

COMMUNICATION CONNECTION



UNC CHARLOTTE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

GRADUATE PROGRAM ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



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| Health Communication | Media | Organizational Communication |
| Public Relations | Rhetoric | Journalism |

Communication Studies
UNC Charlotte 



LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Greetings from UNC Charlotte's graduate program in Communication Studies!

I'm delighted to present this year's edition of our alumni newsletter, Communication Connection. This newsletter is designed specifically with you in mind.

For those of you who graduated before my arrival, I'm Christine Davis. I've been at UNC-Charlotte since 2005, and the Graduate Coordinator for our program since 2010.

I'm pleased to let you know that we're in our 15th year of our graduate program and – as of this year -- we've graduated over 100 MA students. Our students and alumni are doing great things – going on to doctoral or professional programs; working in industry and non-profits all over the world; teaching Communication Studies students domestically and abroad. We are so proud of every one of you.

We feel that it is in the best interest of our program, students and alumni that we maintain a strong relationship that links us all to one another. With this annual newsletter, we aim to keep you up to date on significant happenings within the program and among our outstanding group of alumni. This newsletter is a great opportunity to maintain our important connections and friendships that you formed when you were here in Charlotte. We also have multiple other ongoing opportunities to keep in touch: our alumni Facebook page, our alumni LinkedIn page, and our alumni listserv. If you haven't been receiving the listserv announcements, that means I don't have your current email. Please contact me to be sure you receive our important information, job postings, and other announcements. Please also 'like' us on Facebook *UNC Charlotte Communication Studies MA Program Alumni* and connect with me on LinkedIn so I can add you to our alumni group.

This coming year (2015/2016), I will be on RDL (research leave) working on several book projects. Beginning July 1, Dr. Jon Crane will be interim Graduate Program Director in my absence. I feel very confident that I am leaving the program in such good hands. I plan to return to the department and the graduate program in Fall 2016, fully rested and greatly published.

Enjoy reading this alumni newsletter. Exciting things are going on in Colvard, and faculty, students, and alumni are on the move! Please keep in touch and let us know how you are doing!

Dr. Christine S. Davis
Christine.s.davis@uncc.edu

ALUMNI FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/UNC-Charlotte-Communication-Studies-MA-Program-Alumni/1556485631296425>

ALUMNI LINKEDIN:

http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4909468&go back=.gmp_4909468

EDITOR, MAIN CONTRIBUTOR, AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY: BRITTANY C. PAILTHORPE



ALUMNI UPDATES

Communicating Entertainment: Alumnus Works at NBCUniversal

Spring 2014 graduate, *Kene Onwugholu* was a lover of media from a very early age. Moving from Nigeria with his family at the age of 8, Kene always had “a love and passion for the entertainment industry, and knew [he] wanted to work in it someday.” A student of business, media, and public relations, Kene received his BS in Business Administration – Marketing from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2011. Deciding to further his education, Kene remained at UNCC taking advantage of generalist program to pursue his life’s joys, and successfully wrote and defended his thesis entitled: “The Sound of Music: A Historiography on the Publicity Efforts of the Movie Musical that Saved Twentieth Century Fox.” His favorite pastimes include “watching movies and television, reading books, traveling, and meeting new people,” which undoubtedly influenced his historiographical communication research.

Kene is on his way towards fulfilling his dreams, showing how one’s passions can culminate into a the start of a successful career. Kene earned a highly competitive position as a Page at NBC Universal. He has worked in sunny Los Angeles since the start of 2015, and took time out of his busy schedule to update us, and share some insight on his time in our program:



“Graduate school is not easy, but in the end, it is worth it. Your master’s degree is something that sets you apart from others and no one can ever take it away from you.”

1. What have you been up to since graduating from the UNC Charlotte Communication Studies MA Program? *In January 2015, I moved to Los Angeles, California to be a West Coast Page in the NBC Page Program, which is a career development program at NBCUniversal that gives participants an opportunity to rotate in various assignments at the company, including public relations, marketing, development, production, and so on. Furthermore, pages on the west coast assist with industry events like film premieres, Television Critics Association Press Tour, the Los Angeles Upfronts, pilot screenings, Golden Globes Awards, and Emmy Awards. The program not only acts as a training ground for careers in television, film, and entertainment, but it also functions as a pipeline to careers at NBCUniversal and other television networks and film studios. Through this program, I aim to begin a career in entertainment public relations, mainly film or television publicity, talent relations, and events.*

2. How did our program prepare or help you for your current position? *The Communication Studies MA Program prepared me for my current position by affording me experiences that I added on my resume that made me desirable to the individuals that hire for the NBC Page Program. When I was in the graduate program, I was a graduate teaching and research assistant in the communication studies department; I was an active member of Public Relations Student Society of America; I was on the executive board for CSGSA; I studied abroad in London; and I completed a summer communication internship at Blumenthal Performing Arts Center. These graduate activities and associations impressed the hiring managers at NBCUniversal, which led to attaining a job offer.*

3. What about our program (generally, academically, and socially) was the most notable/memorable for you? *The most notable memory for me was partaking in the London International Public Relations summer seminar. It was an unbelievable learning experience that I will treasure forever. Academically, I loved getting the opportunity to write a master’s thesis on a subject that combined my love for public relations, entertainment, and history. It was a long and arduous process, but I loved every minute of it! The most notable social aspect of the program was the long-lasting friendships I made with my cohort. We were continuously there for each other and were constantly willing to help each other. It was always a good time when we all gathered together.*

5. Do you have any advice for future graduates? *I have three pieces of advice for future graduates. 1. Have courage and be kind. With courage and kindness, anything is possible. 2. Network and make lasting connections. It’s the truth that most times in life, it’s not what you know but rather who you know. 3. Always follow your passion because that, and that alone, will lead you to your happy ending.*



ALUMNI UPDATES

A New Alumna Abroad: Recent Graduate Robin Cavin



Robin Cavin and friend Paul at Brighton Beach

As a student of culture, Robin Cavin was all but home during her summer studying abroad in London England. Photo booths, fish & chips, art, architecture, and of course, an unparalleled education, made the annual International Public Relations Summer Seminar in London, a staple of her time in our MA program. Although Robin, the 98th graduate of the UNC Charlotte Communication Studies graduate program, is not explicitly a student in public relations, getting a crash course in any subject is always greeted as a welcome chance to expand her impressive resume.

Graduated in Spring 2015, Robin's research is just as dynamic as London town. Centering on media and genre, particularly TV and Film, with a focus in horror, Cavin put her three undergraduate degrees to use (BS Communications, B.A. Psychology, BSBA Marketing), and successfully defended her comprehensive examinations. Although PR played a supporting role in her research and capstone, her comps focused on media and film theory, and a knowledge of media relations was always useful in her other research examining issues of fear, unconventional organizational communication, and issues of technology.

Robin reveled in every opportunity to experience and learn about new culture, and this trip was no exception. During this summer course, and throughout the whole of your MA you are "expected to explore and experience, whether on your own, or with other students," Cavin says, "to join a culture is the best experience in understanding it."

As a former teaching assistant for communication theory and mass and new media, Robin encourages her former and future students, to take advantage of study abroad opportunities when they arise. Robin emphasizes that being receptive to "numerous perspectives" is the key to making the most out of studying abroad and any professional experience. Since Communication Studies students are taught from the start to embrace the interdisciplinary nature of our field, well mate, Robin already had a head start.



Brighton Ferris Wheel by Robin Cavin

From Grad School to Law School: Assistant DA Mary Beth Usher



After graduating from the UNCC Communication Studies Graduate program in 2009, alumni *Mary Beth Usher*, has faced extreme diversity on her way to becoming an Assistant District Attorney for North Carolina's Union County. Her father's illness inspired her shift to study Health Communication as an undergraduate, where she graduated with a B.A. from UNC Charlotte in 2007. In the UNCC Communication Studies Graduate Program, Mary Beth was a research assistant for Dr. Dan Grano. Her own research interests were in sports culture, and prepared her to begin Law School in the fall of 2009.

Dr. Grano, also Usher's thesis advisor, said that Mary-Beth, "was incredibly smart, and always had a great critical insight," that would ensure her success as a lawyer. An accident forced Mary Beth to defer her enrollment to Law School for one year. In the interim, she taught Public Speaking with the UNCC Communication Studies Department, before starting at Wake Forest in 2010. Since passing of the North Carolina Bar Exam in summer 2013, and working for the Union County District Attorney's office since fall 2013, Mary Beth is an example of how versatile, resourceful, and resilient, our alumnus can be.

Next Step – Ph.Ds.: Exciting Alumni Admissions

Congratulations to alumna **Morgan Smalls**, who has been admitted into the Communication, Culture & Media Studies doctoral program at Howard University's School of Communications. She is also the recipient of the Frederick Douglass Doctoral Scholars Fellowship.

Congratulations to alumna **Kiya Ward** who has been accepted to Princeton University Seminary and will be attending Emory University Candler School of Theology.

Congratulations to new alumna and former CSGSA President **Jaclyn Marsh** who will be attending The University of Nebraska in the Fall. Jaclyn will begin completing her Ph.D in familial communication under renowned communication studies scholar Dawn Braithwaite.



FACULTY UPDATES

Welcome Sweeney Quinlan Carbone to Our Extended Family!



A heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Maggie Quinlan, her husband James Carbone and the rest of their family on the arrival of beautiful baby Sweeney Q. Carbone. Named after her grandmother, Norma Sweeney Marlette, Sweeney was born October 22, 2014 at 8:06 PM. She weighed 7 lbs 13 oz and 21.75 inches long. Dr. Davis holds Sweeney on the left. She is so beautiful!

A professional congratulations to Dr. Maggie Quinlan and colleague's who's documentary "A Beautiful Remedy." has been picked up for national distribution. For more information on the film see page 6.

Graduate Director Awarded Leave: Dr. Jon Crane Named Interim Program Director

Dr. Christine S. Das was awarded the Reassignment of Duties Leave for Fall 2015-Spring 2016. During her research sabbatical she will be working on several book projects concerning end-of-life communication and research methods. The first book, co-authored with Interim Graduate Director Dr. Jon Crane, titled *Crossing Over: Media and Mortality in the Dead Zone*, is about the relationship between film and death. The second project is a book titled *Communication in Focus Groups: Understanding Group Process and Discourse*. The third book project she will be working on is *Walking the Thin Line: Communication at End of Life*. She and her co-authors of *Straight Talk About Communication Research Methods*, will also be working on revisions for the 3rd edition of their textbook. Congratulations Dr. Davis and Dr. Crane!

Dr. Alan Freitag Awarded Second Fulbright Fellowship



In the midst of a transition to a position in The Graduate School, Dr. Alan Freitag was awarded his second Fulbright Fellowship. Freitag, distinguished Communication Studies Professor, PRSA Fellow, and retired United States Air Force Lt. Col., will be in Poznan, Poland, with opportunities to travel and guest lecture across the Baltic region, from September 2015 to July 2016. As the appointee to the Distinguished Chair Fulbright fellowship, Freitag will be teaching both undergraduate and graduate Public Relations at the Poznan University of Economics.

What will you miss most about teaching at UNCC?

That's an easy one. I'll miss the one-on-one conversations with students in my office. Of all the activities I've enjoyed here – teaching; research and writing projects; professional, community and campus service – I find these interpersonal dialogues the most rewarding and satisfying use of my time. These are the times I can guide a student – graduate or undergraduate – through explorations of challenging academic issues, career trajectories, even personal problems. These are the times the student and I can develop a sense of trust, and perhaps I can help the student evaluate the many decisions to be made at this most critical juncture in life's path. My obligation goes well beyond imparting discipline-specific knowledge to the young men and women I'm privileged to teach and advise; I need to contribute to their character and help them recognize and realize their full potential and purpose. That's a humbling responsibility.

GOOD LUCK DR. FREITAG!



FACULTY UPDATES

UNC Charlotte Communication Studies Says Thank You and Bids Farewell to Dr. Jillian Tullis



Parting from UNC Charlotte this fall, Dr. Jillian Tullis will begin her new position this August in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of San Diego. This opportunity will allow Tullis to engage more with undergraduate students, and collaborate with others across disciplines.

1. How would you describe your time here at UNC Charlotte?

My time at UNC Charlotte has been great; a real learning experience. I've made some life-long friends here and the students have influenced the way I approach teaching in a positive way. I have had a lot of jobs in a lot of industries and I don't think I could have asked for a better first full-time academic job.

2. Do you have a particular memory, of your graduate students or any grad classes, that you wish to share?

I have so many fond memories of the graduate students I've had the privilege of working with at UNC Charlotte. I'm not sure I could pinpoint a particular memory. Graduate students are so much different from undergrads, you have closer relationships with them and they really keep you on your toes. Because they are seeing theory and research through fresher eyes, I find they challenge me to see communication in new ways. I've witnessed students receive awards for the work they do in our classes, graduate and start careers, some of them even come back and teach for us as adjuncts. One student quit smoking because of an assignment in my class, some turn a kernel of an idea they've worked on in my class into successful theses and dissertations. One of my advisees was recently admitted into a doctoral program. I guess the coolest thing is to see graduate students evolve and to have been even a small part of that is rewarding.

3. The Peru summer seminars always sound like amazing experiences. Why do you think it is important to encourage students to study abroad?

Studying abroad gives you a perspective on the world you just can't get in the classroom. When you're in a country where you don't speak the language or you stand out because you look different or dress different, you can't help but be moved. You have all kinds of emotions from anxiety to excitement and maybe even some fear. And while you might realize there are some differences among cultures, I think most people walk away realizing how alike we are. That said, I'm also struck by how much we have here in the United States, we are a country full of abundance. Most of us have clean water, plenty of food, habitable shelter, quality healthcare and education and when you travel abroad it becomes obvious how easily we take these things for granted. But hopefully the experience of traveling and studying abroad, especially to a country like Peru makes one appreciative, but also interested in helping others with less.

4. What will you miss about the UNCC graduate students? What will you miss about the grad faculty?

Our faculty and students are really smart. It's the best part of being on a college campus, you get to share ideas with people who are intelligent and engage in thought-provoking conversations. It's a real privilege to explore ideas. It's something I hope everyone gets to do unencumbered (is that a word) at least once. To me, that's what graduate school is all about – too bad it's only part of what being a professor is about because sometimes I miss sitting in the classroom and just thinking.

5. Can you tell the alumni a little bit about your new job?

I'll be working at the University of San Diego, it's a private Catholic institution. It's difficult to anticipate all of the differences from afar. The Department of Communication Studies is smaller with fewer majors. I expect to work more closely with undergrads than I do here and since there is no graduate program any contact I have with graduate students will be from other disciplines like nursing. You can see the Pacific Ocean from campus – it's really beautiful. I'm pretty sure there are no more snow days in my future.

6. Do you have any advice for the UNCC Communication Studies Graduate program alumni?

Stay in contact with your professors and give back to those students who are coming up behind you when you can. It's helpful for current students to know they'll survive and succeed in the program and beyond

GOOD LUCK DR. TULLIS!



CONFERENCE RECAP

CCA: Greenville, SC



Graduate students Jaclyn Marsh and James Hooks

With the support of the Communication Studies graduate faculty, their classmates, and program alumni, M.A. candidates James Hooks, Jaclyn Marsh, Emily Thomas, and Brittany Pailthorpe presented on panels as part of the 2014 Annual Carolinas Communication Association (CCA) Convention. Interpreting the conference theme, “Communicating Civic Responsibility & Reconciliation,” their topics spoke to the construction of community and identity in virtual and mediated environments. The conference was held in Greenville, South Carolina on the weekend of the 3rd of October. Emily Thomas and Brittany Pailthorpe were finalists for the Mary E. Jarrard Graduate Award. Everyone at the convention received niner-green tote bags courtesy of the Communication Studies Graduate Student Association (CSGSA).

100TH Annual National Communication Association Conference

NCA: Chicago, IL

Celebration was theme of the 100th anniversary of the National Communication Association Conference. Scholars and students traveled to Chicago, Illinois to reflect on the past of our discipline in order to improve our future. The five-day conference facilitated a space for the discussion of concepts like disenfranchisement, utility, focus, integration, and individual and holistic identity. The UNCC Department of Communication Studies made a proud showing, notably Graduate Director Dr. Christine Davis' spearheading of the brand new Communication as Social Construction Division, and Department Chair Dr. Shawn Long's moderation of the opening session..

Graduate student Brittany Pailthorpe co-taught a short course with Dr. Davis and her *Straight Talk about Communication Research Methods* co-author Dr. Ken Lachlan (UCONN) on teaching undergraduate and graduate research methods. MA candidate and CSGSA president Jaclyn Marsh presented original research at the conference. Marsh's paper, "An Analogical Criticism of the Social Constructs Being Communicated to Infants Through *Baby Einstein* DVDs " was part of the top student paper panel for the Communication as Social Construction Division. MA student Maria Jose Armendariz was inducted into Charlotte's MU Chapter of Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. First year graduate students Alex Kello and Jade Myers also attended.



I dove into my first NCA Conference this past November. The crowds were tumultuous, yet inviting seas. The Chicago cold was biting, but authentic, and nothing compared to the air of genuine interest in all research areas despite your affiliation or degree status. Attending NCA builds your individual capital, and gave me the opportunity to brand myself as a product and producer of the underrated work at UNC Charlotte. NCA suggests to young scholars that though crafting your identity and ensuring a departmental future are serious endeavors, there is nothing more vital for a graduate student than meeting your future mentors and peers, sharing laughs, and growing closer to yours and younger cohorts. Being in the business of knowledge is, and will never be, a solitary occupation, and although it will only be my name on my diploma in May, conferences like NCA remind me that I carry traces of those people and places I learn, speak, and grow with. Though my current affiliation will change, just like the topics, panels, and themes of every NCA conference—post-inauguration, I will always be a conventioneer. Post-graduation, I will always be a forty-niner.

- Brittany Pailthorpe



CONFERENCE RECAP

IACS: Charlotte, NC

Held in the beautiful UNCC Center City Building the weekend of March 6-8th, the 8th Annual Summit for the International Association for Communication and Sport (IACS), convened with over 120 scholars, professionals, and students, from across the country and world. The IACS showcased innovative, and timely research on the intersection of communication and sport. What made this summit unique, was its sense of community. All perspectives, methodologies, and sub-fields of research were welcome, with the topic of sport as the overarching thread. Work presented ranged from media coverage, national culture, and the relationships between sport and race, place, memory, sexuality, and capitalism.



The keynote speaker was Dr. Michael Real, author of the seminal essay, "Super Bowl: Mythic Spectacle." Real is often credited as the unofficial father of sports cultural studies. He encouraged young scholars to "ask big questions," and to think critically about the future of the role of sport in communication studies



I had a wonderful time at the IACS 8th Summit. The environment was very professional, yet I still felt laid back and at ease. I found the Plenary Session especially enlightening, in that it appealed to multiple disciplines while confronting relevant, current issues in sports and communication.

- Myasia Burns, 2015-2016 CSGSA President

A big congrats to Dr. Dan Grano for the success of the IACS!

SSCA: Tampa, FL



I am so glad that one of my first professional conference experiences as a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte took place at the Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) Conference. It was such a great experience to attend panels and presentations where I could be exposed to the genius and research produced by scholars that I greatly admire. Apart from listening to those scholars, I even got the chance to meet a few which was incredible- some even want me to e-mail them in the future so we could discuss my research interests. I also came to find that aside from attending the panels on presented research, I really loved the ones that presented teaching techniques and the ones that presented tips for graduate students with goals of becoming academics- I know those notes will be helpful to me in the future! Another highlight of my experience at SSCA was attending the receptions, particularly the one hosted by University of South Florida. USF is a university that I am interested in applying to for my PhD and it was so nice to be in such a laid back and non-intimidating environment where I could socialize with their faculty and learn more about their program. One final thing that I was impressed with during my conference experience was how nice and welcoming people were, especially to a conference novice such as myself. It was a wonderful weekend full of learning, socializing, and inspiration, I am so glad that I had the opportunity to attend and I'm already planning for next year in Austin, Texas!



COMMUNICATION CELEBRATION WEEK 2015

Spring Colloquium | CSGSA Presents: Dr. Sarah Tracy



A staple of Communication Week, the spring colloquium features a leading scholar in the field of Communication Studies to share their research with the UNC Charlotte community. This year’s speaker, celebrated qualitative scholar Dr. Sarah Tracy, spoke with great emotion and conviction to a full crowd in the student union on the morning of April 21st. Dr. Tracy, a professor of organizational communication in The Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University, has published over 60 monographs and two books, and often collaborates with fellow Org-Comm UNCC Professor, Dr. Cliff Scott.

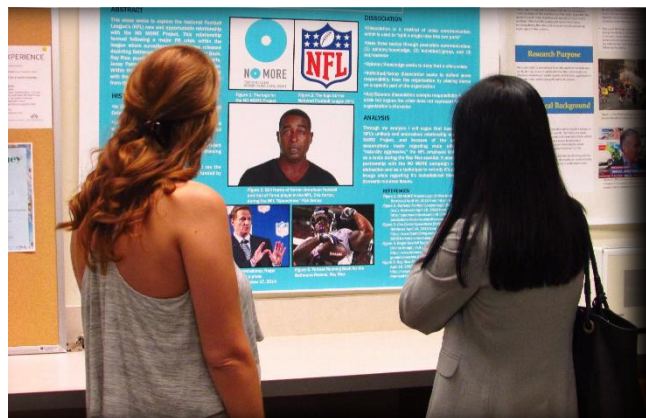
Dr. Tracy presented her research, “Compassion in the Face of Terror: A Case Study of Recognizing Suffering, Co-Creating Hope, and Developing Trust in the Case of a Would-Be School Shooting.” Supplementing her lecture the night before in Dr. Jaime Bochantin’s advanced qualitative methods graduate course, Dr. Tracy provided an in-depth exploration of the compassion communicated by school bookkeeper, Antoinette Tuff to would-be school shooter Michael Hill.

With this research, she extends current theoretical conceptualizations of compassion and contributes insights for communicating compassion to sufferers who may be angry, threatening, or resisting help. Students expressed great joy at Dr. Tracy’s visit and speaking style. This rare, heartwarming research reminds all of us of the power of communication.

Communication Studies Graduate Student Research Poster Fair



Graduate Student Emily Crawford and Professor and alumna Ms. Sayde Brais



Graduate student Beth Booker and Dr. Min Jiang



Graduate Student Robin Cavin and Dr. Christine S. Davis

Graduate and undergraduate students and faculty, gathered in the graduate lounge on Wed, April 22nd for the Graduate Student Research Poster Fair. Representing the best of the research within the UNC Charlotte Communication Studies Graduate program, students Jaelyn Marsh, Robin Cavin, Brittany Pailthorpe, Emily Crawford, Beth Booker, and Myasia Burns, all presented posters. The research featured ranged from analyses of media coverage, politics, PR campaigns, organizational communication, end-of-life communication, and technology.

Posters are discussed during an informal session similar to poster presentations at academic conferences. The event was planned by CSGSA. Graduate program director, Christine S. Davis, said, “the posters were outstanding,” remarking that the students, “did a fantastic job and made us proud.”



COMMUNICATION CELEBRATION WEEK 2015

Forever Green and Gold: Hooding Ceremony

Gathered at the Harris Alumni Center, students, their families, and faculty, closed Communication Studies Celebration Week with the annual banquet on the night of Thursday, April 23rd. A close to sold out event, *Communication Celebration Night, Forever Green & Gold: Recognizing Past Present & Future Achievers*, honored faculty, recognized undergraduates, and featured live music. To the tunes of the Cameron Floyd Band, faculty members Dr. Christine S. Davis, Dr. Shawn Long, Dr. Cliff Scott, and Sandy Hansen, were thanked for their years of service to the Department. Dr. Ashli Stokes, Tim Horne, and Debbie Baker recognized the achievements of undergraduate forensic, PRSSA, and CSSA students

A highlight of the event, UNCC Communication Studies Graduate program director Dr. Christine S. Davis, lead the graduate hooding ceremony. Seven graduating M.A. students, Jaclyn Marsh, Robin Cavin, Brittany Pailthorpe, Maria Jose Aramendariz, Emily Thomas, James Hooks, and Megan Snider were hooded by their capstone committee advisors.

The ceremony was full of laughs, tears, and well wishes for the graduates embarking on their post-MA careers. The 100th graduate of the program was hooded that night.

The coincidental honor bestowed upon Emily Thomas after she successfully defended her comprehensive exams. The beautiful event was planned by the Communication Studies Program Committee, Ms. Sayde Brais, Dr. Jillian Tullis, and Mrs. Melody Dixon Brown, and students of the undergraduate event planning course.



A BEAUTIFUL REMEDY



Dr. Maggie Quinlan, graduate student Jade Myers and alumna Kristen Okamoto

A special addition to this year's Communication Studies Celebration week, graduate faculty member Dr. Margaret M. Quinlan, screened hers and her colleague's documentary film *A Beautiful Remedy*. On the afternoon of Thursday, April 23, dozens gathered to enjoy an uplifting example of how communication can heal. *A Beautiful Remedy* profiles the Arts in Medicine Program at the University Of Texas MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital Directed by Artist in Residence Ian Cion, Arts in Medicine provides art programming to pediatric, adolescent and young adult patients and their families. *A Beautiful Remedy* illustrates the power of art to foster human resiliency amidst suffering. Almost every graduate student was in attendance to congratulate Dr. Quinlan, and her fellow producer, communication studies graduate program alumna, Kristen Okamoto, on the film being picked-up for national distribution on PBS.



MEET THE NEW ALUMNI

#96 Rachael Thomas: Rachael was the 96th graduate of our program and the first graduate of this school year, graduating in December 2014. Her thesis, titled “Me, Myself, and Depression and Identity Construction and Depression” was a really nice example of the extension of theory in a specific mental health context. Dr. Jillian Tullis and Dr. Jon Crane were on Rachael’s thesis committee.

#97 Jaclyn Marsh: Before being president of CSGSA Jaclyn came to our program from Ohio’s Baldwin-Wallace college and via stints in corporate America and preschool teaching. Jaclyn says that highlights of her time here include NCA in Washington D.C. and “falling in love with research,” at OSCLG in San Francisco with program colleagues, working with Dr. Quinlan on her research, and studying with “great professors and fellow students.” Her committee was impressed that Jaclyn knew she was most afraid of taking the comprehensive exam capstone option but she successfully took it on and hit a home run.” Jaclyn completed her comprehensive exams under the direction of her chair Dr. Maggie Quinlan and her committee Dr. Cliff Scott and Dr. Rich Leeman. She will be attending the University of Nebraska in the fall to begin her journey towards a Ph.D.



#98 Robin Cavin. Robin Cavin has a dry sense of humor, but also a willingness to be vulnerable and try new things. She has an exceptional thirst for learning. Robin’s background includes two BS degrees from Western Carolina and a BA from UNC-Charlotte, plus 4 years as an office manager for a funeral home and 7 years as a bartender. She is truly a renaissance scholar. Robin lists her “study abroad in London, meeting and interacting with her cohort, and working with students as a TA” as her program highlights. Robin’s future plans include a corporate job. Robin successfully wrote and defended her comprehensive exam under the guidance of Dr. Jon Crane and committee members Drs. Alan Freitag and Rachel Plotnick.

#99 Brittany Pailthorpe. Brittany came here from New England, specifically the University of Rhode Island as a Writing and Rhetoric major and Magna Cum Laude graduate. She joined us with an interest in professional wrestling. She planned to critique the WWE and had no idea the places we would lead her to study! As Brittany says, “my interests evolved into broader issues of authenticity, memory, and technology, and without the generalist program, I may be a very different scholar, on a different path, without an MA. I was drawn to UNC Charlotte because it had an appreciation of sports culture . . . and when I visited the campus, I fell in instant love with the orange brick and Niner green and gold.” Brittany’s plans include traveling, blogging, an internship and job, with a non-profit or local government. Dr. Freitag says of Brittany: “She was a delight in class; always fully prepared and actively engaged. Unafraid to state her views with clarity and conviction. Writes like a dream – just doesn’t know yet when to stop. Piercingly bright and highly witty.” Brittany successfully wrote and defended her thesis under the direction of Dr. Leeman. Drs. Stokes and Grano were also on her committee.

#100 Emily Thomas: Emily is an intelligent, thoughtful scholar and a very good writer and presenter. She came here from Appalachian State, where she got a BS in Organizational and Public communication, and after jobs as academic advisors for Caldwell Community College and Gardner-Webb University. Emily notes that highlights of her time here include “time spent in faculty offices exploring research interests. I have learned just as much in the classroom as I have speaking one on one with faculty members.” After graduation, Emily plans to work in corporate communication. Long term plans might include a doctoral degree or trekking across the U.S. About Emily, Dr. Tullis says, “what I appreciate about my time [with Emily] was her thoughtful input during class discussions. I look forward to seeing how Emily translates her research interests in the community. I also hope she’ll keep sending me pictures of her cute doggie, Jackson.” Emily successfully comprehensive exam under the direction of Dr. Tullis and committee members Dr. Dan Grano and Dr. Rich Leeman.



MEET THE NEW ALUMNI

101 Maria Jose Armendariz Maria not only learned how to be a deeper, and a more theoretical and critical thinker, but she learned this in her non-native language. In addition to receiving her MA from our program this year, Maria will also be receiving a Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. Maria joined us from Ecuador – the Universidad San Francisco de Quito with degrees in Organizational Communication, Public Relations, and psychology and was awarded a full scholarship for UNCC. She lists her highlights at UNC-Charlotte as the many associations and organizations she has been involved with, including CSGSA, NCA, and two honors societies -- Phi Beta- Delta Honor Society for International Scholars and the National Gerontology Honor Society. She has also been an International ambassador at UNCC and a bilingual interpreter at UNCC. Maria has presented papers at multiple conferences. Maria is returning to Ecuador after graduation for additional research and work experience. Possible future plans might entail a Ph.D. or starting her own long term care facility in Ecuador. She is also a newlywed. Maria successfully defended her comprehensive exam under the direction of Dr. Tullis and committee members Dr. Ashli Stokes and Dr. Dena Shenk from Gerontology.

#102 James Hooks: James came to UNC-Charlotte for his BA in Communication Studies after completing two associate's degrees in Digital Media and Entrepreneurship and doing freelance work. Once in our program, he liked us so much he stayed. James says that a highlight of his time here has been “teaching the undergrad business communication courses because of the practical uses of the course and having students come back to thank me for my attitude and candor as well as how much they were able to learn from me.” He plans to work in player behavior research at a gaming company. Dr. Leeman says “James is an incredibly focused student...he has known what he is interested in, what he wants to do, and pretty much who he wants to do it with. Our discussions have never been about where he wants to go, but about how he can best get there. I wish him every success in reaching that goal, and perhaps our online gaming communities will become more humane places as a result.” James successfully defended his directed project under the direction of Dr. Richard Leeman and committee members Dr. Shawn Long and Dr. Rachel Plotnick.

#103 Meghan Snider: Megan is a delight to work with. She has a strong analytical mind, she has great compassion, she has top research skills, and she has become a very good writer. Meghan received her undergraduate degree in Comm Studies here and was encouraged by Dr. Heather Gallardo to consider graduate school. After a stint as assistant manager for Abbington Place apartments, Meghan took the advice. She lists as program highlights conference participation. Other highlights included being president of CSGSA last year, and taking leadership in the planning and executing of several small and large scale events. After graduation, Meghan plans to either get a job in the healthcare industry or as a lecturer in the communication department at a university.” Long term goals include a doctoral program. Meghan successfully defended her comprehensive exam under Dr. Quinlan’s direction. Committee members are Drs. Grano and Dr. Davis.

