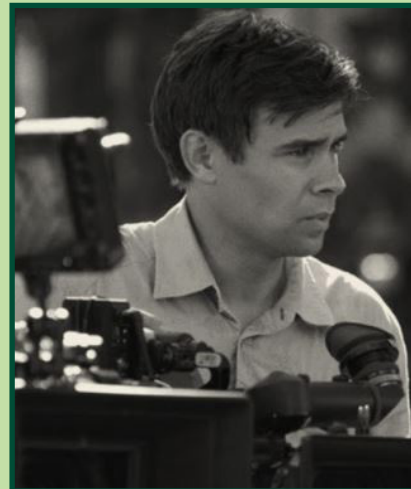
opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas in the field of communication; establish and maintain closer relationships between faculty and students; and explore options for graduate education in Communication Studies.



## Festival of the Arts goes virtual, connects Film students to the pros

**F**estival of the Arts offered six days in April for creative performances, lectures and master classes, showcasing creative and cultural excellence.

Presented by the College of Arts & Letters, this year's festival was completely virtual for the first time.



ABOVE — Michael Paul Jones and Ssong Yang.

Members of the Senior Film Production class benefitted from this year's format with two notable speakers invited to address students, and interact with them on creative projects.

On April 5, cinematographer **Michael Paul Jones** was a guest lecturer and discussed his professional work directing commercials and shooting second unit work on feature films. He was recently the camera operator on *"Top Gun: Maverick"* (starring **Tom Cruise**), and shot second unit on *"The Upside"* (starring **Bryan Cranston** and **Kevin Hart**).

In his career, Jones has won two Emmy awards for his work covering the events of Sept. 11, 2001 for both ABC News and CNN. He has also earned four American Advertising Awards for projects completed for Airstream and Nissan.

### STUDENT NEWS

On April 6, director **Ssong Yang** spoke to students about her work that focuses on the examination of cultural innovations, social awareness and curious mysteries. Having traveled to more than 40 countries filming and directing stories, Yang is currently a director at Station Film in Los Angeles.

Yang's work has included stories featuring age-old gurus, musical prodigies, masters of ancient art forms, ambitious and powerful moms, and brave teenagers. She regularly conducts creative workshops for film, television and digital media.

## Comm Studies alum named to Sac State post

**L**uis Kischmischian has been appointed Director of Student Affairs/Advancement Marketing and Communications for Sacramento State University.

Kischmischian started his Sac State career in 2012 as a communications specialist and event coordinator for Advancement Communications and Stewardship. He joined Student Affairs as a communications specialist in 2014.



A 2011 Communication Studies graduate majoring in public relations at Sac State, he also earned his master's degree in Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies from Sac State in 2017. He is currently completing his MBA.

Kischmischian has worked on many notable Sac State campaigns, including the Breathe Easy/Tobacco-Free Campus effort and the Beyond the GPA/College Ready campaign (the latter of which decreased the number of students required to take remedial courses).

# 'The Pandemic Debate Season' comes to a close

The 2020-2021 Hornet Debate season will long be remembered as the "Pandemic Season" in which all of the tournaments were virtual.

The team did not know what to expect going into the 2020-21 debate season - there had been experiments with online tournaments, but nothing on the scale of an entire season online. Debating virtually is not ideal since students miss out on important experiences and learning opportunities that come from travelling to in-person tournaments.

Hornet debaters competed in 14 unique tournaments this season and five students qualified for the national championship tournament. The team competed in 29 total elimination rounds and won four tournament championships with two additional runner-up finishes.

This year's National Forensics Association (NFA) championship tournament was one of the largest ever. Junior communication studies major **Ayyah Al-jibouri** made it to elimination rounds, won her partial triple-oc final round, and then lost in doubles on a very close 2-1 decision. This is one of the strongest ever performances by a Sacramento State debater at NFA, and the team's first elimination win at this prestigious and challenging tournament.



**AYYAH AL-JIBOURI**

Al-jibouri was also voted Northern California Forensics Association (NCFA) Debater of the Year in the NFA-LD University division. She joins Hornet Debate alums **Brandon Garcia**, **Banafshae Khan**, and **Kevin Ozomaro** as the fourth Sacramento State debater to win this award.

At the Spring Fling tournament in May, giving rookie debaters a chance to compete, **Ariella Sotelo** was the tournament champion, **Mark Espinosa** received a silver and **Jennifer Garabay** received a bronze.

"We have continued to show competitive excellence in LD debate both locally and nationally as we build towards our goal of winning a national championship," said Dr. **Kristen Tudor**, director of debate. "There is still a lot of uncertainty about what the debate landscape will look like next season, but whether we are hopping in the



*Debate Team members masked up, but not muffled. Left to right are Volunteer Coach Justin Perkins, Ayyah Al-jibouri, Jackie Blair, Mahala Rogers, Tony Escalante, and Coach Jared Anderson.*

van to travel again or competing online, Sacramento State will continue to strive for excellence and perform as the national powerhouse that we have become."

## Faculty engage in campus service

Faculty members typically focus on three areas of importance, teaching, research and service. Two Communication Studies professors have offered campus service of note recently:

- Dr. **Cheng Hong**, assistant professor, has assisted the Carlsen Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurs at Sac State recently by serving on the search committee for its new permanent director, and participated in the Entrepreneurship Toolkit Series. In addition, she has invited local entrepreneurs affiliated with the Carlsen Center to be guest lecturers in her classes.

- Dr. **Mark Stoner**, emeriti faculty, recently made available his textbook, *Making Sense of Messages*, free to all Communication Studies classes at Sacramento State. The book, its second edition released in 2020, is useful in concepts of introductory criticism, argumentation, the rhetoric of ignorance, and curating and analyzing multimodel mediated rhetoric.

# J Street Film Festival highlights student work

Film students cap off their semester (or longer) work each year by presenting at the J Street Film Festival.

For 2021, the festival was virtual with student work being posted online via YouTube for their audiences to find. To view the student films, click on: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmt8lLicEs1HAqju1GiL3IQ>

Eight films were completed by FILM 185 students taught by **Kathryn Kasic**, assistant professor, and another four films from FILM 128 taught by **Dan Janos**, associate professor.

From FILM 185, final productions and their directors were:

- “*Spirit to Spirit*” directed by **Sydney O’Neal** and **Gabriela Gomez**

- “*Blue Clouds*” directed by **Jakob Dominquez**
- “*Dearly Departed*” directed by **Tina Klinessmith**
- “*As You Were*” directed by **Molli Fagan**
- “*Redlight*” directed by **Kaia Lopez**
- “*Second Hand News*” directed by **Cristián Ortiz**
- “*Hugo Leckermaul*” directed by **Aerick Hood**
- “*Lost Camelia*” directed by **Waldo Diaz**

From FILM 128, final productions and their directors were:

- “*I’m Strong for You*” directed by **Trevor Mention**
- “*Paradise*” directed by **Sydney Roll**
- “*Germaphobe*” directed by **Gibrán Cabrillo**
- “*Elijah the Billionaire*” directed by **Gavin Veiga**

## STUDENT NEWS

### Sacramento Press Club scholarships continue to benefit journalism majors

The Sacramento Press Club continues its generous support of journalism students studying at Sacramento State University.

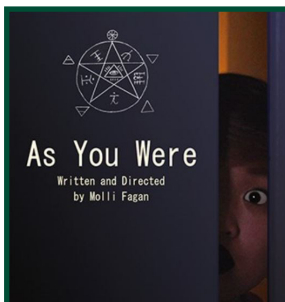
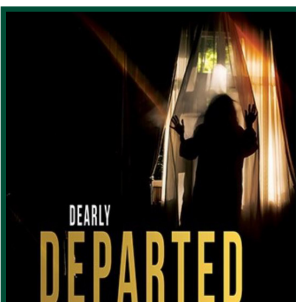
For the just-completed 2020-21 academic year, three students benefitted from scholarships. For the upcoming 2021-22 academic year, four of the eight scholarships awarded by the press club will benefit Sac State students.

Students receiving Sacramento Press Club support in 2020-21 were:

- **Sara Nevis**, recipient of the \$8,000 Hector Amezcua Scholarship, a former air traffic controller in the military who found a new passion for journalism. Nevis is a photographer and writer, and freelances for *The Stockton Record* and is participating in the 2021 *New York Times* Student Journalism Institute.
- **Rose Vega**, winner of the \$6,200 Dale Kasler Scholarship. Vega wrote a compelling magazine piece about how she was molested in daycare as a young child, using legal documents and interviews to augment her memory.
- **Kelly Kiernan**, the \$4,000 Lonnie Wong Scholarship winner. Focusing on broadcast and video, prior to graduating Kiernan started the first regular broadcast show on campus and was a multimedia editor at *The State Hornet*.

The four scholarship winners for 2021-22 are **Madeleine Beck** (a May 2021 graduate who will start graduate work at New York University in the fall), **Keyshawn Davis**, **Emma Hall**, and **Nevis**.

The Sacramento Press Club scholarship program began in 1974 with a single \$1,000 scholarship in honor of Earl “**Squire**” **Behrens** who had recently retired as political editor for *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Since then, the club has given way more than \$400,000 to more than 150 people – a significant amount of assistance that has helped many young students on their way to successful journalism careers.



ABOVE — Title cards for four of the 12 films showcased at this year’s J Street Film Festival.

# 'Carmencement'

## A graduation ceremony on wheels

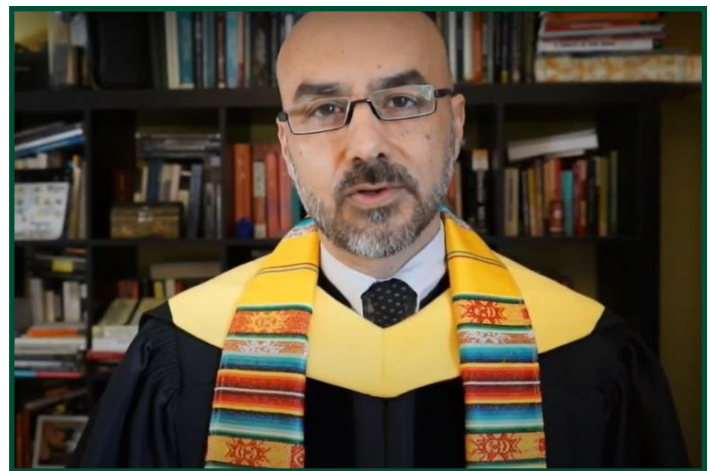
The coronavirus pandemic created a lot of “new” things in the last year and a half, and commencement exercises at Sacramento State were among those changes.

The university offered “Carmencement” this year for members of the Class of 2020 and 2021 in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony at Golden 1 Center. Several thousand of the university’s graduates signed up for the two-day event, May 21-22.

Communication Studies faculty participated in the all-outdoor event and cheered on their students who rolled by in decorated cars.

Another special recognition took place as Dr. **Diego Bonilla**, professor, was honored as the invited faculty speaker at the annual Chicanx-Latinx Recognition Ceremony.

Congratulations to both the Class of 2020 and 2021!



**ABOVE, TOP** — Drs. Shawna Malvini Redden, Kimberly Aguilar and Michele Foss-Snowden cheer on the graduates. **LEFT** — Drs. Mark Ludwig and Jacqueline Irwin do their part to celebrate our graduates. **ABOVE** — Dr. Diego Bonilla offers remarks as the invited faculty speaker for the annual Chicanx-Latinx Recognition Ceremony.