Dear COM Alumni,

Welcome to the second edition of COMConnect, a newsletter dedicated to CMU’s Communication Alumni. We are excited to keep you informed about your fellow alumni and about COM events at CMU. In particular, we hope to spotlight alumni and their experiences in future editions of the newsletter, so please email us your news at comconnect@cmich.edu.

In addition to hearing from our Alumni, we also enjoy meeting you during our alumni events or during your trips back to campus. Please connect with us on facebook or twitter (@cmichcom). Looking forward to hearing from you or seeing you soon!

All the best,

Bill Dailey, Chair

A Message from your Department Chair...

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We Want to Hear from YOU!

Haven’t filled out our alumni survey? Click here to tell us what you’ve been up to. We want to stay in touch and add you to our interactive alumni map! Where in the world are our CMU Communication Alumni? Let’s find out...

Have questions, comments, concerns, or news? Email us at comconnect@cmich.edu

Follow us on Facebook or find us on Twitter: @cmichcom
Faculty News

The possibility of alien life has been a debate since the times of the Ancient Greeks, according to Dr. Joseph Packer, who explores the arguments of these debates in his new book, *Alien Life and Human Purpose: A Rhetorical Examination through History*. Dr. Packer is the current Director of Forensics and Debate at CMU. “I was doing some research about alien life for debate, so I had a lot of raw information and I needed an area to study for my master’s program,” said Dr. Packer. This is Dr. Packer’s first published book, and he is currently collaborating on another book about argumentation for a Chinese audience. The book is in the stages of translation and was started after Dr. Packer taught debate for a year in China. Dr. Packer’s research interests also include weird fiction and philosophical pessimism. This is Dr. Packer’s third year at CMU. He says he most enjoys working with the grad students and his fellow professors.

Hometown: Ann Arbor, MI

Education: B.A. at Michigan State University; M.A. & Ph.D. at Pennsylvania State University

Current Research: Cancer patient treatment decisions

Dr. Kirsten Weber is the newest Communication Area faculty member to receive tenure. Dr. Weber earned tenure this spring and is now the Communication Area Coordinator for the 2015-2016 school year. She teaches a variety of theory-based and interpersonal communication courses at both the graduate and undergraduate level, and her favorite teaching moments are when she gets to help students see the world differently by applying theory in a practical way. When asked what makes the CMU Communication Area unique, Dr. Weber responded, “The students and my colleagues! I couldn’t ask for better students or more supportive colleagues!”

Retired Faculty

Dr. Nancy Buerkel-Rothfuss and Dr. Pamela Gray both retired at the end of the Fall 2015 semester. We were able to catch up with Dr. Buerkel-Rothfuss, and we hope to hear about Dr. Gray’s plans in the future.

It has come to the end of a semester and also the end for Dr. Nancy Buerkel-Rothfuss’s journey at CMU. After 35 years of teaching at CMU, Dr. Buerkel-Rothfuss, or Dr. BR as most of her students call her, is officially retiring and will begin a new chapter in her life.

“I am definitely going to miss teaching,” Dr. BR said. Most students remember Dr. BR from the COM 401 Capstone class. Although the class was considered one of the toughest classes, she claims it was one of her favorites.

“I love that course because it helps students make the transition between being a really well-trained undergraduate student and someone who is ready to go out there and get a job as a communication professional,” Dr. BR said. “You can see the transition happen and it is very exciting, and when they have the kind of experience that the course is designed to give them, it is really good for the student.”

Although she will no longer be teaching, Dr. BR will be dabbling in some interests she has had and can begin to cross off her to-do list. She owns a resort and would like to be more involved with it and to one day become a master gardener.

Even though Dr. BR will be leaving as a teacher, she did mention she would like to come back to CMU and take art classes and volunteer to help people, animals, and artists. The majority of Dr. BR’s overall teaching was at CMU, and she said she loves the Communication Area compared to a lot of others because it is a positive, energizing place to work in. Although students have learned a lot from Dr. BR, she recognizes that she has learned a lot from her students and stresses the importance of a teacher-student relationship.

“I enjoy the dialogue that comes with communicating with people and getting their perspective…I like the conversation that gets us to come closer to a place that could be called right,” Dr. BR said.

Dr. BR has been involved in dozens of research areas. Her main focus has been in family communication, media socialization communication, interpersonal relationship development, and environmental communication.

When asking Dr. BR if she would like to add anything, her response sums up her overall experience.

“I am excited to leave, but sad to go.” Dr. BR said.
Krista Voss, ‘15
CMU: BA in Integrative Public Relations, ABT for MA in Communication, Assistant Basic Course Director, Public Relations Assistant, & Graduate Teaching Assistant
Hometown: Remus, MI
Current Position: Marketing and Communications Specialist, Avfuel Corporation

Krista Voss did not expect to be working in aviation when she finished her coursework for an MA in Communication, but Krista says her experiences at CMU prepared her for her career nonetheless. “The COM department helped me think more critically about subject matter, gave me the necessary tools to conduct research, and gave me the confidence to work creatively and think outside of the box,” said Krista. As the Marketing and Communications Specialist, Krista handles writing and editing for her company and colleagues. She loves the atmosphere of her job and how it connects businesses, culture, and people with a strong impact on global connectivity. CMU Memories: Krista’s favorite memory was staying up all night waiting in line for tickets to the first concert in McGuirk Arena—Ke$ha—with her friends from Larzelere Hall.

Scott Hillman, ‘10
CMU: BAA in Communication (Organizational Focus) & Minors in Event Management and Leadership
Hometown: Macomb, MI
Current Position: Assistant Director of Admissions, Chicago Outreach for CMU

Scott Hillman is a 2010 graduate from CMU and now visits high schools in the city of Chicago and attends college fairs while representing CMU. He mainly discusses the features of CMU, but also makes admission decisions on applicants. Helping students decide what to do with their lives and educating them on the possibilities are some of the many reasons Scott decided to be a part of this career. Scott went on and received his MA in higher education administration from New York University. He graduated in 2012, which helped lead him into his career as an Assistant Director of Admissions. He learned how to properly conduct research and gained new knowledge on public speaking techniques. When Scott is not working, he enjoys running, reading, watching TV shows, traveling, and trying new restaurants. CMU Memories: Scott’s favorite memory in the communication area at CMU was taking any class with Shelly Hinck. Know of an alumnus we should feature? Email us at comconnect@cmich.edu
The COM undergraduate students were busy this semester in their COM 353 and COM 401 courses. In COM 353: Small Group Communication, students broke up into six different groups and planned fundraisers for local organizations. Each group held a short event on campus where they helped collect items for their organization. They collected for many organizations including: Vowels Elementary School, Isabella County Women’s Shelter, Women’s Aid Service, Christmas Outreach, United Way, and Isabella Country Soup Kitchen. The class was able to collect winter coats for families in need, monetary donations for a local family being helped by United Way, food supplies for the local soup kitchen, and much more.

In COM 401: Communication Capstone, students rolled back their sleeves and got to work like professionals during the course of the semester. As part of the capstone course, students came up with ideas, planned, and executed four different charity events. One group organized a Zombie Run event to benefit the Special Olympics Area 7. Helping children was the focus of two groups, one of which sponsored a Kings and Queens dance for West Intermediate School. The other group hosted an event at the Discovery Museum for families to donate art supplies and enjoy the museum, too. Finally, the last group hosted a spaghetti dinner to support the American Legion in Midland. All in all, the Communication Area has much to be proud of with this year’s undergraduate student efforts.

Our Com Students: Involved inside and out of the classroom

Lacey Johnson, MA Student

Hometown: Southgate, MI
Hobby: Bodybuilding Competitions

Lacey enjoys a busy, strict lifestyle. She not only is teaching COM 101, but she also is very active at the gym and training for bodybuilding competitions. Lacey started to get involved in these competitions as a means of health and fitness and spends about two hours at the gym every day. Just like in graduate school, she said doing these competitions means staying “internally motivated and setting goals.” Even though she is on stage for nearly 10 seconds during these competitions, Lacey still likes seeing all her hard work and progress come to an end and feeling confident with not just her body but also with her mindset. She said the best part about graduate school so far is her teaching experience and being able to see her students recognize how a communication concept is applied in their life.

Ryan Rooney, MA Student

Hometown: Grand Rapids, MI
Career Goals: Professor, Researcher, or Owner of a Restaurant Brewery

Ryan leads a very active life juggling three jobs. He is a bartender at Hunter’s Ale House where he said he can carry on a social life and simultaneously build professional skills to one day open up his own brewery restaurant. He also is a musician who plays piano, guitar, and drums, and he occasionally sings. Ryan’s favorite instrument however is the bass guitar, which he says is the instrument “holding it all together.” Ryan’s life as a graduate student and teaching assistant is his top priority, where he says his main goal is to find something that he really likes because then it does not feel like “work.” His favorite memory at CMU so far in the communication department has been the diversity of interest with the communication researchers and looking closer at all the scholarly publications instead of limiting to just one area of research and being stuck with it.

Undergraduate Projects
Making a difference in and out of the classroom

The COM undergraduate students were busy this semester in their COM 353 and COM 401 courses. In COM 353: Small Group Communication, students broke up into six different groups and planned fundraisers for local organizations. Each group held a short event on campus where they helped collect items for their organization. They collected for many organizations including: Vowels Elementary School, Isabella County Women’s Shelter, Women’s Aid Service, Christmas Outreach, United Way, and Isabella Country Soup Kitchen. The class was able to collect winter coats for families in need, monetary donations for a local family being helped by United Way, food supplies for the local soup kitchen, and much more.
The CMU Communication Area is to host its 2nd annual Michigan Undergraduate and Graduate communication conference on February 26, 2016. The conference is open to the public and allows students the opportunity to showcase their work, speak with others who share similar research interests, and receive feedback from scholars in the field. Last year the MUG communication conference hosted student presenters from nine different universities, and we hope to see even more colleges and universities represented in the future. The schedule for this year’s conference is:

MUG Conference:
Graduate & Undergraduate Students Present at CMU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noon - 2:00pm</td>
<td>Presenter Check-In (Event free and open to the public)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm - 1:20pm</td>
<td>Welcome and Keynote Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30pm - 2:00pm</td>
<td>Panel Session 1: Media, Technology, and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10pm - 2:40pm</td>
<td>Panel Session 2: Communication, Organizing, and Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50pm - 3:20pm</td>
<td>Panel Session 3: Changing Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30pm - 4:00pm</td>
<td>Panel Session 4: Family Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:10pm - 4:40pm</td>
<td>Panel Session 5: Messages that Matter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Coming in 2016...

- **January 18**: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. CommUnity Peace March & Vigil. Find full week of activities [here](#).
- **February 26**: COM will host the MUG Communication Conference. For information, click [here](#).
- **March 19 & 20**: CMU’s 27th Annual “Celebrating Life” Pow Wow. Purchase tickets [here](#).
- **April 13 - 17**: COM Alumni and Friends will gather at the 2015 Central States Communication Association Reception in Grand Rapids, MI.
- **May 7**: Spring ‘16 commencement for Undergraduate, Graduate, and Doctoral students.

2015 Highlights & Events

**August:**
- This Fall CMU welcomed more than 3,400 freshmen to the university. For leadership safari highlights click [here](#).

**September:**
- Sept. 12: CMU longstanding tradition, CMU & You Day went on without a hitch.

**October:**
- Oct 13 & Oct 28: Three COM professors assist students in critically watching the presidential primary debates using twitter at #CMUDebateWatch.
- Oct. 16-18: COM Master’s students traveled to Michigan State University for the Organizational Communication Mini Conference.

**November:**
- Nov. 19-22: COM alumni, students, and professors gathered at the 2015 National Communication Association Conference in Las Vegas, NV.

**December:**
- Dec. 4: President Ross hosted a town hall discussion on diversity and inclusion at CMU. Watch President Ross open the discussion [here](#).
- Dec. 19: Fall commencement for Undergraduate, Graduate, and Doctoral students.
Congrats 2015 COM Grads!

MA Theses

May 2015

Kerry Harger - “Toward What Goal Are We Moving?” Dr. C. Everett Koop’s Call for a Smoke-Free Society and the Evolution of the Anti-Smoking Movement

Katharine Hodgdon - The Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow: Roger’s Diffusion of Innovation and Social Media Communication for Disney’s Carousel of Progress

August 2015

Ashley Sharp - Integrating Masculine and Feminine Rhetorical Strategies: Hillary Rodham Clinton’s Response to Gendered Double Binds

Amy Urbanowski-Nowak - The Transformative Effects of Forensic Participation

December 2015

Kimberly Daniels - Avatar Customization: Effects of Nonverbal Representations Inside Virtual Worlds

Undergraduate

May 2015

• Juliana Attard
• Jonathan Blackwell
• Cortney Bos
• Emily Boss
• Benjamin Cardenas
• Haley Case
• Catherine Coronado
• Taylor DeVilling
• Jennifer Drum
• Molly Egan
• Hope Foreman
• Luke Ghiardi
• Joshua Greenhalge
• Breann Hartenburg
• Kaylie Hess
• Emily Hoen
• Adam Hotchkiss
• Katelyn Humphrey
• Emily Jerome
• Lacey Johnson
• Kyle Kenny

• Joanna Mansour
• Shelby Martin
• Elizabeth Mazorowicz
• Alaina McGowan
• Emmanuel Ogu
• Brittany Perry
• Jesse Pifko
• Heaven Piper
• Shayna Prihoda
• Alexis Sheehan
• Eric Steiner
• Derek Thiel
• Mackenzie Tremper
• Stephen Voglewede
• Nathan Wiebenga
• Kent Woody
• Kevin York

August 2015

• Lorreal Jones
• Aaron McCord

December 2015

• Sophie Adams
• Katie Bielskis
• Larry Biggers
• Briana Bosworth
• Sierra Branch
• Dakota Burch
• Whitney Butler
• David Douglass
• Sott Eder
• Emily Fisher
• Josh Garcia
• Amanda Glowacki
• Brittany Hargraves
• Kayle Harris
• Brandon Hilt
• Collin Jacobson
• Grant Klingler
• Courtney Marble
• Aaron Martin-Green
• Cameron McGill
• Quin Miller
• Melki Mourad
• Michelle Sanchez
• Jesse Snyder
• Zachary Spearman
• Austin Thomas
• Vincent Thurman
• Courtney Wertman
• Chelsea Zobl

Thank you Alumni & Friends

The COM Area gratefully acknowledges the generosity of its alumni and friends. You, too, can make a significant impact by giving back to the COM Area. For information on making contributions, please contact Dr. William Dailey, Chair, at 919-774-3177 or by email to daile1wo@cmich.edu.

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