

# The Communicator

Publication of the Department of Speech Communication, SIUE.

Fall 2011

## A Note From the Chair

I would like to offer a special Happy Holidays! Merry Christmas! Blessed New Year! to all our students, alumni, faculty, staff and families. I am very excited that we have renewed the publication of our newsletter, which will allow us to communicate and update each other on changes in our lives.

Speaking about updates, let me use this opportunity to inform you of some of our efforts and accomplishments in the past few years. We have initiated a department name change to accurately reflect what we do. We have also added health communication as a specialization in the graduate program. This allows us to keep up with growing interest and trends for health communication specialists. We just initiated an international study/internship program to Europe to provide our students with the opportunity to expand their horizons. The department's "An Evening with Speech Communication" events have been successful and alumni have come to share their experiences and advice with current students. Finally, we received excellent reviews of both our undergraduate and graduate programs from the internal and external review committees. Our undergraduate program was characterized as "exemplar" by the external reviewer.

We are encouraged. However, we still have challenges ahead. We continue to bridge the communication gap between the department and our alumni. I hope that we will continue to work together to move our program forward.

To our current students, faculty and staff, have a wonderful and productive spring semester. To alumni, I wish you continued success and hope that you will reconnect with us.

*Isaac Abeke Blankson*



## In This Issue

Students Study PR Abroad .....	2
Getting an International Perspective .....	3
Words of Wisdom from Alumni .....	3
Better to Know Too Much Than Not Enough .....	4
Top 5 Tips for Surviving Senior Project .....	5
OCSA News and Updates .....	5
SIUE PRSSA Chapter News and Updates .....	6
Alumni News .....	7
Career Transitions; Lessons Learned .....	8

## Department Initiates a Name Change

by Isaac Blankson

For several years, the speech communication faculty have discussed a potential name change for the department. An initial attempt in the 1990s failed due to objection from some departments. Early this year, we revisited the issue, worked with concerned departments, and re-initiated the process to change the name "Department of Speech Communication" to "Department of Human Communication Studies." Several factors necessitated this name change.

As we all know, the breadth and depth of our discipline has expanded far beyond speech. Our field has expanded to include areas such as organizational, interpersonal, political, public relations, health communication, etc. Both faculty and students believe that the

*continue on page 2*

## Department Name Change...

proposed name will help students and employers better understand the breadth of concentrations within our field and alleviate the “public speaking” misperception people have of the department. Another major concern is the confusion between the Speech Communication department and Speech Pathology and Communication Disorders (College of Education). The name change may alleviate this confusion.



Current SPC Faculty

More importantly, the name change is a very important and necessary response to recommendations by our professional association, the National Communication Association, and internal and external reviews of our program. The NCA, formerly Speech Communication Association, changed its name in 1997 to bring the association “ahead of its roots” and “expand its base” (Spectra, May 1997). Since then, many departments have followed its lead. In October 2011, the NCA conducted an analysis of communication department names and found that only 2 percent still use the word “speech” in their department name.

We are very optimistic that the proposed name change will be approved. The process has the potential to be lengthy but is certainly worthwhile. We have worked with all of the departments that the name change could affect and they are all in support of it. We now wait anxiously for the good news. We will keep you posted.

## Salut! Students Study PR Abroad in Summer 2012

by Amanda Berg

Two countries. One unforgettable experience. SPC 419, the special topics course, taught by Dr. Sorin Nastasia, is taking 12 selected students abroad to study public relations practices like never before. This is a prestigious chance for students seeking speech communication degrees, especially for those with a public relations focus.

The five-week course will involve one week on the SIUE campus and four weeks abroad; two in Lyon, France and two in Bucharest, Romania. The course gives students an impressive addition to their resumes and hands-on experience. Nastasia sees this course as being extremely beneficial for students seeking to develop careers in the growing public relations industry as it adds value to their qualifications and diplomas.

The first week of the class will prepare students for the trip and discuss PR theories. During the remaining four weeks abroad, students will be involved in lectures and workshops at the local universities, and through Nastasia's professional contacts, students will have the opportunity to shadow public relations professionals in the two countries as well.

Thanks to an “Excellence in Undergraduate Education” grant it is estimated students will only pay \$1,500 in airfare in addition to tuition for the six credit course. Nastasia said the EUE grant will save students approximately \$1,500 for room, board and local transportation expenses.

This course has many students like junior, Chelsea Zoeller, a speech communication major with a focus in public relations, excited about the upcoming opportunity to study abroad. “I think it would be a great way to learn about public relations from different perspectives and understand the variations between PR practices in different countries,” Zoeller said.

Students interested in taking the course were required to submit their application along with an essay explaining why they would like to participate and what they hoped to learn. Anticipation is building as students wait to hear who has been selected for this exciting new course.

## Gaining an International Perspective

### *Reflections from a study abroad in Spain*

by Megan Pitcher

It is said that we are living in an era of globalization. As we all know, technology has opened many doors and created opportunity for growth of American business abroad. One of the most important aspects of public relations is effective communication, and it is impossible to do that without understanding your target audience. As public relations becomes more and more globalized, it is also becoming increasingly important to understand and respect other cultures. I am currently studying abroad in Alicante, Spain, and this experience has really reiterated this fact, and opened my eyes to a whole new world.

Before I left for Spain, I was given a packet of information to prepare myself for the next three months of my life. It included information concerning the climate, the people, the political and economical situations, etc. Since I have been taking Spanish classes for seven years, I put plenty of thought and research into my choice of destination, which left me feeling comfortable with the idea of living in another country for a semester. I had absolutely no idea that this short amount of time would change my view on life forever.

In the two months that I have been abroad, I have been able to learn a lot about culture through daily life and the different people that I have met. First and foremost, I have learned the most about Spanish culture because I am living and breathing it! Even after doing my research, I was truly surprised by the importance of several aspects of life in Spain. The first thing that surprised me was that “siesta” time is actually real! This is when the whole city basically shuts down for a few hours in the afternoon. The Spanish people come home to eat lunch with their family and relax for a few hours before finishing off the day. Also, conserving resources is of high importance in Spain. For example, a fifteen-minute shower is very disrespectful.

Although I am immersed in Spanish culture, I have also had the opportunity to learn a lot about life in other parts of the world. I am in a Spanish conversation class with nine other people. Six of them are Japanese, two are Korean and one is Ukrainian. In class we talk about cultural differences nearly every day.

While I am here, I am also taking advantage of the cheap and accessible travel options that Europe has to offer. By the end of the semester, I will have been to four countries

outside of Spain in hopes to see a lot of interesting places, meet a lot of people and gain a better understanding of the world. In these past two months, I have already become more tolerant, accepting and appreciative of different cultures. Knowledge and understanding of culture is a useful tool, and I think we can all learn a lot from each other.

As St. Augustine said, “The world is a book, and those who do not travel only read one page.” We all know that stereotypes tend to be false, so I have learned that it is extremely important to research and even immerse yourself in a culture before taking on a client. Being ignorant to a culture, especially in the world of public relations, is offensive to a client and detrimental to a campaign.



*Megan Pitcher and a fellow SIUE student stop for a photo in front of the Arc de Triomf in Barcelona, Spain.*

## Words of Wisdom from Alumni

by Sarah Rohner

Public relations professionals visited SPC 213, Introduction to Public Relations, classes at the beginning of the fall semester sharing their words of wisdom and their knowledge of the field with the students. The PR panel provided students with the opportunity to pick the professionals' brains during an open Q-and-A with topics ranging from internships to online reputations and everything in between.

Amanda Morgan, a junior majoring in speech communication, found the professional panel beneficial. “I loved being able to listen to the professionals! They were very influential and honest.” Morgan also gained a sense of reassurance from listening to the PR professionals' stories.

*continue on p. 4*



(continued from p. 3)

"I often get discouraged and wonder if PR is the correct route for me. Listening to them gave me the bit of moral boost I needed to get through these last few semesters," Morgan said.

The PR professional panel consisted of seven volunteers who took time out of their busy schedules to participate. They included Katie Bennett, Mark Motley, Pam Perlmutter, Sara Colvin, Jim Grandone, Frieda Smith and Laci Warden.

The PR professional panel is a real treat for students because it is a chance to peek into the real-life experiences of what may be their future jobs. In addition, it is a great



*Following the discussion, PR students have a chance to network and interact with the panelists.*

opportunity for students to get a jump start on networking. The class, taught by Stacey Howard, consists of a variety of different majors including speech communication, mass communication, business, English, and many more.

Andrew Burton, a junior majoring in political science, also found the PR professional panel beneficial. "As a student who is not a PR major, I still found the panel very interesting. Learning the tools that other individuals use for advertising and event planning is always advantageous. I also obtained a resource to complete extra community service hours," said Burton.

Overall the class consensus was that the PR professional panel was very helpful in taking steps toward future career endeavors no matter what major students may be pursuing. Howard puts together these much-anticipated PR professional panels twice a semester. All PR students and PRSSA members are invited to attend. Interested professionals should contact Howard at [showard@siue.edu](mailto:showard@siue.edu).

## Better to Know Too Much Than Not Enough by Lindey Noel (BS '11)

There were many times in my undergraduate career that I thought to myself, "When am I ever going to use this stuff?" Well, it turns out, you will actually use the majority of what you learn.



Since graduating from SIUE's Department of Speech Communication, I have gone on to graduate school at a different university. To help ease the pain of graduate tuition, I have a graduate internship with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. My title is Special Programs Assistant and it is my job to work with a Chicago non-profit organization to help promote clean air quality in the Chicago metropolitan area.

Recently, the organization has become more social media savvy by creating Facebook and Twitter pages. With the introduction of these new social media platforms, I suggested to my supervisor that we also create a blog. I told my supervisor about the blogging assignments I had in Stacey Howard's SPC 213 and 313 classes. She was excited to learn that I had experience in designing and maintaining a blog. It meant that my supervisor wouldn't have to learn a new program and have to take time out of her already busy schedule to write posts.

Now, I'll admit that when I was in the classes, I was not sure when I would actually blog in my career. However, by learning about this other form of social media I have helped prove myself to my boss, contribute to the organization's goals and will be adding another bullet point on my resume.

I'm currently in the process of writing the proposal for the IEPA blog. I will present it in Chicago to the organization's steering committee. Wish me luck!

**Moral of this story:** Despite what you think, your professors, instructors and teaching assistants know a thing or two. Do not automatically write off what they are teaching because you think it's not relevant. You never know where you'll end up or what may be a requirement for a job. It's better to know too much than not enough.

## Top Five Ways to Survive Senior Project

### by Caitlin Baker

It's that time of year again. Seniors are preparing for their final semester which means senior project. While senior projects are different for every major, one thing students have in common is the monumental stress that comes with this final semester.

Abbie Streuter, graduate of SIUE, has already been there. Streuter, graduated in spring 2011 with a bachelor's degree in speech communication and currently works at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch as a media specialist. "My senior project was a great experience. I was the account executive copy for my client," said Streuter. "I did many of the writing assignments and helped with getting the proposal together. I was also a large part of the creative side, making the brochure and postcard for our client."

Looking back at her senior project experience, Streuter shares her top five tips to survive senior project.

1. **Team Selection.** If you are working in a group, and you have the option to choose your group members, choose people you know you will work well with.
2. **Project Selection.** Choose a project you know you will be passionate about and enjoy putting in the time and effort to accomplish the task.
3. **Time management.** Planning ahead and keeping an agenda of when you need to get specific tasks accomplished will keep you organized and on point.
4. **Communication.** Do not be afraid to communicate with your professors if you need help. That's what they are there for and they understand what you are going through. Take advantage of their office hours or email them with questions
5. **Inspiration.** Remember to just soak up the experience and keep your dream and goal of graduation in mind.

"Senior project, my classes and my teachers prepared me for the job I love today. I am lucky and I owe a great deal to the amazing professors at SIUE," said Streuter.

By following these simple tips, students will make it through their senior project, and all that will be left is graduation.



Org. Comm & Interpersonal Comm Students @ Sr. Project

## Organizational Communication Student Association Updates

by Megan Harbison

OCSA is a new student organization formed during the 2010-2011 academic year for students interested in corporate and organizational communication.

### Fall 2011 Recap

OCSA started the academic year by taking an active role in the 2011 Homecoming festivities. The organization was represented by Alyssa Heimerman, who ran for homecoming queen. They also supported Lindsey Maag, who represented OCSA in the karaoke contest singing, "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey.

### Upcoming Events

OCSA has already begun planning for Spring 2012 and is pleased to announce several upcoming events. *More details to be announced.*

- February - fundraising dinner
- March - Krispy Kreme sale
- April - alumni panel/cookout

Megan Harbison, *President*

Dr. Sonia Zamanou-Erickson, *Faculty Advisor*



## Starting the Year Right

*New developments in the SIUE Chapter*  
by Danielle Parmenter

The SIUE Chapter of PRSSA is making some changes this year in an effort to build the chapter and provide a more valuable experience to members. The new initiatives include:

- Holding more frequent chapter meetings. By meeting twice each month, the Chapter can stay more in touch, accomplish more and schedule more programming.
- Creating more opportunities for members to get involved. This year, the Chapter has established four major committees comprised of members and chaired by a member of the executive board. Committees allow members to be more active in the Chapter and get hands on experience.
- Increasing valuable programming. The executive board has made providing valuable programming to benefit chapter members a main priority. This year, the Chapter is planning a programming schedule of guest speakers, workshops, socials, agency tours and more.
- Providing more rewards for active members. The SIUE Chapter of PRSSA has recently adopted a new point system to track member participation and reward active members through Chapter awards and Commencement honors.

For more information on the Chapter, visit the SIUE PRSSA website at [siue.edu/studentorganizations/prssa](http://siue.edu/studentorganizations/prssa) or contact any member of the Executive Board:

- Danielle Parmenter, *Chapter President*
- Mike Shewmaker, *Vice President*
- Brooke Thole, *Secretary*
- Natalie Pitzer, *Treasurer*
- Jen Krizmanich, *PR Director*
- Stacey Howard, *Faculty Advisor*



[facebook.com/siueprssa](https://facebook.com/siueprssa)

## PRSSA Hosts Comedy Fundraiser

by Ashlyn Brammeier

The SIUE Chapter of PRSSA held its first fundraiser of the year at Comedy Etc. II in Fairview Heights, Ill., on Thursday, Nov. 10.

The show's headliner was Emil Fray, known as "The Fryman," a national headliner comedian who has appeared on television numerous times. "I had a lot of fun, the main guy was hilarious," said PRSSA member Megan Halasey.



*Dan Schmidt opens show*

Dan Schmidt, a member of PRSSA, is an employee at the comedy club, and did the opener for the show.

"From the club's perspective we were happy to have the number of PRSSA supporters that were present. Anytime we are able to welcome people to

the club for the first time is a success," said Schmidt. "The audience seemed very into the show, and one group of first time attendees were already discussing coming back to the club for an upcoming show."

PRSSA is planning another fundraiser next semester at Buffalo Wild Wings. More information will be announced at a later date.

## Roll Call! SIUE PRSSA Attends National Conference

by Danielle Parmenter

The SIUE Chapter of PRSSA recently marked another milestone by representing SIUE in the "happiest place on earth." Four members of the executive board attended the 2011 PRSSA National Conference, themed Perception is Reality: Inspiring Effective Communications, in Orlando, Fla.

Jen Krizmanich, Danielle Parmenter, Natalie Pitzer and Brooke Thole participated in four days of intensive conference programming including Chapter development, professional development and networking. The ladies had

*continue on p. 7*



(continue from p. 6)

the opportunity to meet professionals and other PRSSA Chapters from across the country to gain insights and ideas to bring back to SIUE.

Throughout the conference, the group attended professional development sessions featuring leading professionals in the industry. These sessions offered a diverse range of educational opportunities, discussing topics such as sports public relations, leadership, social media, crisis communications, international public relations, integrated communications and government relations.

The group also attended keynote speeches featuring an impressive lineup including:

- Rick Leventhal, Senior Correspondent, FOX News Channel
- Soledad O'Brien, Host, CNN's "In America" documentaries
- Chris Brogan, President, Human Business Works
- Joe Rohde, Senior Vice President & Creative executive, Walt Disney Imagineering

The conference also provided networking opportunities with PRSSA members, PRSA members and industry professionals. The "Coffee Break with PRSA" gave students a chance to interact with PRSA members who are identified as "Champions for PRSSA," professionals who are committed to the development of students and PRSSA Chapters.

Aside from the obvious educational benefits of attending, PRSSA National Conference gave SIUE PRSSA a chance to represent SIUE on the national level. Jen Krizmanich,

public relations director for the Chapter explained, "PRSSA is different than most student organizations because national involvement is a big deal and there are so many opportunities if you're willing to go after them. We've worked hard to grow the Chapter and going to conference was a part of that. The field of public relations is growing and we want to grow with it."

Armed with the excitement and ideas they found at the national conference the executive board members will continue the growth of the SIUE Chapter and develop innovative ways to provide a valuable experience to members.



*Glimpses from the conference*

## Alumni News

**Matthew Frey** (BS '09) recently celebrated his first anniversary working as a donor relations consultant with the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center. He helps to organize and promote blood drives at hospitals, colleges, schools, churches and other organizations. MVRBC helps supply blood to area hospitals including Anderson Hospital (Maryville), Saint Anthony's (Alton), Memorial Hospital (Belleville) and others including SSM Hospitals.

**Matt Trelow** (BS '09) graduated from the interpersonal communication track. He is working as an aftercare support specialist for a social work company called Youthville in Wichita, Kan. He helps families with the reuniting adjustment when children return to the home from state custody.

## Career Transition: Lessons Learned

by Elizabeth Willey (BS '05)



Life after college has been nothing like I thought it would be, but I wouldn't change a thing. Five years ago I was sitting in Dr. Perkins class working on my senior project - dreaming about landing that coveted first job out of college.

I recently started a new job as a sales manager with the Decatur Conference Center and Hotel in Decatur, Ill. I have realized that the skills I have learned from past experiences better prepared me for this opportunity.

Over the years I have worked almost every aspect of events. I have promoted festivals, conducted marketing at trade shows, fundraised, etc., all of which helped me understand my clients' prospective while assisting them.

Now, I am selling and managing the venue logistics, and I realize what an asset my past experience is to the Conference Center. This diverse work experience taught me significant lessons that have helped me with each career transition. Let me share some of these lessons:

- *Presentation and planning can make or break your marketing activities.* This lesson I learned while traveling on the east coast as a brand ambassador for Archer Daniels Midland. I was thankful for the marketing team who helped us always have the right materials and displays for each event. There were some companies who would spend the time and money to be at an amazing show, but did not show up with their best game and missed the opportunity to be noticed by the attendants.

- *Generate one message.* Judy Myers' public relation classes helped me when I was a fundraising special events manager for Catholic Charities of Chicago in their communications department. This non-profit is the largest social service organization in the nation - serving over one million clients annually. I made it my goal that the committees, which could consist of 20-50 individuals, all knew the same message and motto for their event when talking to the public to reinforce the marketing and public relations efforts.

- *The customer is always right; all you need to do is listen.* While marketing with Shelley's Bridal I realized that some clients were upset at bigger things than the issue they wanted fixed. However, I learned that taking the time to listen can make a difference in what is offered as a solution.

- *Not everyone is ready to grow their business.* This was the hardest lesson when I was freelance writing for "Behind Every Bride." Some of the businesses that I reached out to were eager to embrace new marketing tools and strategies. However, others I thought had the potential to grow were hesitant.

There are so many lessons we learn in college that we can reflect on throughout our careers, but it is also the lessons we continue to learn that grow who we are!

---

## Newsletter Editorial Board

Danielle Parmenter  
*Executive Director*

Abigail Delehanty  
*Graphic Designer*

Ashlyn Brammier  
*Copy Editor*

Sarah Rohner  
*Copy Editor*

Jennifer Krizmanich  
*Copy Editor*

Jazmine Wade  
*Copy Editor*

Stacey Howard  
*Faculty Advisor*

**To contribute to this newsletter send your articles to:**

**Stacey Howard** (showard@siue.edu) or  
**Dr. Isaac Blankson** (iblinks@siue.edu)

Join the Speech Communication Dept. Facebook group at:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/178569794039/>