Letter from the Editor

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Class of 2015

Working with Professor Lorra Brown and fellow graduate assistant Jason Moussab, with pride I give you the premiere issue of COMM Matters – a newsletter from the University’s Professional Communication program highlighting alumni, current students, and faculty.

This newsletter has been designed to bring forth the best our program has to offer and showcase the many talents of students and staff involved. Our goal is to publish one issue each semester, to provide updates and news.

There’s a reason I chose this program: to take advantage of the challenging curriculum, interact with experienced professors and their networks, and be part of the diverse student body that provides valuable insights to all facets of the program.

In this issue you will find alumni success stories, current student experiences, and the latest research and master projects from seasoned faculty and students.

As a digital media specialist for SEMGeeks, a media and web development agency, Peter Schauer credited the professional communication graduate program with developing the skills needed for the job.

“The [program] prepared me for a job as a digital media specialist at SEMGeeks because it featured education on the digital marketing field, especially SEO and social media,” he said.

At SEMGeeks, Schauer handles the search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) leads, manages content writers and edits the content, writes for the website, and builds social promotions and e-mail marketing campaigns for a number of clients.

Schauer went on to say that the professional communication program matched exactly what he was looking for on the digital side, “especially with social media and content writing.”

“The knowledge I gained will help me continue to move up the ladder.”

“The classes were extremely convenient for my schedule,” he said. “I worked two part-time jobs and was also working as a freelance writer, so having night classes fit my schedule perfectly.”

Schauer acknowledged a majority of the courses were hands on and had a lot of group activities, which led to great relationships outside of the classroom as well.

“I feel the knowledge I gained from the professional communication program will help me continue to move up the ladder in the digital marketing field,” Schauer said.

Some of the courses that he recommended were Writing for Digital Media and Digital Communications Applications.

From freelance journalist to SEO strategist
The professional communication department held its second roundtable event featuring distinguished students and faculty discussing various social media topics across multiple industries. The Social Media Expert Panel was made up current students Kat Barnet and Kristin Kuscin, as well as graduate Izabella DeSouza. Dr. Matt Crick and Dr. Angie Yoo also held seats on the panel, which took place in the University Commons Ballroom on March 27, 2014.

Dr. Yoo started the event with her presentation discussing social media in the William Paterson University professional communication classrooms. She touched on courses that utilized social media and provided an overview of the benefits of integrating social media into graduate coursework. Next was Kat Barnet, whose presentation was based on her master project topic of brand loyalty and social media. She used Pinterest as a focal point to discuss the relationship between brand loyalty and online communities.

Kristin Kuscin used seven coding categories to analyze tweets from sports organizations and players: game day coverage, promotional, informational, behind the scenes/personal, retweets, response to fans and other. Izabella de Souza looked at business-to-business social media marketing, focusing on the tactics and tools businesses use to communicate with one another. According to her findings, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook were the top business-to-business social networks as of 2013.

Dr. Crick, who is also the director of the New Jersey Center for Social Media Research, took on YouTube with his presentation, “Power and Surveillance in YouTube: Is Everybody Watching?” He noted that over 100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute, and according to his research, participants are not concerned with giving up personal information and do not care who is watching them.
A change of pace for Randi London:

WP’s Professional Communication program in her own words

T he WP professional communication program has interesting courses and a flexible night schedule to accommodate my needs. Leaving my position as senior vice president/management supervisor at Weber Shandwick to raise a family, I needed a program that allows for a school-life balance. Here at William Paterson, consistent course start times most semesters has allowed me to plan my children’s and my schedules well in advance.

As I entered the program, the courses challenged me and re-grounded me in the academic world. It has been extremely helpful to be a student and to not only enjoy the work, but also observe multiple teaching styles and approaches from various professors.

Some of my favorite courses are:

Survey in Professional Writing – a challenging, but great course, where in order to succeed, you needed to employ resourceful, critical thinking and strong writing skills for every project.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – One of the reasons that teaching appeals to me so much is the ability to pass on knowledge and help the next generation of communication professionals understand and navigate the public relations industry. CSR is all about going beyond the economic needs of a business to address social, environmental, and employee rights issues. Professor Brown is a terrific presenter, balancing information sharing with engaging class exercises. I also find the mix of undergraduate and graduate students an interesting approach, because everyone has something unique to offer.

“Ultimately my goal is to teach at the college level, and this program is the first step in getting there.”

Degree fuels Marc Piro’s career advancement at Valley National Bank

A class of 2013 professional communication graduate, Marc Piro serves as the first vice president of marketing/public relations at Valley National Bank in Wayne, N.J. Piro completed his MA under the Corporate and Strategic Communication track.

When and why did you decide to go back to school?

A few years ago I decided that I wanted to take my job to the next level. I wanted to prove that I was a valuable member of the staff at Valley National Bank and the best way to achieve this objective was to seek a quality education that would give me a comprehensive overview of emerging trends in the communication industry. By enrolling in the professional communication program I could take the lessons I learned in the classroom and apply them to the projects I was assigned at the bank.

What made you choose William Paterson University and the Professional Communication program?

I earned an undergraduate degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing in 1999 at William Paterson, so I was familiar with the university. I also live and work in Wayne, so convenience was a factor as well. After having some preliminary discussions with Professor Casey Lum (who headed up the program at that time), I could almost feel the enthusiasm and excitement the university had for this program. I knew immediately that it was something I wanted to be a part of.

How has the MA elevated your career with Valley National Bank?

It has made a remarkable difference. By studying under highly qualified educators such as Lorra Brown, Melissa Bass, Angie Yoo, Sharmila Ferris, Joann Lee, Tina Lesher and Regina Pappalardo, I have acquired the knowledge and skills required to help me advance my career. Many of these courses provided a base of knowledge enabling me to master several emerging communication fields at the bank. Since enrolling in the program nearly two and a half years ago, I have been assigned as project leader on several bank initiatives and have been promoted to a senior management level position as well.

How often do you use the skills you learned in the program?

On a daily basis. From writing a memo to developing an integrated marketing plan to exploring a presence in social media, the lessons I learned throughout my studies have an influence on everything I do.

“A few years ago I decided that I wanted to take my job to the next level. I wanted to prove that I was a valuable member of the staff at Valley National Bank.”

Marc Piro
Professor Kyung-Hyan “Angie” Yoo completed a study examining the world’s top 10 hotel groups’ Facebook communication.

Yoo presented her project on the world’s top 10 hotel groups’ Facebook communication at the 2013 Tourism Sciences Society of Korea (Tosok) International Tourism Conference in Korea this July. The project developed Facebook communication measurement standards and defined the current status of social media marketing in the major hotel groups. At the conference, Yoo received comments and feedback, allowing her to revise her study and measurement tool. She has plans to test it again in another setting and publish the results in an academic journal.

“Only a small percentage of hotel groups engage in a two-way communication on their Facebook pages. Many hotel groups are using their Facebook pages to deliver their messages rather than create conversations with the fans,” Yoo explains.

A professor at William Paterson University, and an active faculty member within the professional communication program, Yoo involves graduate students in her research projects, working together, and guiding them through the research process.

“I believe collaborative research allows students to learn a scientific approach for a research question and gives them an opportunity to see the world from a different perspective,” says Yoo. “Participating in research projects also gives graduate students an opportunity to present their work at academic and professional conferences and publish their findings.”

As the only institution in the State of New Jersey committed to social media research and its cultural and technological impact in our daily lives, the New Jersey Center for Social Media Research sets forth the following mission:

I. To provide current qualitative and quantitative social media research grounded in traditional scholarship but open to new research methods suited to the study of social media.

II. To submit ongoing research and papers to peer-reviewed journals, in print and electronic media, that contribute to the overall scholarship and knowledge in the area of social media and communication.

III. To seek out, apply for and secure funding in order to maintain the Center’s research activities.
Prospective students must have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution and an undergraduate grade point average of 2.75 (out of 4.0) in their major. Applications should include two academic letters of reference, a writing sample, and graduate record exam (GRE) scores. Further information is available through the Office of Graduate Admissions at 973.720.3641 or wpunj.edu/graduate.

Considering graduate school, but aren’t sure? You may take up to three classes (nine credits) as a non-degree student before formally applying to our program!

Now accepting applications for the Fall 2014 Semester!
Apply online at www.wpunj.edu/graduate

M.A. candidates unveiled research findings in social media marketing, corporate communication, higher education, professional sports and more!

Randi London
“Employer Perceptions and Employee Competencies: Are Employers Getting What They Want From Entry-Level Employees?”

Brian Fanning
“Are There Retention-related Benefits to University Utilization of Social Media Platforms?”

Jacqueline S. Anderson
“Gender Stereotyping and The Jersey Shore”

Sima Monfared
“Avatar Appearance and Gender Identity in Second Life”

Kristin Kuscin
“Social Media: A Marketing Tool for Sports Organizations”

Kelly Moran
“An Examination of the Relationship Between Fashion Blogs and Consumer Purchasing Decisions”

Kat Barnet
“Brand Loyalty and Online Brand Communities: Is Brand Loyalty Being Strengthened Through Social Media?”

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M.A. candidates take one last photo before presenting their findings.

Brian Fanning discusses results engagement from his presentation.