

ANNUAL REPORT



A Giant Step Forward

An intricate, complex,
carefully calibrated dream

WHAT IS INSIDE...

- 5 From the Dean**
Moving toward our destiny
- 6 A Giant Step Forward**
A new chapter is about to begin for the Bellisario College
- 16 Classroom Instruction**
Student success in the classroom — and beyond
- 20 Faculty Expertise**
Talented teachers, standout researchers and more
- 26 From The Communicator**
Profile of Gary Abdullah (from our online magazine)
- 32 Staff Support**
The behind-the-scenes heart and soul of our efforts
- 36 Campus Media Opportunities**
Student organizations and hands-on experiences
- 40 Career Preparation**
Internships, visitors and a foundation for success
- 44 Alumni Support, Award Winners**
Classroom visitors and those we've honored
- 50 Stories of Support**
Opportunities to give, and stories about some who have
- 58 Honor Roll**
- 60 Impact and Outreach**
Bellisario College programming far beyond the classroom



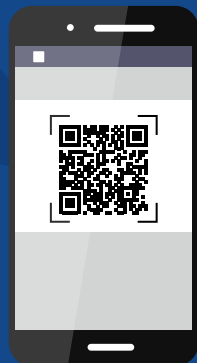


CARNEGIE BUILDING



SCAN QR CODES

You'll find QR codes throughout the Annual Report that will direct you to extended content online.



HOW TO USE QR CODES

1. Open your camera and point your device at the QR code.
2. Wait for the camera to scan.
3. Tap the notification when it appears on your screen to open the bonus content.



FROM THE DEAN

Moving toward our destiny

For much of the world, the past year will be remembered as one of standing still. Travel screeched to a halt. Public spaces went quiet. We became homebound. In many ways, we literally stopped *moving*.

That is not the story for the Bellisario College.

For us, the 2020-21 academic year — not without its challenges — was perhaps one of the most consequential in our history, as we continued our work on multiple fronts and collectively laid the groundwork for the months and years ahead.

In fact, the Bellisario College has been a pacesetter for Penn State. For the second year in a row, our faculty and staff led the University in awards that recognized their outreach, administrative work, and service. We're proud of the fact that we were able to excel at our day-to-day work while also making big plans for 2021 and beyond.

Much of our work focused on a new, five-year strategic plan. The plan, drafted with input from across all departments and programs, supports the University's strategic plan and its land-grant mission. Our plan also outlines aspirations for the unique impact we can make through our new media center, a 30,000-square-foot space that will — for the first time in our 25-year history as a college — provide us with a place where we can collectively work with our students and invite collaboration from across Penn State.

It's a bold plan, and you can read about it in the cover story. It leverages every square inch of our media center and challenges us to innovate and connect our enterprises (such as our Innovation Lab, Media Effects Research Lab, CommAgency and newsroom) in new ways while protecting our core mission. Our plan requires us to ensure our graduation rates are among the best at the University; deliver powerful co-curricular opportunities to all of our students; provide reliable news and information to communities; and use our expertise to increase "news literacy" across the University and the Commonwealth. It also outlines our strategy to infuse "ethics-across-the-curriculum" for all majors and to become a national leader for the professions

on issues of ethics and integrity. But it also calls for us to push storytelling and creative production in exciting new directions, leveraging the support of alumni through our CommVentures fund and other programs.

Elements of the plan are well underway. We've recruited an outstanding incoming class of faculty to join us this fall and launched a vibrant new mentorship program that connects alumni with our students. We also launched a new Maymester program connecting top students with our Manhattan-based employers; hosted the second annual Centre Film Festival (virtual this past year) that featured more than 40 films and filmmakers from across the country; and laid the groundwork for an international internship program to launch next summer.

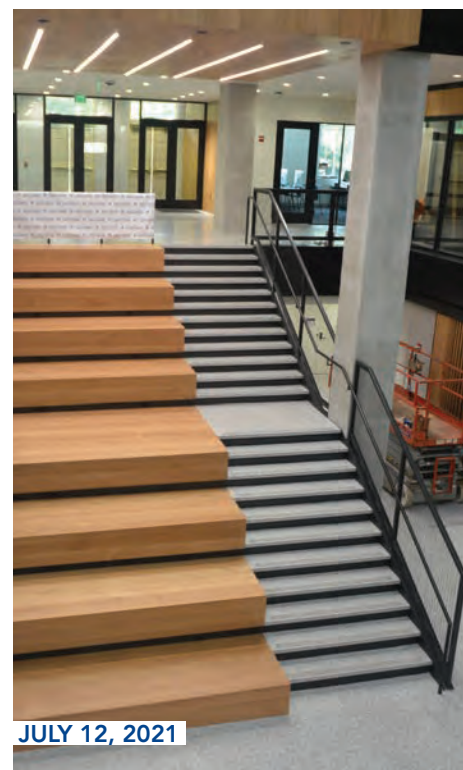
As you read this report, I hope you'll note how we've charged ahead (safely!) even as much of the world stood still during this most unusual and challenging year. We're "Bellisario Proud" — and hope you are, too.

Dean Marie Hardin



A GIANT STEP FORWARD

By Ted Anthony ('90)



On a sunny spring morning in April 2021, the vast lawn outside Old Main is empty of activity. An over-the-shoulder glance toward College Avenue reveals only a smattering of people, faces shrouded in masks.

The moment that classes change arrives. Minutes later, it departs with little visible fanfare; as the coronavirus pandemic enters its second year and the process of vaccinations unfolds, most students on this day are still studying remotely. As you walk up the mall and approach Willard Building, even the ubiquitous preacher is nowhere to be seen.

But then: Turn left onto Pollock Road, heading west, and approach what has, for decades, been the “old” side of Willard. There is activity. Workers are outside measuring a door. Inside it, you can hear — just barely — the rumble of activity and possibility.

Something is happening here. A dream is taking shape — an intricate, complex, carefully calibrated dream that has raced to be ready for Fall 2021 and, by all accounts, will be.

It’s a dream made physical, one designed to change everything. It will help a rising generation of media-savvy, 21st-century students learn the arts and skills and practices of a world of dizzying, complex global communication that — though it barely seems possible — is evolving and mutating faster than ever.

It will bring offices and people, resources and ideas together in a single place unlike any other that preceded it — a comprehensive media learning and production facility funded by a man who got something life-changing out of his Penn State education and, many decades and successes later, gave something life-changing back.

This fall, the era of the Bellisario Media Center — an educational centerpiece like no other — is at hand. And with it, a new chapter in the story of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications begins.

Big plans, big implementations

“

I want the College to give the most practical experience that it can to students, not just learning and studying but actually doing. The more you can do that, the better off you are. It gives the kids a chance to feel what the business is like out there. ... They're going to get an experience that I wish I had had, without having to go outside to get it.

”

— Donald P. Bellisario, May 2021

The word “communications” contains multitudes. A dizzying amount of multitudes.

It is, you could argue, at the root of absolutely everything — or, at least, everything that matters. And when it changes so convulsively, so fundamentally in the space of a single generation, the multitudes that it contains can be an overwhelming challenge to corral, to understand, to harness. Because right now, at our moment in history, there is simply too much information.

When Donald P. Bellisario, a 1961 graduate who went on to be an advertising executive and then a world-renowned screenwriter and TV producer, announced in 2017 that he and his wife, Vivienne, would give a \$30 million endowment to the College of Communications, he envisioned a place where students could flourish and interactively test the waters of their chosen fields.

He found a kindred spirit in Marie Hardin, the Bellisario College's dean since 2014.

To sit down with Hardin today is to immediately be immersed in her vision of a world where Penn State's communications students fan out

across their chosen industries as undergraduates and learn from the best out there — and then take their places among those best and retain ties to the school to keep the virtuous cycle going.

Hardin thinks big — as surely one must when steering through a pandemic pivot (more on that below) and administering an endowment of that size while getting the media center built (more on that below, too).

But beyond all that, Hardin is quick to amplify what she sees as the centerpiece of the Bellisario College's overall philosophy — the notion that communications students function as democracy's torch-bearers in an era when the wrong kinds of information at the wrong times are placing democratic ideals in peril.

The pandemic “has shown us the really deep-seated problems and challenges that we have in the ways that we communicate,” Hardin says.

She and the faculty and staff, she says, realize that many students don't necessarily go into the professions that they're studying. But they learn to seek credible information; to judge information that's coming at them and parse it; to ethically process it and share it; and to bring people together with credible information to accomplish goals. In short: “information that is essential for good decision-making.”



“It’s not just about preparing students for a profession,” she says. “It’s about preparing them to live in a democracy.”

How, then, to do all that, to break it down into discrete buckets that together form a philosophy for a post-pandemic 2020s? The Bellisario College’s five-year strategic plan, assembled last year, is built on five key pillars. Hardin lays them out:



Supporting student success

This principle — more challenging, obviously, during the pandemic and in its wake — is built around helping students get global communications experience while they’re in school and includes offering at least three undergraduate majors completely online and ensuring that career support for online students matches that offered to their on-campus counterparts.



Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion

The main goal here is to close the achievement gap between underserved students and others. “That will not be easy,” Hardin says. “But it’s necessary. And important.”



Furthering ethical leadership

Many majors and programs already place ethics at their core, and some actually integrate the notion of ethics itself as part of the curriculum. Hardin and Co. are working to ensure that more majors incorporate ethics into their curricula.



Impacting communities

Penn State’s status as a land-grant institution, charged since 1862 with offering affordable quality education to the “sons and daughters of the working class,” presents an opportunity to revisit and redefine that principle for the 21st century. That includes developing programs to address “news deserts” throughout Pennsylvania and working toward more universal broadband access across the Commonwealth.



Empowering digital innovation

Helped immeasurably by the facilities available in the new Bellisario Media Center, faculty members are developing new platforms and technology for storytelling — and, with a shiny new home for its Media Effects Research Lab, creating easily accessible feedback loops for new practices and technology.

It’s an ambitious set of priorities. And yet all around are signs of progress, even given the strange pandemic interlude of the past year.

One key path to all of it, Hardin says, is the Bellisario College’s mindfully calibrated blend of scholars and practitioners. Looking at the mix of them across the faculty suggests great possibilities for all sorts of mashups and innovations — something that Hardin wants to draw out as much as possible in coming years. “If you make the conditions right for scholars and practitioners, give them a problem to solve together,” she says, “they can do great things.”

The pandemic pivot

“

I wanted it to be as much as possible like it was in the classroom. ... I wanted to try to be as engaging and interactive as possible. I wanted it to be fun, and I wanted to have fun myself.

”

— *Renea D. Nichols, associate teaching professor, advertising and public relations, on her approach to remote pandemic learning*

How do you communicate about communications when communications are suddenly upended? How do you collaborate to communicate when all of your communications are virtual? These somewhat absurdist questions became all too real when the pandemic arrived at the doors of the Bellisario College last year.

For students, faculty and staff alike, it was not an easy moment.

“I’m not going to try to sugarcoat it. This past year has been very draining,” says Heidi Canales of Riverdale, Maryland, a member of the Class of 2022 who is majoring in public relations and has a minor in Latino/a studies.

“It was like a rush into this digital-virtual dependency on technology lifestyle,” Canales says. “I don’t think I was personally ready for it yet. I’m a people person. I like interacting with people face to face. That’s my thing. That’s my jam.”

But to hear her and others tell it, the pivot was quick, smart — and as smooth as could be expected.

“The College did a great job in shifting how classes work and how students are learning,” Canales says. “I don’t think I was expecting that. I thought they’d be, ‘Oh, we’re in a pandemic, let’s just keep going.’ But there was that shift to make it relevant, important to what was going on.”

In her general public relations class, she says, lecturer Jeff Conlin immediately shifted the curriculum to focus heavily on social media because of its crucial role during the pandemic.

At the same time, many other pivots were happening to help students and maintain moment-to-moment relevance.

The advising center created drop-in hours on Zoom. Outdoor learning centers rose in the form of tents outside Carnegie Building. Frequent virtual guest speakers became the norm — and, it turned out, were actually more plentiful and diverse because they didn’t have to travel to University Park.

Katie Gergel, a 2020 graduate in film production who is now a media operations specialist at Bliss Point Media in New York, recalls one of her instructors, Martin Camden, an assistant teaching professor of film production, saying after the pandemic hit: Forget about the big equipment. Just use your phone.

That, Gergel says, freed her to do a creative piece at home filming herself and her mother comparing their lives and themselves.

“We were all very overwhelmed. And that feeling can stifle creativity,” she recalls. “There was something really nice about these new projects that were filmed on our iPhones and with our families in our houses. It kind of got to the core of what we wanted to do with our film projects.”

Nichols took a different approach. Teaching a COMM 100 LEAP class for incoming students, she learned from her school-teacher sister about “Bitmoji classroom,” a cartoon-flavored virtual equivalent of the physical classroom. And she ran with it.

She created different rooms related to the class and to mass media in society. One room, themed to the pandemic, offered answers about it from the University. Different items on her virtual desk pointed students to new information — a “bottle” of “vodka” linked to Penn State alcohol policies and her sorority letters linked to Greek life resources. She even uploaded an architectural rendering of the new Bellisario Media Center and let her students put their bitmoji there so they could “visit” the new facility.

She also started doing mental-health check-ins to see if the LEAP students — just out of high school — wanted to talk privately.



Renea Nichols

“They had senioritis. They had Zoom-itis. They had panic-itis,” Nichols says. “I wanted to keep them as active in the process as possible.”

What types of teaching and learning will stick around after the virus is gone? What lessons learned about virtual communication will be useful in a post-pandemic landscape to Bellisario College students who suddenly found themselves trying to figure out, on a very personal level, the very principles they were studying?

The answer, of course, is that no one really knows yet. But what seems clear from the pivot — not to mention the debut of the new media center — is that the Bellisario College is going to be a pretty effective place to keep figuring that out.

Evolving identity, growing diversity

“

We’re vastly underrated. I think there are a lot of stereotypes out there that Northwestern, UNC, American University, the University of Maryland are kind of the go-to schools and then you have the cow pasture of Penn State. But it’s really the complete opposite. ... The image is there, the unity is there and the brand is certainly there.

”

— Sébastien Kraft, broadcast journalism with a political science minor, class of 2022

As any institution evolves, it must grow out in different directions to stay healthy. The conversations happening within the Bellisario College right now suggest exactly that is taking place.

Topping the list, not unexpectedly, is diversity and inclusion — something that a “culture survey” done by the University before the pandemic suggested the students already were embracing. The national racial reckoning that began last summer infused the issue into conversations in many virtual classrooms.

For many of the Bellisario College’s students of color, the past year underscored how pivotal their voices are in the rising generation of communications professionals — and in pretty much any industry where Penn State students might end up.

“Media is so powerful. I don’t think I realized how powerful until the pandemic,” says Canales, a member of the University’s Latino Caucus.

“Being a Latina woman, I have this perspective and this understanding of life that people who are working in the industry right now don’t understand and don’t represent it in the right way,” she says. “Representation goes a long way. In all aspects of communication, representation matters.”

It can be difficult for students who feel they don’t see themselves represented. Canales, for example, says she’s had only one female professor in her communications curriculum. Yet she, like many other students, cites the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and its leader, Assistant Dean Gary Abdullah, as key guides over the past year — and advocates for less-amplified voices.

“What we say and how we say it matters,” says Dejanae Gibson, a 2019 graduate and an associate producer at Discovery Inc. for HGTV’s programming and development team. “We need diverse stories to capture what it’s like to be an individual in society.”

Other areas are growing, too — too many to enumerate them all. The growth of CommAgency is helping people across campus communicate what they do, both internally and externally. The rising profile that has accompanied the communications program for years is drawing more attention as well.

“The College has changed a lot since I’ve been there, and from what I can see almost entirely for the better,” says Hannah Biondi, a 2014 advertising/public relations graduate who now works as a social media director in the spirits business. A member of the Alumni Society Board, she connects frequently with undergraduates.

“If you asked me what I ‘belonged to,’ it was never ‘my college’ first and foremost. That’s not the way it was viewed,” Biondi says. “But I think now because it’s Bellisario and because of the way the college views itself, it has become so much stronger. I hear young alumni and students reference it much more often.”

New ideas are flourishing. Hardin’s emphasis on Penn State’s land-grant imperatives, and connecting them to



Matt
Jordan

communications, have produced notions about how to “repair what is now a fractured media landscape,” as Matt Jordan, an associate professor who heads the department of film production and media studies, puts it.

Jordan is working on an initiative that reframes the land-grant mission “to produce public knowledge” across Pennsylvania. Through the initiative, he expects to partner with local newspapers, revenue-starved local newscasts and digital platforms to create continuing content — across platforms — around timely themes such as justice and equality.

“We’d help drive conversations that sometimes don’t sustain long enough in our media landscape,” Jordan says. “Public knowledge production is really important.”

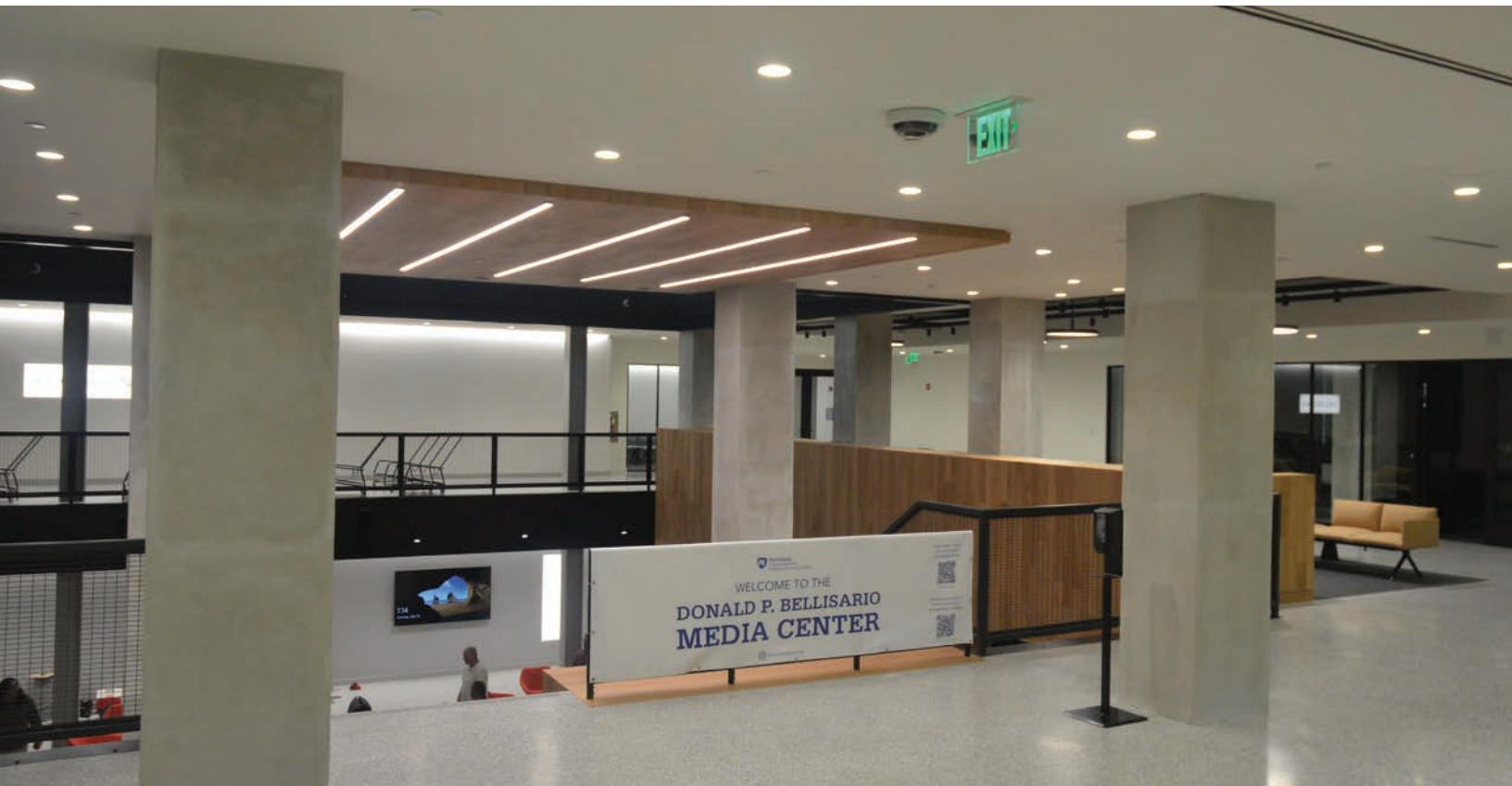
Similarly, Sascha Meinrath, the Palmer Chair in telecommunications and a staunch advocate of digital literacy, talks of using the land-grant rationale to expand broadband access around the state.

“In the 21st century, a university should be not just a hub of connectivity but a purveyor of connectivity throughout its service area,” Meinrath says. “Doing almost anything in a digital era is going to require connectivity. ... As more folks realize, ‘Hey, this benefits my work area. Hey, this helps with child poverty. This helps with the opioid epidemic, this helps with worker retraining and all these problems we have to face,’ my hope is that we make the societal shift to make connectivity foundational.”

As the Bellisario College pushes into these new areas, its own foundational imperative — to ensure that the people who are part of such initiatives come from varying backgrounds and perspectives — commands center stage.

Abdullah sees such principles as particularly important at an institution of communications, where students who graduate are not only representing themselves but are becoming “the storytellers of future generations.”

“You are creating the voice of a generation,” he says. “And if not everyone’s involved, is it the correct voice?”





Shiny new headquarters

“

We've underestimated the power of shared communal space. As a college, we've never had it.

”

— Dean Marie Hardin

After being apart for so long — apart and fragmented across campus for years, and apart for a year of pandemic shutdown and virtual learning — the Bellisario College of Communications is about to experience being together like never before.

The Bellisario Media Center, that new life for the older part of the 72-year-old Willard Building, was touted as “a magnet for students and faculty” when it was announced in 2018. And for the roughly 2,700 communications students who will be enrolled in the fall of 2021, it surely will be that.

“This,” says Katie Gergel, “is going to be THE spot.”

It is a noteworthy achievement — an endless buffet for anyone interested in creating content, studying communications and collaborating in a cutting-edge environment.

Part of it is pure co-location. Long before it had the Bellisario name, the College of Communications

was fragmented. Some classes, faculty and staff were in Carnegie Building, some in Willard Building, some off campus, some way out in Innovation Park.

People who collaborate would sometimes see each other only two or three times in a semester.

So the ability to create a hub — one that is also, in many ways, an auxiliary HUB — is its own solution.

“With everything together, the nature of how we do things is going to change — and going to grow,” says Karen Mozley-Bryan, the Bellisario College’s facilities manager. Indeed, the sheer amount of common area in the media center — be it conference rooms, open congregation spaces or the as-yet-undefined innovation lab — seems to shout collaboration from the rooftops.

That’s just the beginning. Walk through the facility and you see a staggering amount of resources that allow students to — as Bellisario himself explicitly wishes — do top-level, hands-on work without leaving the education environment.

There are full-on TV and film studios and a news studio complete with a robotic camera. There is a new and sleek home for the Media Effects Research Lab, including a focus-group room and an eye-tracking lab to study how consumers look at media and advertising. On the second floor is an open newsroom and news lab, which will also house the new offices of the Collegian.

There are voiceover booths. Radio reporting classrooms. Finishing suites for film. There is a “one-button studio,” developed by Penn State for people to pull together visual presentations on the fly. There is even a green room where guests can wait before going on the air. The broadcast portion of the media center alone required the installation of almost 7,000 audio/video/data cables and almost 7,000 strands of fiber-optic cable, according to project engineer Tyler Washburn.

And the media center is a 24-hour facility, so students who keep odd hours can do their work anytime “instead of breaking in, like they used to in Carnegie,” Mozley-Bryan jokes.

Everywhere are opportunities for serendipitous conversations. “That’s an intangible, but it’s important,” says Scott Myrick, director of operations for the building.

The facility will be a key attraction for would-be communications students mulling a Penn State education, and that is already paying dividends. Mozley-Bryan recalls a student who came in to see the facility, still under construction, and made her choice immediately: “I cannot wait to start next year,” she wrote.

“To bring student journalists together to tell stories across platforms from the get-go will have a huge impact. It’s going to have an impact on journalism across Pennsylvania and beyond,” says John Affleck, the Knight Chair in Sports Journalism and Society. He’s particularly interested in opportunities that link up film and journalism. “Just having everybody together will create chatter that will create opportunities.”

The media center will also be an attraction for alumni, who form a centerpiece of the value that the Bellisario College tries to offer its students. Networking — both within the pandemic and after it — has become more important than ever as communications jobs are continually reconceived and reinvented.

“The network is never-ending,” says Abby Johnson, an advertising/public relations major with a digital media trends and analytics minor who will graduate in 2022.

And it was, it seems, extended over the past year — not in spite of the pandemic but



Abby Johnson

perhaps because of it. In two pandemic-era classes that Johnson took with Lee Ahern, an associate professor of advertising/public relations, she was thrilled to find him bringing in people from across industries to talk to them about how COVID-19 was affecting everything they were studying.

“Things are changing so rapidly that a textbook couldn’t give us information that someone in the real world could,” Johnson says. “We can have guest speakers from around the world that we don’t have access to typically.”

This aligns well with the Bellisario College’s dual identity — to teach professional communications-industry skills but also teach its students to communicate within the working world, whatever profession they might choose.

Students joke about the frequency of what they call invaluable emails from Assistant Dean Bob Martin at the Office of Internships and Career Placement, which outline opportunities far and wide. Alumni report that the college is always looking for people to come back and talk and network with students — and Zoom in if they can’t visit. Alumni regularly offer feedback direct from various corners of the professional world on student projects — and tell students whether what they’re doing is still relevant out in the wild.

Providing a fulcrum for all of this to happen is deeply rewarding to Donald Bellisario, who reflects on his Penn State education and imagines what he could have done with access to the tools that the center named for him will offer.

“I just wanted to give people the opportunity that I didn’t have and had to get on my own,” he says. “This will be a terrific learning experience, these facilities. I am so envious of that, and so pleased to be able to deliver it.”

And that “togetherness” that the media center will produce? It will shine an entirely new light in the pandemic’s wake. Being together physically — an educational benefit in any moment, in any era — becomes almost transcendent when it arrives after more than a year of being virtual, being alone, being apart.

“Togetherness, connectedness to other people, that’s going to be so much more important,” Dejanae Gibson says.

“Students coming in right now are going to want to have a sense of community and a place that they know is theirs,” she says. “I think people are going to come into it so eager — eager to do something, eager to make a change, eager to produce things they’re excited about. And to tell stories about humanity and how it has shifted.”

Changing history for the better

Thirty years ago, a TV show called “Quantum Leap” followed a time traveler, a physicist named Sam Beckett, as he pinballed through the latter half of the 20th century trying to repair moments where history had gone wrong.

For five seasons, Dr. Beckett moved from place to place, from era to era — “driven,” as the voiceover on the opening credits says, “by an unknown force to change history for the better.” On the fly, he had to figure out what was going on around him, learn how to walk a mile in another human being’s shoes, and devise ways of helping people. His main tools were communicating effectively and taking action.

At the beginning of every episode, the credits displayed the show’s creator (and frequent writer) in capital letters: DONALD P. BELLISARIO.

In 1993, the last “Quantum Leap” episode was filmed in Cokeburg, the southwestern Pennsylvania mining town where Bellisario grew up and the place he left in the late 1950s to come to Penn State to be educated as one of the sons and daughters of the working class.

In that finale, Dr. Beckett learns that he is actually the one who charts his journeys, and that it is his ability to understand and adapt to his surroundings that will deliver him. The series ends with him continuing to “leap” — to keep figuring out how to communicate with different kinds of people and help them achieve their goals while edging his own way forward.

Sound at all familiar?

Like Dr. Beckett, today’s Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications students are trying to navigate a world in which the ground is changing under them by the minute. And they have something of the same trajectory, too: They leap toward the future rather than the past, fueled by dreams of figuring out the world and improving it, powered by an institution and technology that are designed and aligned to help them find their way.

They are emerging from a pandemic into a world that we both recognize and don’t. They are trying to chart their own journeys, navigating the choppy seas of a new universe of information — and disinformation. Things are moving so fast that they are acquiring fresh skills that even their older siblings may lack. They are learning to be citizens of a democracy and what that means, and the skills they are accumulating are utterly essential to the democratic society they are joining.

They are, you might say, learning to change history for the better.

And now: As a pandemic edges toward its end and the new media center awaits, they are uniquely positioned to do so. Method and moment are, finally, converging. Things are happening. Students are returning. The world is coming back, and change is at hand. Says Abdullah: “Now that we are seeing the other side, here we go.”

“

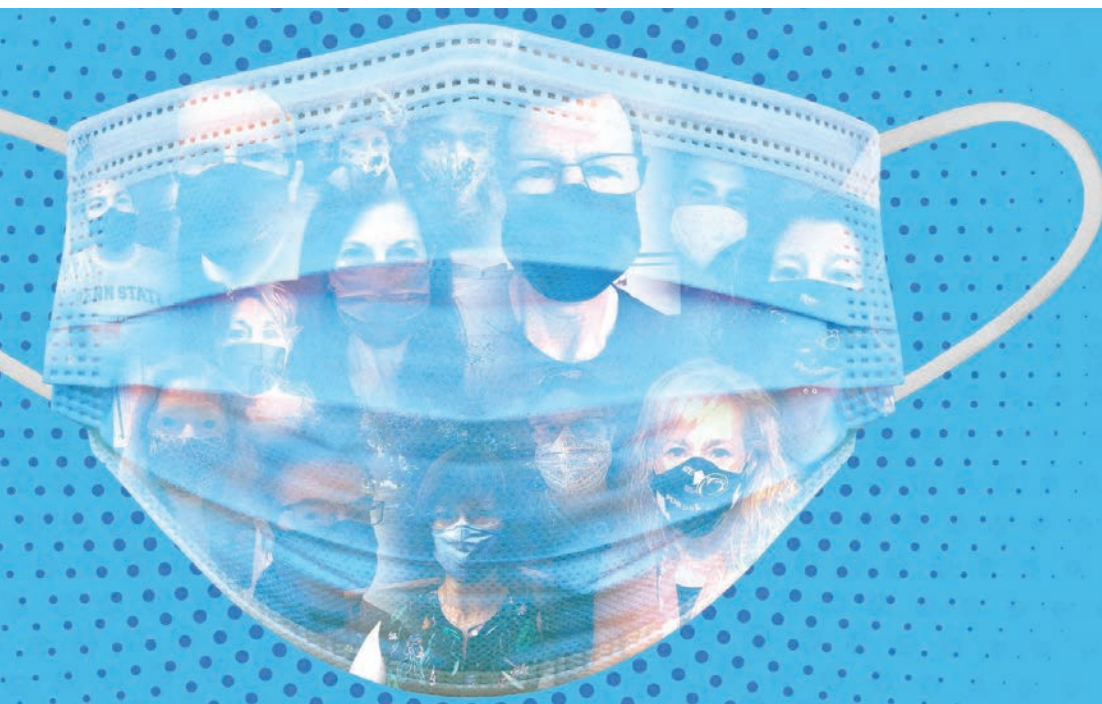
When you get the buzz of a large endowment plus the buzz of taking over half of one of the largest buildings on campus, people notice. It’s put even more pride in what we do. You can feel people pay attention to us.

”

— Gary Abdullah, assistant dean for diversity and inclusion



Ted Anthony ('90) is global director of newsroom innovation for The Associated Press and splits his time between Pittsburgh and, when there’s not a pandemic, New York City. He has reported from more than 25 countries and is the author of “Chasing the Rising Sun: The Journey of an American Song” (2007). His next book is “Scoring Position: Baseball, Anxiety and the Search for My Son’s Post-Pandemic Adulthood.”



LIFE BEHIND THE MASK



Check out
the Fall 2020
Communicator
for that story
and more!



First World Campus student earns student marshal honors

Elyssa Vondra's experience sounds strikingly similar to that of many other Penn State students: the University made a strong first impression, she changed her major a few times, and she balanced academic responsibilities while working to pay her tuition.

In many ways she had the quintessential Penn State experience — and she capped it as a student marshal, representing the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications during summer 2020 commencement exercises.

She was the first Penn State World Campus to earn the honor. The Wisconsin native has never set foot on campus, or in Pennsylvania.

"When I was about to start college, I decided I wanted to go to school online. I searched and Penn State came up first," Vondra said. "I did a lot of research about the program and University as well. That confirmed my decision."

Throughout high school, Vondra envisioned a career as a neurosurgeon but by the time she enrolled at Penn State her initial intended major was law, which morphed to political science and, ultimately, journalism. She earned her bachelor's degree in digital media and journalism.

Like many students who succeed at Penn State, persistence paid off for the native of Platteville, Wisconsin.

She put that approach to use after her freshman year as she sought experience to complement what she was learning in the classroom.

A Dean's List student, Vondra earned numerous academic awards, including the President Sparks Award and the President's Freshman Award. As a recipient of a U.S. Senate Youth Program scholarship, she traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet former President Barack Obama and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Vondra started learning remotely in her home state and later moved to Columbia, South Carolina, with her husband, Avi Sukhwai, as he pursued his doctorate. She worked as a news producer, reporter and editor throughout her undergraduate career. She and her husband celebrated their second anniversary in November.

"For me, it was a neat experience. An online option worked really well, and it allowed me to work at the same time," she said. "It was a good option for someone who needs a little more flexibility. The biggest challenge was probably time management, balancing going to school, working and life. There were times when I was thinking my career was going well and I thought about stopping school and just focusing on work, but my husband and family encouraged me to finish."

Vondra, who was raised by her grandparents in a kinship foster arrangement, found out about her status as student marshal on an especially stressful Monday. "It made my day, my whole summer really, and made it all seem worthwhile," she said. 🍀

STUDENT MARSHALS

SUMMER 2020
Elyssa Vondra

FALL 2020
Kelsey Bell

SPRING 2021



Bing Zhang,
Overall

Nina Trach,
Advertising/PR

Jake Jurich,
Film Production



Justin Korman,
Journalism

Daryle Watkins,
Media Studies

Eva Rhule,
Telecommunications
and Media Industries

ACADEMIC OFFERINGS

RESIDENT INSTRUCTION

Undergraduate Majors

Advertising/Public Relations
Film Production
Journalism
Media Studies
Telecommunications and Media Industries

Minors

Digital Media Trends and Analytics
Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Film Studies
Information Sciences and Technology
for Telecommunications
Media Studies

Graduate Degrees

Master's Degree, Media Studies
Ph.D., Mass Communications

ONLINE

Majors

Digital Journalism and Media
Digital Multimedia Design
Strategic Communications

Minor

Media Studies

Graduate Degree

Master of Professional Studies in
Strategic Communications

896

total number
of graduates



“
We Are is not just a chant you say in the stadium,
but the words to live by once you walk out of it.
”

– Bob McKinnon ('90 Adv/PR), commencement speaker



Watch the speech

Public relations students embrace community, mentoring for success

As a prospective student, Sydney Haykel accepted her offer of admission to Penn State sight unseen from her home in California. Even from afar, she felt a sense of community that swayed her decision — and that feeling was confirmed when she arrived on campus.

“It’s hard to describe, but the ‘We Are’ mentality comes through. It’s a culture thing,” she said. “Then, when we finally did end up visiting after I had accepted my offer it was clear.

“It’s a community and everyone wants to help each other. This isn’t me against you in class. And isn’t the point of learning helping each other to learn?”

Haykel and her classmates put that mentality into practice.

Members of a 400-level public relations class were challenged to enter the nationally competitive Outstanding Student Award competition conducted by PRWeek.

Five national finalists, including three from Penn State — Haykel, Jenna Silverblatt and Yunjing Zhang — were selected from hundreds of applicants across the nation.

“It’s certainly an honor,” said Jenna Silverblatt, who was part of the class with Haykel and Yunjing Zhang last fall. “It shows the strength of our public relations program in general, and especially shows the commitment of Tara Wyckoff, our professor.”

All three Penn State finalists said the peer-review part of the process was helpful and important. This is the first time Penn State has had three finalists for the award.

“I loved the work and loved the process,” Zhang said. “It’s so exciting that three of us are finalists. There was a point where I thought about just doing a simple paper and not much more, but I wanted to do my best and I knew that wasn’t enough.”



Penn State students selected as finalists for the Outstanding Student Award from PRWeek were, from left, Sydney Haykel, Jenna Silverblatt and Yunjing Zhang.

The annual competition this year challenged students to create a campaign for a sustainable shoe that would be launched during fashion week in New York City. Written entries could be no more than six pages, along with supplemental material not to exceed two pages. Entrants were encouraged to include a 60-second video as well.

Silverblatt built a campaign, “Soles of the City,” that relied on brand activations centered around New York City healthcare workers and integrated the pandemic narrative into Fashion Week. She lives in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and has been working as a junior associate at Gregory FCA, Philadelphia’s largest public relations firm, since earning her degree in December 2020.

Haykel’s campaign included influencers, gamification and art installations — showing a range of public relations strategy and tactics.

Zhang created a campaign, #NYFWInABox, that included activations and influencers to engage with the audience. An international student from China, she picked Penn State because of its apparent proximity to New York City (she has since learned it’s a little farther than it looks on the map) as well as the reputation of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications. 



PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY SELECTIONS

Lauren Groff, Amy Hall, Ayden Herold, Kayla Marrero

DAVIS AWARD RECIPIENTS

Dominika Brice, Renata Daou, Sandra Eichhorn, Hannah Nelson, Daryle Watkins and Yunjing Zhang

Six students selected as Bellisario Fellows



Six students were selected as the most recent class of Bellisario Fellows. They are (clockwise from upper left): Maryah Burney, Catherine Cao, Sara Harkins, Megan Swift, Preston Shoemaker and Jodi Norton.

Rosen named among 2021 Oswald Award winners

The John W. Oswald Award, established in 1983, annually recognizes graduating seniors who have provided outstanding leadership in at least one of several areas of activity at the University. The award consists of a medallion honoring John W. Oswald, president of the University from 1970 to 1983.


Media studies major Rachel Rosen earned the award for athletics.

Nominators said Rosen has been a force for the Penn State women's lacrosse program since 2017 but her leadership and philanthropy off the field also stand out. She represents Big Ten athletes on the NCAA's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and serves as the group's chair for the Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon, known as THON.

As a member of SAAC, Rosen works to enhance student-athlete welfare within the Big Ten. There, she's dedicated to creating more structure within school advisory boards. For THON, she helped raise more than \$50,000 through community outreach initiatives while managing 800 student-athletes. The funds went toward helping those impacted by pediatric cancer.

"Rachel spent every waking hour at THON throughout the weekend, except for when she had to help our team earn a win against Cornell," a nominator said.

Rosen is also a standout internationally. In 2019, she helped lead Israel Lacrosse to a silver medal in the European Championships.

"She is continuously pushing for and putting herself in leadership situations that represent and drive the Penn State name forward," a nominator said. "Rachel is continuously coming up with ideas to succeed in embodying the Penn State name, both as a member of the women's lacrosse team and as a Penn State student." 



Rachel Rosen



2021 Project Yellow Light Scholarship Competition

**Winner:
Katherine Saylor**



Listen to Katie's winning radio spot.
projectyellowlight.com

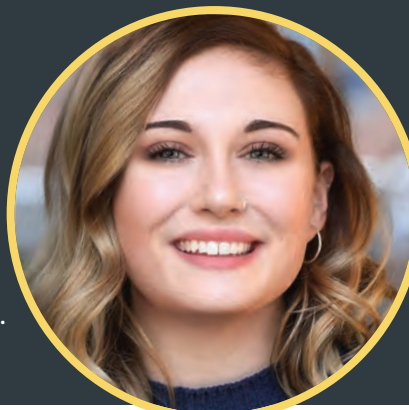


IMAGE: PENN STATE ATHLETICS

A ‘scholar of the highest order’ retires from the Bellisario College

Faculty member Rob Frieden excelled in the classroom and as a researcher

For nearly three decades, Rob Frieden’s identity has been clear and his impact has been unquestionable.

That all changed July 1, when Frieden officially retired as a Penn State faculty member.

Frieden arrived at Penn State as an associate professor in 1992. He taught his last class as the Pioneers Chair and professor of telecommunications and law in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications during the spring semester.

His accomplishments as a teacher and researcher represent a combination of success that serves as an aspirational goal for colleagues at the University and across the country.

He taught more than 30,000 hours in the classroom, consistently sharing his expertise (he was a lawyer for Motorola and the FCC before becoming a faculty member) and an engaging sense of humor. Frieden embraced the “rigor” of the classroom, always wearing a coat and tie and striving to be students’ teacher, not necessarily their friend.



Rob Frieden enjoyed his time in the classroom, embracing the “rigor” of faculty-student interaction while often injecting humor to make more challenging topics easier to understand. IMAGE: MARK SELDERS

Ironically, Frieden said he would miss teaching the most — and not miss it as well.

“Teaching got me here, and nothing can rival teaching, or a courtroom, for that energy, flow and excitement. It’s invigorating, problem-solving and an interdisciplinary interaction. You can’t replicate that,” he said. “But it can also be incredibly difficult. I loved that rigor. I aspired to maintain that high level each and every time I entered the classroom.”

Still, Frieden was approachable.

“There are very few people I know who can inject humor into a discussion of net neutrality,” said Krishna Jayakar, professor and head of the Department of Telecommunications.

As a researcher, Frieden authored five books, 29 book chapters and 75 law and peer-reviewed journal articles. Additionally, his work was downloaded 11,280 times from the Social Science Research Network.

“He’s a scholar of the highest order — one of the most prolific and productive members of our star-studded faculty,” said Patrick Parsons, a professor and former head of the Department of Telecommunications.

Frieden influenced many beyond Penn State as well.

“He motivated so many people to want to pursue these types of careers — telecommunications and how it intersects with law, how it intersects

“

I loved that rigor. I aspired to maintain that high level each and every time I entered the classroom.

”

– Rob Frieden, Pioneers Chair and professor of telecommunications and law

with society, and how it intersects with ethics,” said Nicol Turner-Lee of the Brookings Institution. “He should enter retirement feeling darn good, because he’s impacted so many people.”

One of Frieden’s educational passions was digital literacy, always striving to help students see a bigger picture.

“It amazes me how apt my students are at hand-eye coordination, texting and how to use their smartphone,” Frieden said. “But, at the same time, they don’t understand the business of it — data mining, information use and so much more — things that really matter.”

What he sees for himself in a few weeks remains unclear, though. He’s ready to cede his position to another motivated, up-and-coming faculty member. He’s secure in his career accomplishments, too. He’s just not sure what’s next ... and he’s actually OK with that uncertainty.

“I did not think this would be a one-and-done place for my career, and that speaks very well of Penn State,” Frieden said. “I always felt supported here, and I did my part to promote the brand and promote the school during my career.

“The career-life balance was easy to achieve here. Now we’ll see what’s next, where my pivot takes me.”

Faculty member earns Fulbright support to develop film in Poland and Israel

An award-winning faculty filmmaker in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications has received a Global Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award to Poland and Israel, the U.S. Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board recently announced.

Pearl Gluck, an associate professor in the Department of Film Production and Media Studies, will research and begin production on “Little Miss Hasid,” a feature-length documentary, at Tel Aviv University and the Lodz National Polish Film School during the fall 2021 semester.

As a Fulbright Scholar, Gluck will share knowledge and work to foster meaningful connections across communities in the United States, Poland and Israel. Fulbright Scholars engage in cutting-edge research and expand their professional networks, often continuing research collaborations started abroad and laying the groundwork for forging future partnerships between institutions.

Upon returning to their home countries, institutions, labs and classrooms, they share their stories and often become active supporters of international exchange — inviting foreign scholars to campus and encouraging colleagues and students to go abroad. As Fulbright Scholar alumni, their careers are enriched by joining a network of thousands of esteemed scholars, many of whom are leaders in their fields. Fulbright alumni include 60 Nobel Prize laureates, 86 Pulitzer Prize recipients, and 37 who have served as a head of state or government.

Gluck’s project focuses on educational pioneer and feminist Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov movement that she founded. “Little Miss Hasid,” which was Schenirer’s nickname in Polish grade school, builds on Naomi Seidman’s academic monograph (“Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in the Name of Tradition”) that focuses on the interwar Polish emergence of the movement.

Gluck, who led a group of Penn State students to Poland in 2019, has already built a connection with Seidman, who agreed to adapt her book into a film.



Pearl Gluck, an associate professor in the Department of Film Production and Media Studies at Penn State, has received a Global Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award to Poland and Israel. IMAGE: MICHAEL GARRETT

Patients may not take advice from AI doctors who know their names

By Matt Swayne

As the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in health applications grows, health providers are looking for ways to improve patients' experience with their machine doctors.

Researchers from Penn State and University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) found that people may be less likely to take health advice from an AI doctor when the robot knows their name and medical history. On the other hand, patients want to be on a first-name basis with their human doctors.

When the AI doctor used the first name of the patients and referred to their medical history in the conversation, study participants were more likely to consider an AI health chatbot intrusive and also less likely to heed the AI's medical advice, the researchers added. However, while chatting online with human doctors they expected the doctors to differentiate them from other patients and were less likely to comply when a human doctor failed to remember their information.

The findings offer further evidence that machines walk a fine line in serving as doctors, said S. Shyam Sundar, James P. Jimirro Professor of Media Effects in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications and co-director of the Media Effects Research Laboratory at Penn State.

"Machines don't have the ability to feel and experience, so when they ask patients how they are feeling, it's really just data to them," said Sundar, who is also an affiliate of Penn State's Institute for Computational and Data Sciences (ICDS). "It's possibly a reason why people in the past have been resistant to medical AI."

Machines do have advantages as medical providers, said Joseph B. Walther, distinguished professor in communication and the Mark and Susan Bertelsen Presidential Chair in Technology and Society at UCSB. He said that,

like a family doctor who has treated a patient for a long time, computer systems could — hypothetically — know a patient's complete medical history. In comparison, seeing a new doctor or a specialist who knows only your latest lab tests might be a more common experience, said Walther, who is also director of the Center for Information Technology and Society at UCSB.

"This struck us with the question: 'Who really knows us better: a machine that can store all this information, or a human who has never met us before or hasn't developed a relationship with us, and what do we value in a relationship with a medical expert?'" said Walther. "So this research asks, who knows us better — and who do we like more?"

The team designed five chatbots for the two-phase study, recruiting a total of 295 participants for the first phase, 223 of whom returned for the second phase. In the first part of the study, participants were randomly assigned to interact with either a human doctor, an AI doctor, or an AI-assisted doctor through the chat function.

In the second phase of the study, the participants were assigned to interact with the same doctor again. However, when the doctor initiated the conversation in this phase, they either identified the participant by the first name and recalled information from the last interaction or they asked again how the patient preferred to be addressed and repeated questions about their medical history.

In both phases, the chatbots were programmed to ask eight questions concerning COVID-19 symptoms and behaviors, and offer diagnosis and recommendations, said Jin Chen, doctoral student in mass communications, Penn State and first author of the paper.

"We chose to focus this on COVID-19 because it was a salient health issue during the study period," said Jin Chen. 

Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications Presents



COMMversations

A podcast focused on the people and programs of the Bellisario College.



bellisario.psu.edu/alumni/podcasts

Illnesses of celebrities can negatively affect public health

By Jonathan F. McVerry

Not all public figures are equally beloved, and sometimes when more controversial celebrities get sick, it may negatively affect people's health intentions. In a study of people's reactions to radio host Rush Limbaugh's announcement of a lung cancer diagnosis and Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul's announcement of a diagnosis of COVID-19, researchers at Penn State found that those who took pleasure in their misfortune were themselves less likely to take steps to prevent lung cancer or COVID-19.

"Schadenfreude is the emotion of feeling pleasure in another's misfortune," said Jessica Gall Myrick, associate professor of media studies. "In our study, after learning the news of a politician's illness, if people felt schadenfreude, they were much less likely to intend to take the actions that would prevent either lung cancer or COVID-19."

In general, previous research by Myrick has found that coverage of celebrity ailments can raise public awareness of serious illnesses, which can then serve as a motivation for people to avoid bad activities or start new healthy routines. But most studies on the topic examine how the public responds to well-liked celebrities. Respondents were not asked if they liked or disliked the person reporting the illness in the current study, but rather if they felt schadenfreude upon hearing the news of Limbaugh and Paul.

Myrick and doctoral student Jin Chen of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications conducted two online surveys shortly after news coverage of illnesses associated with two provocative public figures. Their results were published in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*.

“

The more media exposure people had to these political figures ... the more pleasure they experienced in learning of their illness. That pleasure in the political figure's pain seemed to demotivate people to take action to protect themselves.

”

– Jessica Gall Myrick, associate professor of media studies

Both of the surveys showed the same pattern; the respondents who felt greater schadenfreude toward Limbaugh and Paul after learning of their illnesses were less inclined to take the steps to prevent lung cancer and COVID-19.

Political ideology was not related to feelings of schadenfreude, according to these studies. The only factor that could predict how much schadenfreude people felt was how well they believed they knew these famous individuals through the media.

"The more media exposure people had to these political figures, and the more familiar people felt they were knowledgeable about the political figures, the more pleasure they experienced in learning of their illness," Myrick said. "That pleasure in the political figure's pain seemed to demotivate people to take action to protect themselves."

Myrick added that schadenfreude is a positive emotion and when "we feel happy and pleased, we also feel safe." This may be the reason people are less likely to avoid the health risks."

Myrick is affiliated with the Science Communication Program, a program in the Bellisario College that supports research in the science of science communication. 

**FACULTY
PRODUCTIVITY**



Bu Zhong
Penn State Teaching and Learning with Technology: Faculty Engagement Award

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

AUGUST 2020

24

graduate students

19

faculty researchers

International Communication Association

May 2021

23

graduate students

15

faculty researchers

106

presentations

110

journal articles

12

book chapters

6

books written

Bellisario College faculty member recognized as Highly Cited Researcher




A faculty member in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State has been recognized as one of the world’s most influential researchers.

Professor Homero Gil de Zuñiga was identified by Clarivate as a 2020 Highly Cited Researcher for the production of multiple highly cited papers that rank in the top 1% by citations for field and year. Clarivate, a global leader in providing trusted insights and analytics to accelerate the pace of innovation, owns and operates a collection of subscription-based services focused largely on analytics, including scientific and academic research, patent intelligence and compliance standards, pharmaceutical and biotech intelligence trademark, domain and brand protection.

As explained in the Web of Science executive summary, each year the conglomerate in charge of the JCR ranking identifies the most influential researchers, a select group of researchers who have been the most frequently cited by their peers throughout the previous decade. In 2020, fewer than 6,200 researchers worldwide, or 0.1% of researchers across 21 different fields in an interdisciplinary manner, earned the Highly Cited Researcher distinction.

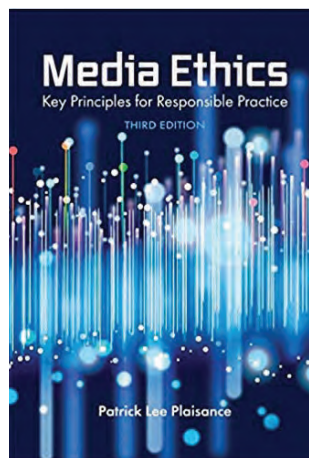
Gil de Zuñiga joined the Penn State faculty in 2020. Along with his duties as a professor at Penn State, he is a distinguished research professor in political science at University of Salamanca, where he directs the Democracy Research Unit, and a senior research fellow at Universidad Diego Portales, Chile. Prior to these appointments he was the Medienwandel Professor at University of Vienna, an associate professor at the University of Texas and a research fellow at several institutions.

His research addresses the influence of new technologies and digital media over people’s daily lives, as well as the effect of such use on the overall democratic process.

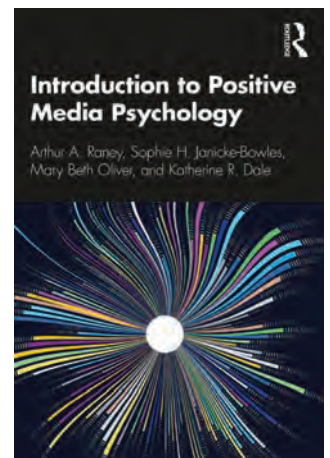
He has published several books and book chapters with prestigious academic publishers such as Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Routledge, Sage, and others. Likewise, his work (over 100 articles) has been published in numerous ISI/JCR indexed peer-reviewed academic journals. 



by Yael Warshel



by Patrick Plaisance



by Mary Beth Oliver

FULL-TIME FACULTY, 2020-21 ACADEMIC YEAR

Advertising/Public Relations

Lee Ahern, *Associate Professor*
 Michelle Baker, *Assistant Teaching Professor, Director of Online Programs in Strategic Communications*
 Mark Birschbach, *Lecturer*
 Denise Bortree, *Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs*
 Colleen Connolly-Ahern, *Associate Professor*
 Frank Dardis, *Associate Professor*
 Stephanie Madden, *Assistant Professor*
 Ann Major, *Associate Professor*
 Steve Manuel, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Renea Nichols, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Fuyuan Shen, *Professor and Department Head*
 Heather Shoenberger, *Assistant Professor*
 Ronald Smith, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 S. Shyam Sundar, *Distinguished Professor*
 Dave Wozniak, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Tara Wyckoff, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Ken Yednock, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Bill Zimmerman, *Lecturer*

Journalism

Gary Abdullah, *Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion*
 John Affleck, *Knight Chair*
 John Beale, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Curtis Chandler, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Boaz Dvir, *Assistant Professor*
 Russ Eshleman, *Associate Teaching Professor and Department Head*
 Russell Frank, *Associate Professor*
 Marie Hardin, *Professor and Dean*
 Shannon Kennan, *Associate Teaching Professor*

Steve Kraycik, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Ann Kuskowski, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Marea Mannion, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Walter Middlebrook, *Eberly Professor of Practice*
 Kathleen O'Toole, *Lecturer*
 Shaheen Pasha, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Juliet Pinto, *Associate Professor*
 Patrick Plaisance, *Don W. Davis Professor in Ethics*
 Jamey Perry, *Assistant Dean of Academic Services*
 Robert D. Richards, *John and Ann Curley Professor of First Amendment Studies*
 Ford Risley, *Professor*
 Christopher Ritchie, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 John Sanchez, *Associate Professor*
 Cynthia Simmons, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Will Yurman, *Associate Professor*
 Bu Zhong, *Associate Professor*

Film Production and Media Studies

Rod Bingaman, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Marty Camden, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Jo Dumas, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Homero Gil de Zúñiga, *Professor*
 Pearl Gluck, *Associate Professor*
 Cassie Ross Green, *Lecturer*
 Kevin Hagopian, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Matthew Jordan, *Associate Professor and Department Head*
 Sara Liao, *Assistant Professor*
 Martin Marinos, *Assistant Professor*

Matthew McAllister, *Professor*
 Jessica Myrick, *Associate Professor*
 Mary Beth Oliver, *Distinguished Professor*
 Anthony Olorunnisola, *Professor and Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and Research*
 Michelle Rodino-Colocino, *Associate Professor*
 Michael Schmierbach, *Associate Professor*
 Maura Shea, *Associate Teaching Professor and Associate Department Head*
 Christofer Skurka, *Assistant Professor*
 Timeka Tounsel, *Assistant Professor*
 Vertna West, *Assistant Teaching Professor*

Telecommunications and Media Industries

Benjamin Cramer, *Associate Teaching Professor*
 Anne Doris, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Linda Feltman, *Lecturer*
 Rob Frieden, *Pioneers Chair*
 Catie Grant, *Lecturer*
 Bill Hallman, *Lecturer*
 Anne Hoag, *Associate Professor*
 Matthew Jackson, *Associate Professor*
 Krishna Jayakar, *Professor and Department Head*
 Bob Martin, *Assistant Dean of Internships and Career Placement*
 Sascha Meinrath, *Palmer Chair*
 Scott Myrick, *Lecturer*
 David Norloff, *Assistant Teaching Professor*
 Patrick Parsons, *Professor*
 Yael Warshel, *Assistant Professor*

University-Wide Award Winners



Faculty Outreach Award
Sascha Meinrath



McKay Donkin Award
John Nichols



Rosemary Schraer Mentoring Award
Mary Beth Oliver



Award for Administrative Excellence
Steve Sampsell



STRENGTH AND SUPPORT

By Steve Sampsell ('90 Journ)

The best thing about Gary Abdullah is his voice. And he definitely knows how and when to use it.

From the booming, deep, room-rattling laugh he unleashes among friends to the calm, quiet almost whisper he uses during one-on-one meetings with students who need a softer touch, Abdullah, the assistant dean for diversity and inclusion in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications, invariably picks the correct approach for the situation. He had his discernment and wisdom put to the test almost daily during the past year and a half, though.

Like everyone else, he was adapting to unknowns as the coronavirus pandemic impacted the campus, community and country. At the same time, matters of equity, justice and race — longstanding challenges ignited again by clear injustices and often flamed by less obvious personal beliefs and political differences — were providing an additional layer of complexity to almost everything.

Every day brought another important and timely challenge that impacted students, faculty and staff in the Bellisario College, and that meant Abdullah, who wants every member of those audiences to feel welcome at Penn State, was a busy man.

“He’s had the hardest job in the college this year, there’s no question in my mind,” Dean Marie Hardin says. “The thing about Gary that’s so impressive is the way he manages to provide the kind of support that each individual student that meets with him needs. At the same time, he manages to think about the bigger picture and what needs to be done in terms of the larger direction of the college. On top of that he is a trusted resource at the University level in bigger discussions.

“Another thing I like about Gary — he will speak up when he sees something he thinks is not right. He’s not afraid to tell me what he thinks I need to hear, and a lot of people are not like that. That’s a great quality. He pairs that honesty with a loyalty that is very clear, and that’s what makes it work.”

A developing voice

Long before he was talking, Gary Andre Abdullah was listening. His parents, Gary and Lydia, came to Penn State from Philadelphia and graduated from the University in 1974 and 1975, respectively. A week after earning her bachelor's degree, Lydia was hired by the University. The couple was married in 1975 and both worked at Penn State for decades.

Gary's father worked in public information and his mother in human resources. The elder Gary retired first, about seven years ago, and Lydia retired three years ago, after 41 years at Penn State — all of them in the University's sprawling finance and business unit, including an impactful tenure as the director of diversity and inclusion.

"You know, children are always watching and they're always listening," Lydia says. "He could see things we did at work, beyond our work and the difference we made here. He could see the good, the bad, the ugly and choose to make a difference. In that manner, I think the job becomes a tool of your calling."

His father says Gary was "never the goof-off kid." Instead, he took advice from his parents to be respectful to heart and understood that he always had the right to share an opinion about something he believed. Even in the 1980s in State College, though, that often sounded easier than it was.

Gary remembers his father walking down the street to confront the parent of another child who had called his son a name on the school bus. And he vividly remembers his first encounter with the N-word.

"It was a summer swimming program and coming back to the locker room some kid had thrown my clothes on the ground and pissed on them. I was a kid. I was 7," Gary says. He also recalls another incident, 20 years later, when he was working at the Penn State All-Sports Museum, leaving for the day as the crowd was moving into Beaver Stadium for a football game. "You just had that feeling, a lot of people going one way, me going the other," he says. "All you can do is keep walking."

Abdullah knew what to do and what not to do in such situations. Having grown up in State College, he earned his degrees from Penn State and, again, watched his parents. He practiced patience and brought perspective, as well as a distinctly effective communications style, to every situation.

It has been a thread in his Penn State career. He earned two degrees from Penn State, a bachelor's in telecommunications and a master's in telecommunication studies. Before being selected as assistant dean, Abdullah was the multicultural coordinator for the College of Education at Penn State, an academic adviser in the Bellisario College, and an admissions officer for the University during a career that has been focused on higher education.

(In part because of his telecommunications degree — "I'm a nerd about that stuff" — he still follows the industry pretty closely, especially matters related to TV networks, streaming companies and their business models.)

"He likes to think things all the way through before he actually speaks on them," says his wife, Alyta Abdullah. Gary and Alyta have known each other since they were 6 years old. In the past year, as the family dealt with the death of her father, the pandemic challenges and changes, his work, her work (she's a nurse) and the typical ups and downs of raising two teenage daughters, she watched as his passionate and patient process played out.

With classes going virtual, racial injustices getting mainstream media attention, marches in State College, and with faculty, staff and students turning to him as either a type of first-responding resource or steadying point of comfort, Abdullah maintained an unwavering, level-headed approach.

"He doesn't speak on it too much but when he does, he's already gone over the scenarios in his own mind and how to process it," Alyta says. "When he wants to make a point and he's very passionate about something, he will let you know."

He was a leader and advocate in every instance. He did that in part by remaining mindful of what was happening with the George Floyd case, and so many others, without making a deep dive into the situations. Part of that approach was because he was focused on serving others — especially students — and part was because, unfortunately, he had seen many similar things in the past. So, Abdullah respected and supported those who were processing things for themselves and saved his energy to help others.

"No lie, it's been tough to be Black and working in a position like this in a place like this the last year. It's tough to be the person in the room whose job it is to bring up the uncomfortable stuff or to be the go-to reference for uncomfortable topics or discussions," Abdullah says. "If I'm

at work, it's my job. If I'm at home, I'm a Black man and it's important and I need to be aware. But, in my personal life, to avoid going down the rabbit hole, I'm going to go turn on Disney+ or HGTV, because that's where I decompress. Otherwise, I'm thinking about it all the time."

Abdullah's honesty and optimism helped others, and himself. What was certainly a challenging year was not as difficult as it could have been in large part because of his approach and efforts. Overall, he values the power of communications — even when it comes to somewhat softer topics, like raising teen daughters. Or perhaps especially when it comes to them.

"He believes as long as you can talk with them, communicate and have rules, things will probably be OK," Alyta says. "I'm a realist and he's more of an optimist. I'll say, 'Yea, I'm pretty sure there are going to be some tough days.'"

A campus and community voice

There are 28 steps inside Carnegie Building from the main lobby up to Abdullah's second-floor office. During a typical year, he would get a lot of foot traffic and visitors — and he got more visitors than anyone else during the 2020-21 academic year because he was often in his office.

While the University generally went to a remote work schedule, he found it easier to compartmentalize, focus and serve students from his office. A few visited in person — many students had returned to campus and town but were taking classes remotely and appreciated any in-person interaction they could get, even if distanced and masked. However, most connections were made via Zoom. He met with students struggling in class and students looking for guidance or support. He also met with prospective students considering attending Penn State and curious about the campus and Bellisario College cultures.

As he would during a normal year, Abdullah also served on faculty and staff search committees. More than ever this past year he was a resource and sounding board for faculty, staff and students stressed out by pandemic- and race-related issues. He also worked most of the year without an administrative assistant. When that key point



Sample grouping of bow ties from Gary's collection of over 50.

person in his office — who normally triages requests for his time — moved to another position, Abdullah was left on his own, as the spot was not filled due to a University-wide pandemic-related hiring freeze. It was just another challenge in a year full of them.

Still, Abdullah never lost focus on the students and supporting them. He always reminds them to be intentional and mindful of the investment they're making to pursue a college education.

"I am intentional about helping them become intentional," he says. "College is not cheap no matter where you go and for many of our students this is the first time there's a financial strain put alongside their education — and this is big enough that everybody knows it costs something.

"You have to be intentional about coming here and learning, about being great. Even if you come here not knowing what you're doing, you have to be intentional about determining what you want to do. Don't be here just because that was what was expected of you. Don't be here because you don't know what else to do. You should be here because you want to be great, and you need to be intentional about that."

For his part, Abdullah never really intended to be doing what he's doing. After growing up in the community and attending Penn State, he initially thought he'd "get out of Dodge pretty quickly." Instead, he got hooked, eventually combining his appreciation for communications with a passion for counseling and people. Both he and his parents describe his work as a calling.

While some might generalize diversity and inclusion work as something that helps only a subset of students, Abdullah knows otherwise. He believes his office exists to

support all students because no matter their geographic or socioeconomic backgrounds, all students share pressures related to change, insecurity, stress and so much more. A big school like Penn State can be an overwhelming place.

“It’s my job to provide the personal touch that Penn State cannot — because it’s an institution. Penn State is not built for one at a time,” Abdullah says. “Here in the Bellisario College we can do that. We can give people a personal touch and let them know we see them.”

Abdullah says his attire, invariably a trademark bow tie and sweater vest, provide an outward expression of his confidence, and because he shares his confidence and energy with students, hopefully motivating them toward success, his look keeps him energized as well. Each night before work he meticulously irons his clothing for the next day. He does the same for his wife each week.

“He takes pride in his work,” Alyta says. “He gets very excited when there’s a crisp line.”

A respected voice

Dean Hardin remembers Abdullah as a graduate student whom she used to remind of assignments and deadlines. She says he was a good student and has grown as a leader and person.

“When you have somebody as a student it’s easy to always see them in that light. After Gary took the job, I challenged him very early on. What I wanted was not somebody who was just going to make the trains run and meet the needs of students on a day-to-day basis,” Hardin says. “I challenged Gary to become a leader and he took that challenge very seriously. He has really emerged as a leader on this campus.”

At times Penn State and State College, as one, seem like the smallest town in America.

People who are active leaders on campus and the community often interact. Plus, it’s hard for a large Black man like Abdullah to go unnoticed. He’s been losing weight and working out the past year-plus as well, dropping nearly 100 pounds, but he’s still hard to miss. He seemingly knows everyone on campus and in town. They know him, too. Or they at least know his mom and dad. During their lifetimes the minority community in Happy Valley was not always as large or vibrant, and the Abdullaha were often one of the first connecting points for people who were arriving for the first time.

“He and his family obviously have a huge legacy,” Alyta says. “He sees the impact of his parents and he feels he has to fill those shoes as well, even just to represent the family name. That’s a lot on his shoulders at times.”

Still, Abdullah does not shy away from the expectations and opportunities. His familiarity with campus and community make him especially effective at his job. It’s easier for him to connect students with opportunities or find the right people to offer assistance or support. Plus, his innate lifelong context about the community makes him an important and valuable partner in the Bellisario College and at the University.

“Over the years, being around, listening, sitting in the back on car rides, I understood why some people made the decision to say here,” he says. “And I love this stuff, listening to kids, talking with them about problems and helping them find their options. It’s a God-given gift to be able to sit here and listen to people, to be able to get them to open up and talk, to get people to trust you, to

“

I challenged Gary to become a leader and he took that challenge very seriously. He has really emerged as a leader on this campus.

”

– Marie Hardin



be able to have hard conversations. Some people can't do it, but for me it's a muscle and it's intentional, something I've worked on."


His faith plays a large role in what he does, and he admits that some aspects of what he was taught in terms of religion might be more exclusive than inclusive. He's struck a balance through the years that allows him to remain true to his calling and to his faith, while best serving all the people that need his encouragement and support.

"Growing up in the Christian church there are things you are taught, and I have probably unlearned some over time," he says. "Depending on where you sit and what your views are that can be a good or bad thing. To properly relate to my students and get past an identity to a person. I've matured."

There's no questioning his effectiveness, on campus, in his church or in the community. At 39, he's gotten better at his job, strengthening his skillset through experience and repetition, and continually honing his voice. Those closest to him have noticed — and they believe his impact will grow, from what he does with individual students to bigger-picture topics.

"He's definitely needed around here," his father says. "A lot of the older Black community has retired and there's a difference in terms of what's available to help students from other communities when they come here as opposed to years before. He's great at helping them."

It's not just his family who appreciates and believes in him.

"I think it's so incredibly important for me to have a partner," Hardin says. "To be able to completely trust the person in that role and be able to see them not only as someone to follow my orders but as someone to advise me and be a partner with me, I cannot tell you how much better I sleep at night knowing that." 



Steve Sampsell ('90) serves as the director of strategic communications for the Bellisario College. He has taught courses on news writing and reporting, magazine writing, and sports writing. He has published two books — one each with advice for his two daughters before they entered college.

JOIN US ONLINE

SPRING 2021

THE COMMUNICATOR



Scan this QR code to view *The Communicator*.

communicator.bellisario.psu.edu



DONALD P. BELLISARIO MEDIA CENTER



See a virtual tour of the completed Bellisario Media Center and more photos



Pandemic didn't stop Bellisario College's advising office from helping students

When a campus shutdown went from a few weeks to a month to unknown, the academic services office in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications was able to adapt thanks to the flexibility of its staff, the resilience of its students and the support system of other departments in the Bellisario College and on campus.



Assistant Dean Jamey Perry meets with a student before mask guidelines were in place. IMAGE: RILEY HERMAN, '22

Spring break of 2020 was coming to a close. Assistant Dean for Academic Services Jamey Perry told members of the advising team to pack up their laptops and plan to work from home for a couple of weeks. The coronavirus pandemic had started to change schedules, but no one expected it to last long.

"Then April came around, and all of a sudden I was like 'Hey, nobody's coming back,'" Perry said. "It was a double whammy for us, because we had students prepping for a normal fall semester and we were also helping students panicking about finishing the spring semester."

The advising office has a unique placement at the center of the Bellisario College. Advisers work closely with students and faculty. They also collaborate with members

from nearly every other academic department. Together, they assist in accomplishing the office's mission to help students reach their academic goals.

When the pandemic hit, students were wrapping up their first years, graduating, starting an internship or learning abroad. They were all sent home. The advising mission stayed the same.

That meant many Zoom meetings and phone calls sometimes late at night and early in the morning. There were some learning curves and hiccups with technology, but adviser BB Muré said patience and teamwork won the day.

"I think most students know what resources they have here," she said. "Their professors, their librarian, academic advisers, career services, diversity and inclusion, the tech office ... we all supported each other. And when you were running out of steam, there was always someone there to take the baton and keep the momentum."

After a quiet summer with most staff working from home, the advising team worked hard to provide a sense of normalcy for on-campus students in the fall. That meant keeping the lights on in 204 Carnegie Building should students need a place to go. When students stopped by, there would be a brief, socially distanced conversation in the lobby connecting students with recourses to access virtually.

"Especially for freshmen," lead adviser Mary Sergeant said. "Dean Marie Hardin really wanted somebody there for the freshmen coming in living in the dorms instead of a post-it note that said, 'Sorry we're out. Call this number.'"

““
Our students are amazing. They are resilient folks. They just keep going.

”

– BB Muré, Bellisario College academic adviser

The advisers came up with weekly rotations to ensure at least one adviser was available during working hours. Working from home, the other advisers made themselves available virtually. They assisted international students

many time zones away and sometimes worked near 12-hour days assisting students with course requirements from their living rooms.

"Typically, students would just come running into the office, because they know we are there from 8 to 5," Sergeant said. "I wanted them to feel as if they had something like that, so we had (virtual) meetings at all hours of the day and night."

As spring 2021 approached, the advising office had solidified different processes. Students had adapted, too. Muré, Perry and Sergeant all saluted the resilience and flexibility of their students.

"Our students are amazing," Muré said. "They are resilient folks. They just keep going." Through each challenge, positives started to emerge. Some of those positives may become part of the normal routine when students, faculty and staff return in the fall.

“

We want to go above and beyond in trying to find ways to support, encourage and be positive for students.

”

– Jamey Perry,

Bellisario College assistant dean for academic services

"There were things I appreciated," Muré said. "I always will prefer face-to-face meetings, but it's nice to know students are just a call or email away."

Perry said accommodating busy schedules and offering a level of convenience for students and staff is important.

"We want to go above and beyond in trying to find ways to support, encourage and be positive for students," Perry said. "We want to make ourselves extremely available for them."

An unexpected benefit materialized over the last year when former students needing a few credits to graduate started calling and signing up for classes. With more courses online, they were able to get the classes they needed to complete their degrees. The advisers were delighted to help these Penn Staters achieve their dream.

"We had adult students who weren't able to graduate, and they took this opportunity because they could do Zoom in a class that was offered through University Park," Sergeant said. "They took advantage of being able to be anywhere, and still get this done. So, when you talk about positives, that is a positive, and it's phenomenal."

Perry said he and his team learned something new every day over the past year and a half. He thinks the experience will help prepare them for "the next blindside." He hopes today's students will come back in a few years as alumni with some insight on what the advising office got right and how it could improve.

"Only time will tell," Perry said. "But I hope they tell us we hit it out of the park." 🏆



Advising staff (front row, from left) Del Schwab, Nikki Diorio, BB Muré, Kristen Dickson, (back row, from left) Brenda Johnson, Mary Sergeant, Olivia Werner, Katie Kennedy and Jamey Perry.

VIRTUAL & VITAL

Numbers alone do not measure the impact of the Office of Internships and Career Services, but they're a strong start.

Plus, the office's committed team complemented for-credit internships, three internship and job fairs, and numerous workshops (resumes, interviewing and more) with ample personal attention and support.

Still, the numbers alone are impressive:

309

for-credit internships

COMM Careers in the Capital

36

companies

228

students

JobExpo.Comm

73

companies

402

students

Success in the City

61

companies

460

students

Bellisario College faculty and staff recognized for excellence in 2020-21



Award winners were (top, from left): Ben Cramer, Stephanie Madden, Bu Zhong, Shannon Kennan, (bottom, from left) Matt McAllister, Michael Zelazny, Leah Carraway-Justice and Chris Maurer.

Join us on
LinkedIn™

Search **Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications, Penn State – Alumni** and **Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications, Penn State – Ad/PR Network** to join the groups and connect with fellow alumni.



During the 2020-21 school year, faculty and staff were required to wear faces masks in University buildings.

FULL-TIME STAFF

Doug Bencotter, *financial assistant*
 Tasha Bourjaily, *executive assistant*
 Amanda Brown, *administrative assistant*
 Jeff Brown, *general manager of CommRadio*
 Leah Carraway-Justice, *administrative assistant*
 Yu Tai Chung, *director of information technology*
 Emily Clevenger, *undergraduate recruiter*
 Christine Cooper, *coordinator of graduate education*
 Kristen Dickson, *academic adviser*
 Nikki DiOrio, *academic adviser*
 James Dugan, *TV studio lab coordinator*
 Julie Evak, *coordinator of undergraduate education*
 Elaine Files, *research administrator*
 Stephanie Girouard, *staff assistant*
 Dorie Glunt, *financial coordinator*
 Drew Heo, *assistant equipment manager*
 Brenda Johnson, *administrative assistant*
 Whitney Justice, *part-time graphic designer*
 Katie Kennedy, *administrative assistant*
 Janet Klinefelter, *alumni relations and stewardship officer*
 Jeremy Krebs, *administrative assistant*
 Sherry Kyler, *administrative assistant*
 Jose Lugaro, *director of development*
 Lynn Maggs, *assistant to the financial officer*

Karina Martinez, *administrative assistant*
 Christopher Maurer, *systems administrator*
 Lori McGarry, *education program specialist*
 Jonathan McVerry, *communications strategist*
 Julie Miller, *manager of internships*
 Lacy Miller, *administrative assistant*
 Karen Mozley-Bryan, *manager of facilities*
 BB Muré, *academic adviser*
 Paris Palmer, *strategic communications coordinator*
 Michael Poorman, *director of alumni relations*
 Stephen Reighard, *broadcast technical instructor*
 Curtis Richner, *IT support specialist*
 Sandi Rockwell, *director of finance and administration*
 Colette Rodger, *development assistant*
 Steve Sampsell, *director of strategic communications*
 Dell Schwab, *academic adviser*
 Mary Sergeant, *lead academic adviser*
 Brian Shoenfelt, *multimedia production specialist*
 Zachary Shourds, *media consultant and Finestra Lab coordinator*
 Chad Simpson, *human resources strategic partner*
 Megan Warefield, *human resources consultant*
 Olivia Werner, *academic adviser*
 Christian Young, *IT support specialist*
 Michael Zelazny, *equipment room and lab coordinator*

Journalism student earns individual national writing championship



Melissa Manno

Every one of Melissa Manno's communication devices and social media channels was popping — and she had earned the attention.

Manno, who will be a senior journalism major at Penn State this fall, claimed the individual national writing championship during the 61st annual William Randolph Hearst Foundation's Journalism Awards Program in early June.

Along with the first-place finish she secured a \$10,000 scholarship.

"Honestly, it was an honor just to be able to qualify and compete. Winning is incredible," Manno said. "I'm so grateful for the opportunity and the support. This is the biggest recognition I've ever earned."

Manno competed against 28 other finalists. Those in the writing competition were tasked with writing three stories. Two, a profile and a news story from a group interview with all the competitors, focused on NBC medical expert Dr. Vin Gupta. The third story challenged competitors to write about a company or group that had been forced to adapt or pivot during the pandemic.

The competition was conducted virtually. Finalists met their judges and received their assignments over Zoom, then produced and submitted their pieces from home on deadline.

Winners were announced with Manno participating via Zoom from her family's dining room table. Meanwhile, her parents were watching the competition's livestream upstairs. When she was announced as the winner, her parents' cheers were audible.


"It was exciting and so unexpected," said Manno, who is completing a communications internship with the Smeal College of Business. She's pursuing minors in geography and digital media trends and analytics. She's also a member of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences student council.

After the announcement, congratulatory messages started arriving in waves. She heard from Dean Marie Hardin of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications, as well as journalism department head Russ Eshleman, who had edited the story Manno wrote to qualify for the championship. Her internship mentor, Andy Elder, an instructor in the Bellisario College and staff member in the Smeal College of Business, offered congratulations — as did many classmates, family members and friends.

She was still processing the whirlwind of competition, success and congratulations 18 hours after she was announced as the winner.

"It was definitely a shock," Manno said. "I'm extremely happy and proud."

She became the fourth Penn State student to win the crown since 2007. Previous winners were: Anna Orso, 2014, now a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer; Andrew McGill, 2010, who leads the interactive news team at POLITICO; and Halle Stockton, 2007, managing editor of Pittsburgh-based PublicSource.

Manno only has a little time to bask in the glow of her championship, though. Days after winning, she left the country for a summer internship in the Czech Republic. She worked for an organization that assists refugees with legal and social support as part of the CzechMates Program offered at Masaryk University and led by a former Penn State faculty member. 



Read Melissa Manno's story she wrote to qualify for the national championship.

ONE GOOD THING

Students studying remotely for a photojournalism course were challenged with an assignment to share one good thing for them during the pandemic. Here's some of what they produced.



Students earn first-place finishes at Mid-Atlantic Emmy Awards

Two submissions from Penn State students earned first-place recognition during the 2020 Mid-Atlantic Emmy Awards.

Both were winners in the competition's College/University Student Production division. They were:

Newscast: "Centre County Report: March 6, 2020" —

Anna Middleton, producer; Samantha Blackburn, director;

Daniel Kocher, technical director; Cameron Gregory, anchor; Luke Lacher, anchor; and Noah Chast, sports anchor.


Sports: "Stephen Beattie: Penn State Basketball's 'Glue Guy'" — Jack Hirsh, reporter, and Brian Shoenfelt, adviser.

"It's a great honor for our students to have their work recognized," said Steve Kraycik, an associate teaching professor and director of student television in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications. "It's a testament to our consistent quality — and especially the mindset and talent of our students who were working during a pandemic. I'm proud of our honorees, and all our students."

Penn State had 10 finalists for awards in the competition.

Several Bellisario College alumni who work at WSPU-TV were part of award-winning productions for WPSU as well.

Two WPSU shows — "The Penn State Basketball Story" and "Unrivaled: The Penn State Football Story" — earned awards for Sports Program-PostProduced or Edited.

Alumni credited for working on the programs were: Allen Goldate, senior producer/director; Michael Klein, post-production audio; Sam Newhouse, videographer/editor; Will Price, producer/director; Shane Robinson, videographer/editor; Anya Swanson, producer/director and Matt Stephens, videographer/editor. Current student Justin Donnelly was credited as a videographer/editor as well. 



A March 6, 2020, episode of "Centre County Report" earned an Emmy Award for Penn State students. IMAGE: PENN STATE

Students' work advances to national journalism competition

Work by four Penn State students was selected as the best — regional winners that advanced to the national competition — in the Region 1 Mark of Excellence Awards.

Those winners of the competition, part of the Society of Professional Journalists' Mark of Excellence, were:

- Lexi Elder, Still Photography, "Caring for Mr. Franz"
- Noah Riffe, Breaking News Photography, "Supporting Trump"
- Ariel Simpson, Television In-Depth Reporting, "Lack of Minority Coaches: Where Does Pennsylvania Stand"
- Callaway Turner, COVID-19: Video Coverage, "Appalachian Arts Community Finds Hope".

The national competition will be conducted in September. Region 1 is composed of central and eastern Pennsylvania as well as eight other states — Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.

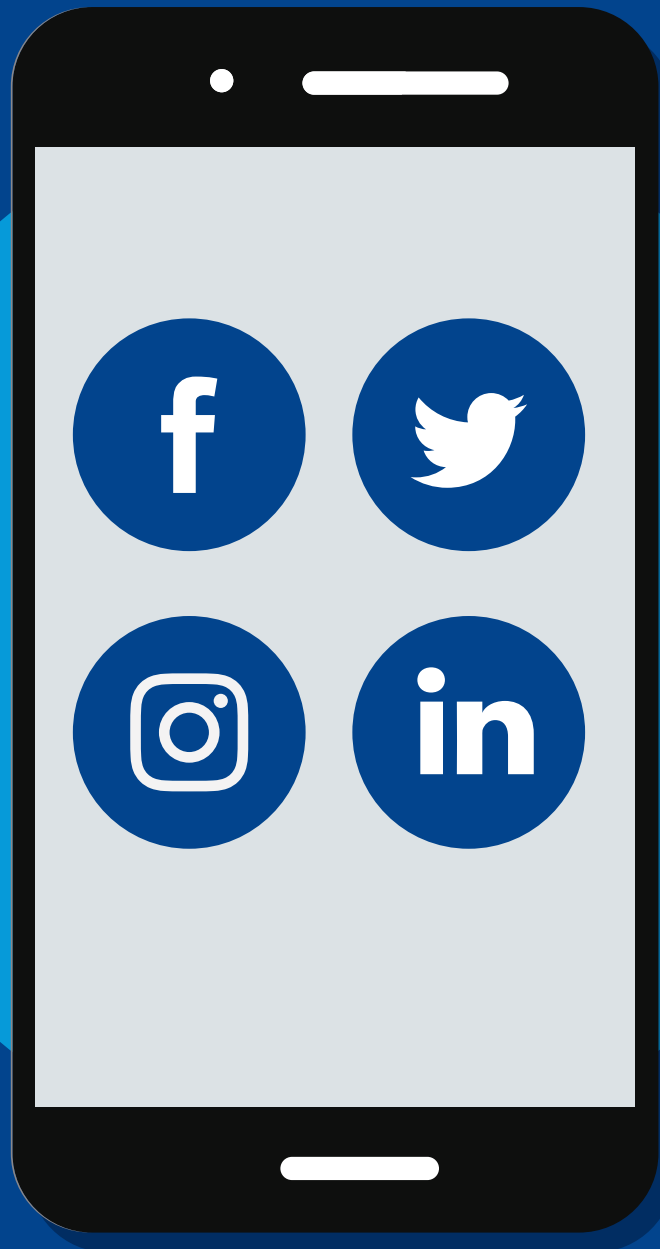
In addition to the four winners, the work of eight other Penn State students was selected as a finalist in the competition.

Those students (Riffe was a winner and a finalist) were:

- Nico Boyd: Photo Illustration, "Dizzying Reaction"
- Josie Chen: COVID-19: Video Coverage, "Paralympics Postponed"
- Cameron Gregory: Television Feature Reporting, "Pregnancy During Pandemic"
- David Eckert: Online Sports Reporting, "The Old Freshmen"
- Jack Hirsh: Television Sports Reporting, "Stephen Beattie: Penn State's Basketball's Glue Guy"
- Jack Hirsh: Online Digital Sports Videography, "Penn State Golf Seniors Moving Forward After Lost Season"
- Lily LaRegina: COVID-19 Coverage: Photo, "A New Normal"
- Jordan Pietrafitta: Feature Photography, "Their Night to Shine"
- Noah Riffe: Breaking News Photography, "Kitchen Mess"
- Josh Starr: Television Sports Reporting, "Allergic to Outside"

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

@PSUBellisario



Recruiting: Completing the Class of 2025

Collaboration and creativity pay dividends amid pandemic

For the past five years Emily Clevenger has had one job — recruiting the incoming class of students to join the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications.

With changing University areas of emphasis, policies and procedures, no two of those years have been the same and none was like the past year when a worldwide pandemic prevented on-campus visits (which often represent an unrivaled selling point for Penn State) or much personal interaction.

Still, the Class of 2025 came together with nearly 450 students (the typical threshold) thanks to Clevenger's leadership, collaboration and creativity.

At the University level, admissions officials adapted and pivoted, offering flexibility and working to connect with prospective students by any means necessary after on-campus recruiting activities were canceled. Technology and virtual meetings became popular and productive options.

"The University did what it could to adapt and pivot," Clevenger said. "It was a challenging time, but they worked hard and explored many ways to engage with prospective students."

In the Bellisario College, Clevenger sought to do even more, and her collegiality and creativity were vital to a recruiting success story that included many long hours and a variety of different approaches.

Without typical summer campus visits by families, the Spend a Summer Day program moved online. Almost all colleges embraced Zoom.

The Bellisario College did something different, utilizing its state-of-the-art TV studios and YouTube to produce four live TV shows over two days (two per day) — mirroring the typical on-campus schedule. Cooperation from the strategic communications team allowed pre-produced packages and virtual tours to be part of the shows.

Plus, viewers were able to text live questions to Clevenger, which were then answered by her and Gary Abdullah, the assistant dean for diversity and inclusion.

"It's always a team effort," said Clevenger, who became the Bellisario College's first recruiter in 2016 after the advising office had handled those efforts for years. "We have so many people who do their jobs well, and they do them



Emily Clevenger and Gary Abdullah cohost a Spend a Summer Day program.

independently, focusing on their own duties and responsibilities. However, when we need to come together, it always comes off seamlessly."


Clevenger's collaboration and creativity led to several productive recruiting efforts, including:

- personal video greetings delivered by email from Dean Marie Hardin to high-achieving students;
- postcard greetings, and
- individual video meetings by Clevenger with prospective students.

In order to complete the Class of 2025, the Bellisario College put together a Bellisario College Signing Day.

On the first Monday in May, Clevenger and Abdullah (supported by some deft creativity and production from strategic communications team members Whitney Justice and Paris Palmer) hosted another YouTube-based show that included the names of every member of the incoming class.

Every student who had accepted an offer of admission was invited to submit a photo of themselves that was included in the show. A handful of students were featured in brief videos about why they had selected Penn State.

Plus, several Penn State varsity coaches (men's hockey coach Guy Gadowsky, women's soccer coach Erica Dambach and women's volleyball coach Russ Rose) provided welcome videos to the Class of 2025 for a complementary social media effort. 

Journalism student uncovers sports stories in Steel City

A lifelong sports fan, Andrew Destin was thrilled to be back in a stadium watching live sports. It was an April Pittsburgh Pirates game, and it was his first post-pandemic event. Knowing he'd return in the summer to cover sports in the Steel City made the experience even more exciting.

Destin is a senior journalism major at the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications. In June, he started a sports reporting internship at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Over the course of the summer, he will be covering athletes, teams and leagues in one of the most storied sports towns in the country.

It's not difficult to see where Destin's passion for journalism and sports comes from. He played basketball and baseball through high school, and even explored playing baseball in college. Growing up in Saratoga, California, two newspapers — the San Jose Mercury and San Francisco Chronicle — were delivered to his home daily. More recently, the Destin family subscribed to The New York Times too. The news has always been a big part of Destin's life.

"I grew up with a very good understanding of the industry and that was ingrained in me," Destin said. "I am so passionate about what I'm doing. I could rant for hours about [sports] and the stories I'm doing for the Post-Gazette and the pitches I'm putting out there. It's all fun for me."

“

When I was at the Pirates game in April with my roommates, it became real. I was so excited to get there. I knew it was going to be great.

”

– Andrew Destin, senior journalism major


thing more substantial so I could get my work out there to more people," Destin said.

In January, he got an email from Martin about an opportunity in Pittsburgh. He applied and got the position. But it didn't sink in until April. "When I was at the Pirates game in April with my roommates, it became real. I was so excited to get there. I knew it was going to be great."

Post-Gazette interns are encouraged to pitch their own story ideas and they enjoy the independence of covering most events in person. They also get tasked with a variety of assignments. Destin has covered a Pirates game and a match involving the Riverhounds, Pittsburgh's minor league soccer team. He's written about a youth soccer academy in Monroeville and hopes to attend Pittsburgh Steelers training camp later this summer.

"[The local sports stories] are something I'm taking pride in right now," Destin said. "Everybody wants to read about the Steelers, Penguins and Pirates, but there's other important stories that deserve to be told."

"Andrew is very old-fashioned in the sense that he does not stop working on a job until it has been completed and completed to the best of his ability," said Jeff Brown, CommRadio general manager. "I can assign virtually anything to him and walk away, knowing that he has it taken care of, and the work will be of professional quality."

Destin has also done play-by-play for the Big Ten Network and worked as a producer with PSNtv, Penn State's student-run television network. Last year, he interned with WPSU Radio, central Pennsylvania's NPR station. 

Destin works alongside Post-Gazette sportswriters and a team of other interns from schools across the country. He said they all push each other to be their best, which is exactly the challenge Destin was looking for when he applied for the internship.

Last summer, he was going to be a play-by-play broadcaster for a small baseball league in New England, but it was cancelled due to COVID-19. He had that opportunity again this year but entering his senior year he wanted to shoot for a bigger market.

"I sat down with Bob Martin [assistant dean for internships and career placement] and I basically told him I wanted something bigger, some-



Senior journalism major Andrew Destin stands outside the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette building. Destin is interning at the newspaper this summer as a sports reporter. IMAGE: PROVIDED



Public relations major Eryn Werner has been embracing the opportunities working online offers. This summer she has a virtual internship with Merck. IMAGE: NATHAN WERNER

PR student embraces opportunity found in virtual world

Many students are tired of a world of Zoom meetings and virtual workspaces. Eryn Werner doesn't mind. In fact, she is taking full advantage of it.

Working virtually allowed Werner, a public relations major, to complete the past school year living with her parents in Switzerland. In May, she started a publication design and social media internship with Merck, a Fortune 500 multinational pharmaceutical company. The position lasts all summer and is completely virtual.

"I actually like the virtual atmosphere," Werner said. "It provides me with a lot of flexibility and I still feel like I'm building valuable connections."

Werner saw the position among the many shared by Assistant Dean for Internships and Career Placement Bob Martin, who throughout the year sends regular emails to students in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications with available internships. The Merck position piqued Werner's interest.

"I was in an internship frenzy, and I was reading every email," she said. "I applied because I wanted to work for a bigger company, and I've always liked Merck's mission. What they do is really admirable."

According to Randi Smith-Billett, Merck's global social media manager, interns at Merck contribute. Werner will learn about how global campaigns are built, launched and measured. And even though the internship is virtual, she has big projects lined up this summer like planning a global social media campaign.

"Eryn is an incredibly self-motivated individual. She can pivot with ease, and she asks questions to obtain key information," Smith-Billett said. "At the end of the summer, we hope each intern leaves feeling a sense of empowerment and has an understanding of Merck's company culture and business."

“I wanted to go to a school where everyone loves their school.”


– Eryn Werner, public relations major

She applied to 10 colleges, but Penn State had the familiarity, size and opportunities she was seeking. Werner started her college career as a supply-chain management major but found a home in the Bellisario College.

"I feel like there's so many different pathways you can go with public relations," she said. "You can do crisis communications, you can go to law school, you can get your MBA. Communications is a good tool to have."

She added, "There are so many communities within Penn State. I like the community and the culture at Penn State. Plus, I wanted to go to a school where everyone loves their school."

Merck is Werner's fifth internship. The more recent positions — including one with a startup in Switzerland — center around social media. She said she likes finding new ways to engage a community through social media outlets. While working with Valley, a student-run lifestyle magazine, Werner made it a point to help the group's LinkedIn page grow and be more engaging. It had not been a focus of the magazine and she saw potential.

"It's fun to bring a brand voice into a new space that hasn't really been tapped into yet," she said. "Engagement and awareness are key. You want to engage your community and have a conversation." 

“I’ve always liked Merck’s mission. What they do is really admirable.”

– Eryn Werner, public relations major

Student sees internship as career key, with ‘Christmas Spectacular’ in mind

Abigail Schucker spent many of her days this summer thinking about the holidays, and not summer holidays like July 4 or Labor Day.

Instead, as a marketing strategy student associate with Madison Square Garden Entertainment Corp., Schucker was part of a team focused on the “2021 Christmas Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes.” It’s never too early to be planning to make that event successful — especially so on the heels of the coronavirus pandemic, which shut down New York City shows for a year and a half.

Schucker, who attended the Christmas Spectacular once about 10 years ago, applied for the internship after receiving an email from Bob Martin, the assistant dean for internships and career placement in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications. Martin sends emails with internship and job opportunities directly to students by email, sometimes a couple of times a day.

Schucker applied in November, interviewed in December and accepted the internship offer in January. This summer, she worked about 35 hours a week, all virtually, as the marketing team planned to drive interest in the spectacular, which debuted as a half-hour show in 1933 and has attracted millions of people in the past 88 years.

Her 20-member team was part of an even bigger group of people focused on creative content and social media to promote the Christmas Spectacular.

“It’s just an amazing opportunity,” Schucker said. “There are challenges and great people to work with. It’s an experience that really complements what I’ve done on campus. I’ve tried to get involved with as much as possible since my first day because I’m focused on building a career.”

Schucker most recently served as director of marketing for The Daily Collegian, and as an account associate for Happy Valley Communications. She also completed a previous internship with Penn State World Campus and worked as a commercial sales and rental representative for Penske Truck Leasing.


“It feels like all of my experiences have complemented each other. Classes and organizations have been important, and so has my retail experience and internships,” Schucker said. “I like meeting people. I like interviewing, which hopefully helped me get this summer internship, and I feel like I’m learning a lot that will help me.”

Schucker, a senior advertising/public relations major from Reading, Pennsylvania, said picking Penn State for her college education was easy. She was sold by the opportunities and support available to students.

“I didn’t even want to go to Penn State because that’s the place everybody goes to and then we sat through the communications program presentation on a recruiting visit, and I was sold,” she said. “It was clear they had so much to offer.”

She has embraced numerous opportunities as a way to discover what she likes and does not, hopefully pinning down a solid strategy for when it’s time to start her career.

“I don’t want to be the person who has a degree but no idea what to do with it,” she said. “So I’m making the most of all the Penn State connections.”

And especially so if that means thinking Christmas thoughts in July. 



Advertising/public relations major Abigail Schucker sees her internship as an important step toward an eventual career. *IMAGE: PHOTO PROVIDED*

Alumni Connections Program draws strong support

Participants enjoy opportunity to help students and find personal benefits, too

It's one thing to say Penn State has a dedicated and powerful alumni network, but it's even more compelling and impressive to watch those alumni in action.

More than 275 alumni have volunteered in the past year-plus to mentor students in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications as part of a program that launched in April 2020. The virtual mentoring effort, with connections by email, phone or Zoom, has found overwhelming (and overwhelmingly positive) results and success.

ALUMNI CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

276
alumni

433
students

"For me, it's relatively low impact and it's humbling to be part of it. I don't think I'm especially good at it, but then again the folks who I consider my biggest mentors were people who would listen and share their time with me," says Scott Snipkie, an attorney and compliance consultant in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, who earned his journalism degree

in 2008. He subsequently earned his master's and J.D. at the University of Missouri, and always remained close to his mentors, especially those at Penn State.

"John Sanchez was my ethics professor and thesis adviser. John Curley was excellent in the newsroom management class, and Mike Poorman was always so accessible and helpful," Snipkie said.

Poorman, the Bellisario College's director of alumni relations, pairs mentors and mentees based on career interests, geography or personal information. The program was conceived and brought to life by Poorman, Associate Dean Bob Martin, Director of Development Jose Lugaro and administrative assistant Amanda Brown.

The Alumni Connections Program has mentors on campus and as far away as London and Sweden. They all share a desire to give back and support students.

"It's been a really nice experience," said Kara Corridan, manager of creative and content for Prudential Financial, who earned her journalism degree in 1993. She was paired with a junior, just back from studying abroad in Spain. As they stayed in touch through the year, Corridan offered advice about general topics and then specifics of a job search. Corridan's daughter, a junior in high school, got to meet the student as well.


"Being able to connect on a personal and professional level is really important," Corridan said. "Whenever we talked we always opened with a state of the union, not all business. How's your family? My family? It's important for a mentor to put themselves in the shoes of the mentee, just so you're meeting them where they are — and then maybe push a little bit, too."

The program has been so impactful for Corridan that she signed up as a mentee for a program offered by her company.

Alumna Amanda Cramer, who earned her film-video degree in 2015, and leads curriculum and learning for 2U Studios in Arlington, Virginia, said the mentoring program provides a chance for her to do what others did for her.

And, as one of just a handful of film-video alumni in the program, she has been connected with several mentees.

"I know the power of having a mentor. Having someone as a sounding board and not in an official capacity is valuable," Cramer said. "Ideally it's somebody who will give it to you straight and not beat around the bush. For me, it's not telling the mentees what to do but sharing options and challenging them to do some work as well."

The program has attracted two dozen World Campus students and members of the Class of 2025, too. 

WE NEED YOU

Are you a Bellisario College alumnus wanting to give back to current students? We want you to join us as a mentor through the Bellisario College Connections effort.

For more information visit:
bellisario.psu.edu/alumni/alumni-connections

Eight alumni and a faculty member among Bellisario College honorees



Award winners selected by Bellisario College alumni boards include:
 (top, from left): Jordan Hyman, Suzanne Grayney, Rob King, Edgar Ramirez, Maura Shea,
 (bottom, from left) Tom Verducci, Eric Rabe, Mark Brownstein and Kerry Ford

PIVOTING YOUR CAREER IN A PANDEMIC

Strategies for success if you stay in your job...and if you decide to leave.

Sponsored by the Bellisario College and Penn State World Campus

Creating Content in 2021

Series sponsored by the Bellisario College Alumni Society Board

Bellisario College alumni who are the best in the communication business from coast to coast share their expertise about creating content, getting ahead and standing out in 2021 during this series of virtual webinars.

6 p.m. Tuesdays | Jan. 26 – March 9

Penn State Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications

Career Tips from the Pros

Hosted by the Bellisario College Ad/PR Alumni Network Board

Hear from alumni in advertising and public relations with experience at such places as BBDO, CBS, Jellyfish Digital Marketing, Madison Square Garden and the U.S. Congress in this two-part free webinar. Moderated by Suzanne Schulner, Game Show Network.

SPECIAL ALUMNI EVENTS

9

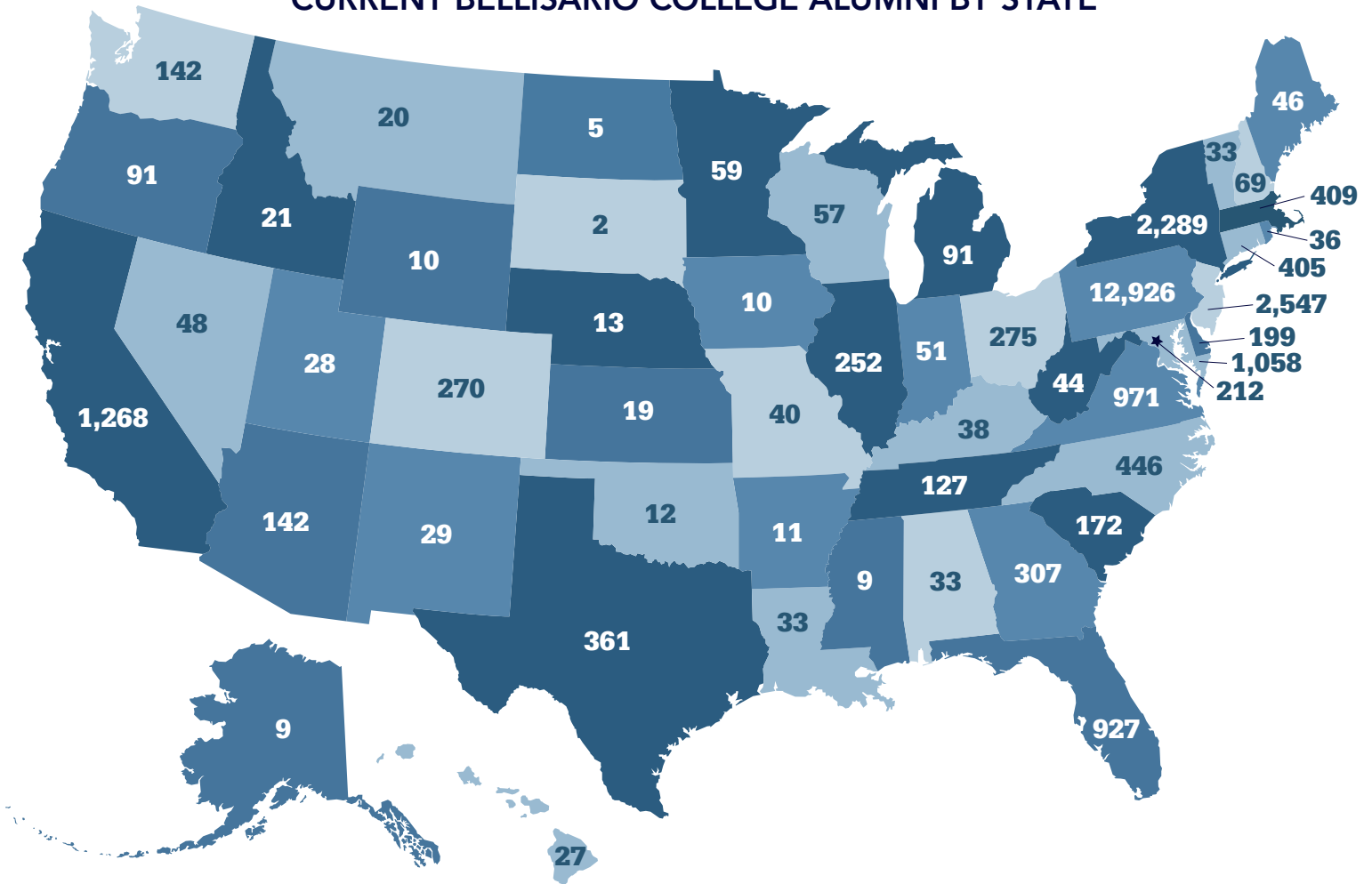
special events and programs featuring alumni:

- Covid Career Hacks
- Creating Content In 2021
- Career Tips From AD/PR Pros
- Pivoting Your Career
- Young Alumni Panel
- Alumni Council Webinar
- Podward State Podcasts
- Celebrity Bingo
- Valley Magazine — Careers & Confidence

56

Bellisario College alumni participants

CURRENT BELLISARIO COLLEGE ALUMNI BY STATE



BOARD LEADERS

Ad/PR Network Board

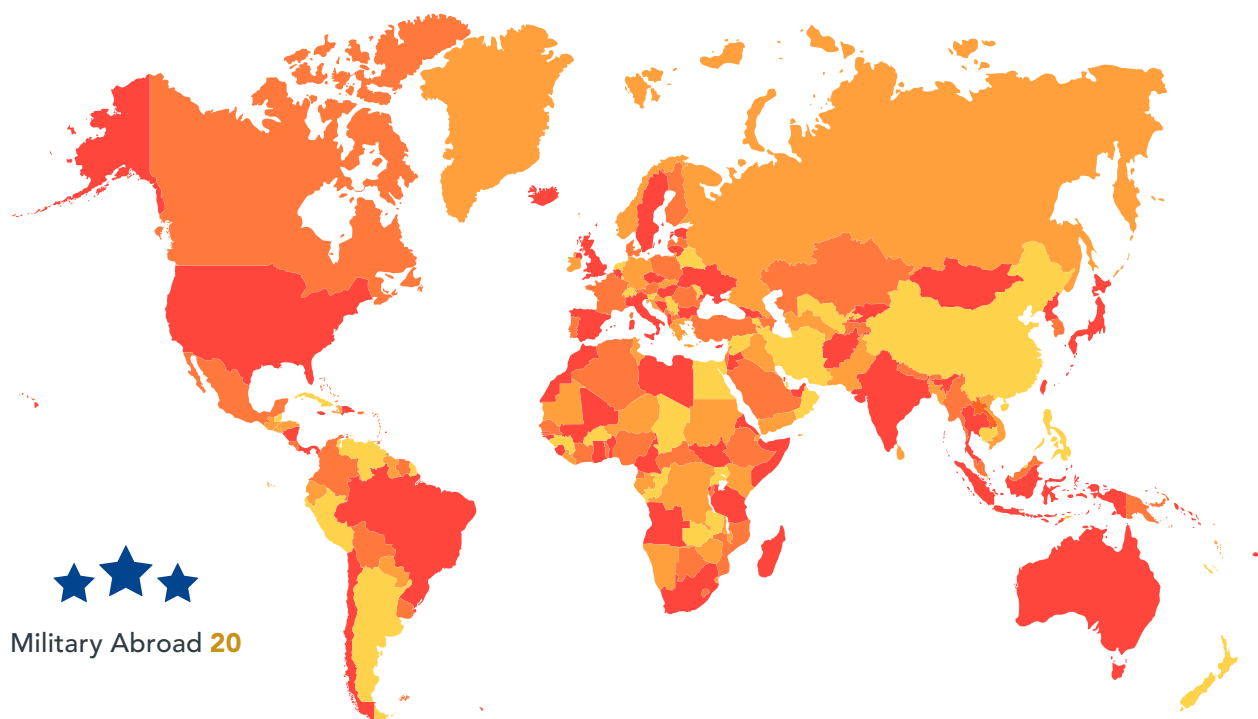
Joe Berwanger
 Katie Blitz
 Gladys Charity
 Lauren Connolly
 Kathy Heasley, *president*
 Becky Kitlan
 Steven Lampert
 Scott Nulty
 Amanda Oey
 Tom Resau
 Suzanne Schulner
 Tara Smith
 Rachel Steinberg
 Robert Strang
 Kathy Swidwa
 Bailey Templin
 Brenna Thorpe
 Students:
 Gabriela Moreas De Paiva
 Abrielle Emory
 Phoebe Sebring

Alumni Society Board

Ron Balasco
 Hannah Biondi
 T.J. Brightman
 Natalie Buyny
 Amanda Cramer
 Kevin Flintosh, *president*
 Carol Gosser
 Katherine Hansen
 Taylor Harrington
 Pam Hervey, *immediate past president*
 Alyson Joyce
 Willie Jungels
 Ebony Martin
 Brian Nawa
 Chimaeze Okoli
 Linsey Shea
 Stephanie Shirley
 Daniel Solomon
 Halle Stockton
 Erin Stranges
 Meredith Topalanchik

Cindy Viadella
 Ron Wagner
 Jacob Wilkins
 Students:
 Kaitlin Jean-Noel
 Abigail Johnson
 Sebastien Kraft

CURRENT BELLISARIO COLLEGE ALUMNI BY COUNTRY



Military Abroad **20**

Algeria 1	England 2	Italy 4	Saudi Arabia 2
Australia 8	Fiji 1	Japan 17	Singapore 6
Austria 1	Finland 1	Jordan 2	South Korea 111
Bahrain 1	France 2	Kazakhstan 9	Spain 4
Bangladesh 1	Germany 4	Kuwait 2	Sweden 1
Bermuda 1	Ghana 1	Malaysia 11	Switzerland 5
Bolivia 2	Greece 2	Mexico 3	Taiwan 42
Brazil 2	Grenada 1	Netherlands 1	Thailand 7
Brunei 1	Guatemala 2	New Zealand 2	Turkey 1
Canada 23	Hong Kong 20	Nigeria 2	Uganda 1
Cayman Islands 1	Hungary 1	North Korea 2	Ukraine 1
China 324	Iceland 1	Pakistan 1	United Arab Emirates 6
Colombia 1	India 20	Panama 2	United Kingdom 21
Cyprus 5	Indonesia 2	Philippines 2	United States 26,745
Dominican Republic 2	Iran 1	Poland 2	Venezuela 4
Ecuador 4	Ireland 1	Qatar 1	Zimbabwe 2
Egypt 1	Israel 1	Romania 1	

A group photo of approximately 15 people, including alumni and staff members, posing together. Some are wearing Penn State sweatshirts.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Join the Bellisario College
of Communications
Alumni Society Board.

Alumnus brings vital approach to New York Times

Mike Abrams serves as director of journalism practices and principles

He looks quiet and unassuming, but looks are deceiving and Mike Abrams' low-key demeanor belies his level of accomplishment and responsibility — and the respect he has earned across his world-renowned company.

Abrams, who has been with The New York Times since 2004, was named the organization's director of journalism practices and principles in November 2020. In that role, the longtime editor helps develop the Times' stylebook, plays a big role in recruiting editing candidates (as he has for years) and, most importantly, guides some internal operations, especially how the Times "communicates across the company about our journalism."

Abrams brings together stakeholders with different perspectives and responsibilities every day to help ensure the Times' success on all its platforms.

“

Now, because of the way we collaborate and the ways we innovate, you're finding more nonjournalists working side by side with journalists. ... What we're trying to do is protect our journalism mission and ensure everyone is on the same page..

”


— Penn State alumnus Mike Abrams, '94,
director of journalism practices and
principles, The New York Times

when he arrived on campus. He started his career as a general assignment reporter in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and worked in Pennsylvania and Virginia before joining the Times in 2004. He's humble regarding his latest career move and the accompanying title, but also refreshingly pragmatic.

"I think it probably sounds more important than it is — although I do think there's a lot of important work to be done," he said.

The Times' nearly 5,000 employees (about 1,700 of whom are journalists in the newsroom) serve more than 7 million subscribers all over the world. In recent years, subscriptions to the Times' offerings have reached record levels. People value quality journalism, and Abrams does a lot to ensure consistency and quality in his role.

Accuracy remains the standard by which Abrams measures journalistic success, and his persistent, list-making approach helps him succeed in an important role. He said he's "both optimistic and pessimistic" about the future of journalism — encouraged by more access through a seemingly ever-growing array of outlets and simultaneously worried about the value of facts.

"The founding of our country was built on a strong press. Part of how our country should operate is holding power to account, chronicling things that are interesting to people, describing the world, helping us make sense of the things around us," Abrams said. 

Alumnus Mike Abrams was named director of journalism practices and principles at The New York Times in November 2020. He has been with the company since 2004. IMAGE: EARL WILSON

"It's not just the old system where it's journalists alone in the newsroom. Now, because of the way we collaborate and the ways we innovate, you're finding more nonjournalists working side by side with journalists," Abrams said. "We have digital designers for visual products and engineers for how people log in and access their subscriptions.

"The engineering, project development, project augmentation — all of those elements — are coming together and all of those people have different backgrounds. So, there can be a lack of communication or misunderstanding. What we're trying to do is protect our journalism mission and ensure everyone is on the same page."

It's neither an easy job nor a simple one, but it's one seemingly well suited for Abrams, who brings a calm, level-headed approach to his work.

Abrams, a State College native who earned his bachelor's degree from Penn State in 1994 and served as editor of The Daily Collegian as an undergraduate, found journalism as a calling



Listen to
COMMversations
episode 59
"Why Journalism
Matters with
Mike Abrams"



Watch Bellisario College lectures, special events and more.



Check out our YouTube page, and subscribe!



Bellisario College launches opportunity to support equipment fund

Gifts starting at \$250 will be recognized on permanent digital donor wall

A transformative, \$30 million gift from Penn State Distinguished Alumnus Donald P. Bellisario helped create opportunities for faculty support, student scholarships and the state-of-the-art Bellisario Media Center.

Now alumni and friends can join in that support — and have an ongoing presence in the media center — with their own gifts to the Bellisario Media Center Equipment Fund.

All alumni and friends who make gifts to support the effort at \$250 or above will be recognized on the media center's digital donor wall, consistently reminding students they are part of a community invested in their future.


Three options exist for donors:

- Level 1: \$250 – Gifts recognized by a digital brick
- Level 2: \$500 – Gifts recognized by a digital plaque with a personalized message
- Level 3: \$1,000 – Gifts recognized by a digital portrait with a personalized message and photo.

Gifts may be made online or by utilizing a downloadable printed form. After gifts are made, donors will receive instructions for personalizing their digital brick, plaque or portrait.

With the media center nearing completion and the focus moving to student success within the facility, gifts from alumni and friends can provide necessary hands-on equipment to encourage collaboration, innovation and storytelling across disciplines and platforms at the University.

"The media center will be, hands down, the most exciting place on campus for Penn State communications students and faculty," Dean Marie Hardin said. "It will inspire students to perform at their very best while at Penn State and prepare them to thrive in the kinds of media environments they will enter as professionals."

Examples of what support for the equipment fund could provide include audio equipment such as camera-mounted microphones and boom-pole kits, drones, gimble sticks, and 360-degree cameras for pop-up newsrooms, design software packages; professional lenses, a mobile public relations lab for presentations and contests; and a media database and monitoring tool. 



EXAMPLE DONOR PLAQUES

Level 1: \$250



Level 2: \$500



Level 3: \$1,000



Alum provides support to encourage student collaboration and success

Gift creates the Warren Carmichael Teams Space

A Penn State alumnus who built a long, respected and varied communications career with daily displays of collaboration, mentoring and leadership has provided a commitment to the University that will encourage students to hone their skills in their areas for years to come.

Warren Carmichael made a \$35,000 gift to create the Warren Carmichael Teams Space inside the Bellisario Media Center on the University Park campus. The space is designed to enable students to easily collaborate on projects and share feedback and insights with each other — an iterative process that often leads to success in communications endeavors.

“Obviously in communications, collaboration is important and one of the things I’ve long noted over the years is that communicators sometimes have difficulty communicating with each other,” Carmichael said. “The idea of having a space where students can spend time to collaborate is important. It will help improve the quality of their projects.

“The complete transformation of the Bellisario College and the accompanying upgrades are very important. I wanted to be a part of that and show my support. By sponsoring the room, I was able to contribute to help future educational efforts.”


Carmichael, who earned his bachelor’s degree in agricultural journalism in 1958, when he was just 19 years old, started his career in radio broadcasting. He worked at a radio station in State College for three years and at a station in Fairfax, Virginia, for 13 years. As an active-duty member of the Army after graduation, he also served four years in the National Security Agency.

Carmichael’s enthusiasm for mentoring and teaching, as well as his professionalism and talent were on display later in his career, when he served for 23 years as the director of public information for the Fairfax County Police Department in Virginia. He earned the county’s highest award for employees for his work and was honored in 2002 by a Resolution

of Commendation by the Virginia General Assembly. In 2001, he was presented with the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police Award for outstanding contributions to law enforcement.

He wrote the first ever Law Enforcement Freedom of Information Guide for Virginia, volunteered as a public information adviser to the City of Fairfax Police Department and was a national instructor for the Columbia School of Broadcasting. For five years, Carmichael was also a principal in an advertising/public relations agency.

“Warren knows the importance of quality communications, and his gift supports the development of necessary skills among our students,” said Dean Marie Hardin of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications.

A previous endowment from Carmichael established the Warren R. Carmichael Media and Justice Program in the Bellisario College. He served four terms on the Alumni Society Board and spent six years as officer and director of the Washington Metro chapter of the Penn State Alumni Association. 



Warren Carmichael, who earned his bachelor’s degree in agricultural journalism in 1958, when he was just 19 years old, said he was happy to provide a gift that he hopes will encourage and impact Penn State students for years to come.



The complete transformation of the Bellisario College and the accompanying upgrades are very important. I wanted to be a part of that and show my support. By sponsoring the room, I was able to contribute to help future educational efforts.



– Penn State alumnus
Warren Carmichael, '85



Under Mary Meder's leadership, Harmelin Media has increased its revenue fivefold since 2002.

Alumna's gift for Innovation Lab Fund supports students' entrepreneurial efforts

When Mary Meder makes one of her regular visits to State College, she invariably walks across the University Park campus to soak up some inspiration.

"When you're on this campus, you feel invigorated," Meder said. "You feel like you're going to have fun, meet really nice people and have great conversations. Visiting brings me a lot of joy."

Meder, the longtime president of Philly-based agency Harmelin Media and a 1984 Penn State graduate, brings an innovative and joyful approach to her work, too. Under her leadership since 2002, Harmelin has increased revenues fivefold and grown annual billings to over \$750 million. It is now one of the largest independent media services firms in the United States and was recently named one of the Best Places to Work in 2021 by AdAge.

Harmelin's focus — and Meder's — has long been innovation, which is a key ingredient to the agency's continued success. A recent estate commitment from Meder and her husband,


Joe, along with an annual gift, is designed to encourage the same innovative mindset among Penn State students as is found in Harmelin's employees. Their support will create the Mary Meder Innovation Lab Fund in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications.

The fund will further enrich the Bellisario College of Communications by providing support for the new Innovation Lab when it opens in the Bellisario Media Center later this year. The Mary Meder Innovation Lab Fund will be used to acquire new technology, software, and equipment; to support entrepreneurial endeavors of the college; and for faculty grants, undergraduate scholarships and any other related costs associated with innovation, collaboration and media production.

"Harmelin has always been about what's next," Mary Meder said. "What's the new trend in the advertising industry, and how can we leverage that in a unique way for the benefit of our clients? To remain at the forefront of our industry, we need more students (aka future employees) thinking creatively, and I feel this partnership can help both Penn State and Harmelin Media."

Meder, who has more than 30 years of experience in the media industry, guides strategic direction at Harmelin Media and is responsible for the company's revenue growth, including securing new business, client retention and expansion and identifying new revenue streams. She also oversees development of Harmelin's senior and executive staff. In her role as president, Mary has overseen the development of new service offerings including analytics and modeling, marketing technology, programmatic media, search engine optimization, influencer marketing, eCommerce, content marketing and more.

"It was an easy decision to support Penn State," she said. She and Joe have two children — son Kyle, who earned his bachelor's degree from Penn State in 2016, and daughter Chrissy. "When I considered the things that have advanced my career and that really bring me joy, Penn State is at the top of both lists."

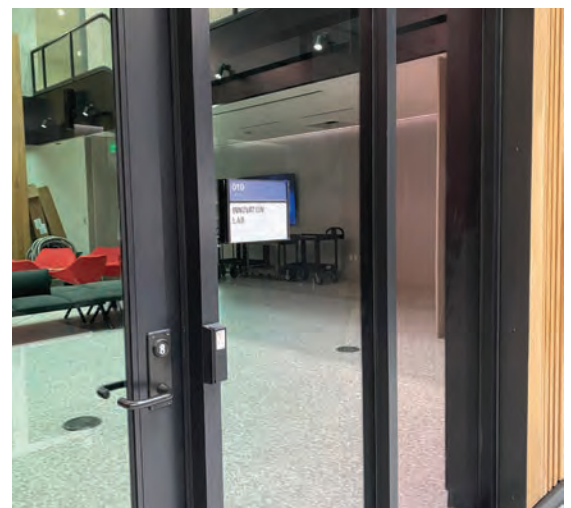
Meder is the past chair of Special Olympics Pennsylvania and currently serves on its board. In 2011, she received the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Hall of Fame Al Senavitis Lifetime Achievement Award. Meder also serves as an officer of the Philly Ad Club Board of Governors and is a past board president. During her presidency, she initiated an economic impact report for the Greater Philadelphia Advertising and Communications Industry. 

“

It was an easy decision to support Penn State. When I considered the things that have advanced my career and that really bring me joy, Penn State is at the top of both lists.

”

– Mary Meder, 1984 Penn State graduate



Innovation Lab in the Bellisario Media Center.

Alumna's appreciation of history and journalism lead to important, timely gift

Alumna Kathleen Pavelko easily, and thoughtfully, conquered a difficult challenge — finding the just-right gift for a special occasion — with her recent support of Penn State.

Pavelko, who earned a bachelor's degree in history (1975) and a master's degree in journalism (1979) from the University, provided \$20,000 for the naming of a voice-over booth in the Bellisario Media Center. The state-of-the-art, student-focused facility on the University Park campus will open for classes and students for the fall semester, and it will transform student experiences in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications.

Pavelko, president and CEO emerita of WITF Public Media in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, brought valuable perspective to her decision-making process.

"My approach is basically taking the long view backward and forward. Because I was a student of history before I was a student of journalism, that's how I think," Pavelko said. "Practically, a voice-over studio is a necessity for all communications platforms — radio, TV, podcasts, work online and so much more. It's an important and valuable space today and every day.

"In the long term at Penn State, what used to be a school of journalism became a college, and then the Bellisario College. Things change, and we have to be prepared for that. The college has been an important part of my career, and this latest iteration with the media center prepares the college to serve the lives of students for years to come. It's exciting to be part of that."

Pavelko served as president and CEO of WITF from 1999 to 2019 before becoming a consultant to nonprofit boards and their executives. Under her leadership, WITF's total assets quintupled, and it earned many journalism honors, including the DuPont-Columbia Silver Baton, which honors excellence in broadcast and digital news.

Before joining WITF, she served in production and management at Penn State Public Broadcasting, was executive producer for West Virginia Public Broadcasting and was president of Prairie Public Broadcasting, based in Fargo, North Dakota, where she created North Dakota Public Radio — the state's first statewide public radio network.

"Kathleen's pragmatic professionalism — her expertise, input and support — have benefited the Bellisario College for years," said Dean Marie Hardin. "She's a leader. Her curiosity, intelligence and thoughtfulness have made us better through the years. We appreciate that, and her support in this instance." 🛡️



Penn State alumna Kathleen Pavelko, president and CEO emerita of WITF Public Media in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, provided \$20,000 for the naming of a voice-over booth in the Bellisario Media Center. IMAGE: PROVIDED

Alumni gifts bolster Penn State Hollywood Program

Unwavering support from alumni — the most recent in the form of two gifts to enhance programming and help students — has bolstered the Penn State Hollywood Program.

Two alumni with established careers in the entertainment industry have offered their support to ensure the initiative's ongoing success. The Hollywood Program is a popular and successful annual program that allows students to complete courses and internships in Los Angeles.

Cheryl Fair, president and general manager of KABC-TV, the flagship ABC affiliate in Los Angeles, and Mark Hoerr, director of post-production for original series at Netflix, made separate gifts totaling nearly \$100,000.

Fair, who earned her bachelor's degree in speech in 1973, committed \$50,000 to establish the Cheryl Kunin Fair Fund. Half of the gift will create a permanent endowment, and the other half will be leveraged over the next few years to help with costs associated with course development, equipment purchases, faculty or student research projects, and any other initiatives that further the goals of expanding and strengthening the Hollywood Program.

"My career in this business started with an internship at KDKA-TV while I was at Penn State. That led to my first job and all the great career opportunities that have followed," Fair said. "The Hollywood Program is critical to creating those career opportunities for today's students."



Cheryl Fair, president and general manager of KABC-TV, was one of two alumni who made recent gifts to support the Penn State Hollywood Program. *IMAGE: KABC-TV*

"The Hollywood Program is critical to creating those career opportunities for today's students."


Hoerr's gift, combined with a Netflix matching program, will create the Mark S. Hoerr Hollywood Program Award Fund and provide \$45,000 in support for students with demonstrated need. Hoerr earned his bachelor's degree in advertising in 1987.

"As a Pennsylvania kid who moved to Los Angeles without a clue or a dollar to his name, this program would have been invaluable to me," Hoerr said. "It's my pleasure to be able to support the Penn State Hollywood Program in any way possible."

Both Fair and Hoerr are members of the advisory board for the Hollywood Program.

Hollywood Program founder Robert Richards, the John and Ann Curley Professor of First Amendment Studies who teaches courses on site and serves as an in-person advocate and resource for students in Los Angeles, said the gifts would impact students for generations to come.

"We're fortunate to have an advisory board that feels so strongly about this program," Richards said. "We have seen how much it has meant to students — many of whom never would have dreamed of getting to Los Angeles and yet now live and work here in the entertainment industry. And we're really just beginning!"

While the Hollywood Program was shortened earlier this year and will be on hiatus in 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic, it will return in 2022. 



Mark Hoerr.
IMAGE: NETFLIX

Alumnus displays commitment by endowing scholarship for journalism students

Bob Heisse, a scholarship recipient himself as a student, makes investment in future generations

A Penn State journalism graduate who has built a career defined by a commitment to strong community journalism displayed his commitment to students with a recent gift to the University.

With a \$50,000 gift, Bob Heisse, the executive editor of River Valley Media Group in La Crosse, Wisconsin, has endowed the Bob Heisse Scholarship for students with financial need in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications.

"It's something I had been planning to do, and having a plan made it possible. I'm excited to be able to provide support that can help deserving students," said Heisse, who earned his bachelor's degree in 1979. He was a scholarship recipient himself, and he started his career in daily newspaper journalism immediately after graduation with the Bucks County Courier Times. "I certainly got boost from communications scholarships during my time at Penn State."

Before joining River Valley Media Group, Heisse served in top editor positions in Kenosha, Wisconsin; northwest Indiana; and Springfield, Illinois. He also previously served as executive editor of the Centre Daily Times in State College.

Heisse, who now oversees three daily newspapers (the La Crosse Tribune and Chippewa Herald in Wisconsin and the Winona Daily News in Minnesota) and several weeklies for River Valley Media Group, believes investing in student success can pay dividends for communities and

media organizations in the future.

He also believes students need a variety of skills to enable them to succeed and best serve their communities through journalism that focuses on local issues and the impact local decisions and events have on people.

"I love community journalism," Heisse said. "While there always are challenges, there has never been a better time to report stories using multiple platforms. Journalists can reach more people than ever before using video and social media."

Papers under Heisse's leadership have earned two top-tier awards — the Lee Enterprises President's Award for coverage of civil unrest in Kenosha and a presidential award from McClatchy Newspapers for coverage of the Jerry Sandusky scandal while Heisse was at the Centre Daily Times, where he spent 10 years as the paper's top editor.

"We have many alumni who have positively impacted the communities where they have worked during their standout journalism careers, and to have someone like Bob Heisse reinvest in Penn State and our current students is special," said Dean Marie Hardin of the Bellisario College. "It's a tangible sign of his commitment to the future of journalism."



Bob Heisse, executive editor of River Valley Media Group in La Crosse, Wisconsin, has endowed the Bob Heisse Scholarship for students with financial need in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications. IMAGE: SEAN KRAJACIC, KENOSHA NEWS

Heisse served as president of the national Associated Press Media Editors in 2012. He also previously served as president of the Pennsylvania Associated Press Managing Editors and the Pennsylvania News-Media Association. 

Family provides gift to support career development of communications students

Endowment offers paid internships for students working at CommAgency

Pam and Brad Korman complete each other's sentences, instinctively and smoothly taking turns as they discuss their daughter's experience at Penn State — and their decision to create a new endowment at Penn State to help other students find the same growth and success. The Pamela and Bradley Korman Endowment for CommAgency in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications will support the kind of hands-on learning that gives students a professional edge.

Their daughter, a journalism major, found opportunities almost from the moment she stepped on campus — and the family's first visit remains vivid in her mother's memory.

"I was worried about a big school, but our middle son said I was being foolish and Penn State was where she needed to be," Pam Korman recalled. "We weren't on the campus for 30 minutes when Brad and I looked at each other and said 'Yeah, this is it.'"

Along with evidence of caring and support from faculty and staff, the Korman family found strong practical considerations for their daughter to select the Bellisario College to pursue a career in broadcast journalism.

"We were at some schools, and they'd show us shiny new cameras or studios but made it clear those were for upperclassmen. At Penn State, they told us students could find ways to be hands-on from the start," Brad Korman said. "We asked some students how long they had to wait after they got here to start doing things, and the answer was about two weeks.

"Plus, you see the work students are producing, and it speaks for itself."



Pam and Brad Korman hope the endowment they created can help Penn State communications students gain valuable professional experience during their undergraduate careers. *IMAGE: Provided.*

While their daughter has made the most of her time at Penn State, including a production-related internship with Penn State Athletics, the Kormans have embraced the University as well.

Although neither of them, nor their two older sons attended


Penn State, Brad's parents both did and there was always a connection with Happy Valley.

Thanks in part to their daughter's positive experience, and as a testament to their commitment helping others in general and encouraging college students to succeed in particular, the Kormans made a \$100,000 gift to create their endowment. Through its current fundraising campaign, "A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence," and the Economic Development Matching Program, the University made a one-time 1:1 matching contribution to bring the total endowment to \$200,000.

"The combination of classroom and practical experience puts students in the best position for career success and the Kormans' gift will open up those kinds of opportunities for even more of our students," Dean Marie Hardin said. "We appreciate their commitment and vision, which will have a long-lasting impact."

The funding will support paid internships for students working for CommAgency — the student-run media production agency that provides live production, photography, social strategy and analytics and videography for Penn State clients. The Kormans and several other Bellisario College supporters watched a showcase of CommAgency work and talked to students late in the fall semester. That effort was facilitated by the Bellisario College's development office.

"If you're going to work during college, and you can have the opportunity for that to be resume-building, and in particular a paid internship, it's so much more valuable because you can carry that experience with you when you graduate," says Pam Korman, a conceptual photographer whose work has been showcased in exhibitions across the world. She also leads workshops for photographers based on color theory, composition, and developing and executing personal projects.

"We've always been advocates for education, and big believers that when you have the ability to help, you need to help," Brad Korman adds. "The combination of a paid and practical experience just made so much sense to us." He's the co-chief executive officer of Korman Communities, which functions as an operator and investor in a variety of real estate ventures and investment strategies across the United States and United Kingdom. 

Scholarship honoring popular recent alumnus moves toward endowment threshold

Matt Trabold Scholarship in Sports Journalism created in honor of 2013 graduate

A scholarship honoring a passionate and popular Penn State alumnus — someone who brought energy to every assignment he tackled and every room he entered, according to his many friends in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications community — has quickly moved toward its endowment threshold, which would allow the fund to support students for years to come.

Such response and support seems appropriate when it comes to Matt Trabold.

Trabold, who earned his journalism degree in 2013, worked as a videographer for WHAM-TV in his hometown of Rochester, New York, until mid-March. His presence at every game he covered was noticed by competitors, fans and colleagues. His energy, enthusiasm, passion and ever-present shorts were hard to miss.

He died unexpectedly April 1, 2021, though, just days after individual conversations with some of his Penn State classmates who always enjoyed hearing from him and consistently praised his impact on them.

“Matt had the unique ability to bring out your best when you were in his company,” wrote Tyler Feldman, who works as a sports anchor and reporter at WITN-TV and earned his journalism degree in 2016, in an online tribute.

Darian Somers, also a 2016 graduate, met Trabold as an undergraduate at a hockey game and interacted with him regularly through CommRadio and other student organizations, building what he thought would be a much longer-lasting relationship with celebratory touchpoints for years to come. He offered a tribute that praised Trabold’s passion for people. “Those moments are what Matt loved, and I loved that most about him. The light and the energy he brought.”


Numerous similar online conversations and tributes spurred the idea for a scholarship in Trabold’s honor.

“It was something Tyler suggested in an online post, maybe a scholarship at Penn State, and we asked him if it would be OK if we leveraged his idea,” said Julie Trabold, Matt’s mother. “He said he had no ownership and anything we could do to honor Matt would be great. So, we moved forward. It has not been easy, but it’s been a positive amidst all of this.”

Matt was the oldest of Julie and Michael Trabold’s two children. They loved their son and his passion for sports, especially college basketball, and they have been humbled in the weeks since his death by how much other people loved their son as well.

“We knew he had really close friends from Penn State, and we knew he had a great reputation in the Rochester area for his commitment to and excellence in covering the local sports community, but we didn’t know the extent until he passed away,” Julie said. “He had such loyal friends.

“It’s such a tough industry. If we can make future young journalists’ lives easier with a scholarship, that’ll make it successful,” she added.

Trabold was part of three Emmy Award-winning teams for the “In the Game” show while he was a student in the Bellisario College. He also participated in PSN-TV and completed summer internships for a radio station in State College, as well as the TV station where he eventually worked. 



The response to the scholarship in his memory provides a testament to the impact and popularity of Matt Trabold, pictured here. IMAGE: PROVIDED BY THE TRABOLD FAMILY

HONOR ROLL

Our alumni and friends made 1,937 gifts totaling \$2,499,662 during the period from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, to support the Bellisario College and its students. The Honor Roll recognizes those who made gifts of at least \$100 during the fiscal year.

DEAN'S CIRCLE (Minimum \$2,500)

AARP Inc.
Gerald Abrams
John Affleck and Jessica Ancker
LaVonne Althouse
Abraham and Leslie Amoros
Douglas and Claudia Anderson
AYCO Charitable Foundation
Lisa and Stephen Banco
Mimi Barash Coppersmith
Robert Barbarowicz
Roger Bolton and Lynne Melillo Bolton
Todd and Anita Brightman
Brownstein Group
Marc and Amy Brownstein
Catherine and Robert Buday
Judson Burch
Warren Carmichael
Jeanne and Kevin Chapkovich
William Clark
GMGRP Inc.
Paul Cohen
John and Ann Curley
J. Bradley and Bailey Davis
Robin Deacle
Stanley and Ann Degler
Richard Edelman
Shirley Ellis
Douglas Eroh
Cheryl and Donald Fair
Elizabeth Fetter and Donald Durbin
Fidelity Investments Charitable Fund
Ellen Foster
Macdonald Gagen
Google Inc.
Jennifer Gottlieb
Gary Gray and Kathleen O'Toole
Jay Grossman and Dorothy Daub-Grossman
Norbert Haas
Ginger Hardage
Marie Hardin and Jerry Kammer
Harmelin Media
Jonathan and Joanne Harmelin
Daniel Hartman
Robert Heisse
Mark Hoerr
Bridget Hughes
Mary Hummel
Kenneth and Jennifer Irvin
Mr. and Mrs. Jon Iwata
Jay Jackson
Bill Jaffe
Jayne Jamison and Edward Besno

Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pa.
James Jimirro and Ajchara Kaewthep
Johnson & Johnson
David and Mary Lee Jones
Stevens and Diane Kasselmann
Michael Katz
Kinetic
Bradley and Pamela Korman
Paul Levine and Marcia Silvers
Michael and Amanda Lockwood
Ann Major
Mars Inc.
Frederick and Ann Martelli
Christopher and Diane Martin
Joseph and Mary Meder
Merck & Company Inc.
Arthur and Marjorie Miller
Brian and Patricia Nawa
John Nichols
Willard and Doris Nielsen
Northern Trust Charitable Giving Program
Jeaneen and Paul Olliver
Anthony and Moradeyo Olorunnisola
Thomas and Edith Ortenberg
Eugene Borza and Kathleen Pavelko
Pa. Association of Broadcasters
Princeton Area Community Foundation Inc.
Jennifer Prosek
Eric and Luisa Rabe
Richard and Rayna Ravitz
Jordan and Elizabeth Rednor
Traci Rodriguez
Mary Lee Schneider and Edward Flam
Jane Perry Shoemaker
Daniel and Tara Smith
Southwest Airlines
Steven and Jacqueline Szafara
The ESS Group Inc.
Beatrice Trabold
U.S. Charitable Gift Trust
Visa Inc.
John Wagner
WE Communications
William Randolph Hearst Foundation
Windstream Services II LLC
Carolyn Xu
Randolph Yanoshak
Melissa Zorkin

DEAN'S ASSOCIATES (\$1,000 to \$2,499)

Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund
Neil Barskyu

John Beauge
Thomas and Paulette Berner
George Berwanger
Joanne Calabria
Thomas and Gwyneth Chobot
Michael T. Chobot
Philip and Joan Currie
L. Matthew and Kelly A. Day
John A. and Janet M. Dillon
John A. Dunn
Helene Eckstein and William Humphries
Gene Foreman
Judith Friedman
Marliene Froke
Jim Gardner
Gregory and Deborah Guise
William J. Hackett
Tara and Seth Haplea
Brian and Dale Healy
Todd and Pamela Hervey
Heyman Associates Inc.
Anne Hoag
Jeffrey and Nancy Hunt
Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh
Joseph and Kathryn Kardesh
Kohl Pharmaceutical Research
Steven and Doreen Lampert
George and Nancy Lewis
Janice and Steven Livingston
Anne Lusk
Robert and Marylou Martin
Warren and Carole Maurer
Robert P. McKinnon
Woodene Merriman
Norman and Mollie Miller
Barry D. Mordis
Neil Barsky and Joan S. Davidson Foundation
Paychex
Pretzel City Sports
Mark and Tracy Pulos
J. Ford and Mary Risley
Lorraine Ryan
Peter J. and Lynn M. Sarratori
Robin Savage
David W. Skidmore
Christian Trabold
Kevin Trabold
Matthew J. Trabold
Thomas A. Trabold
Barry and Marylouise Uhlig
Thomas and Kirsten Verducci
Amanda Weitman
David and Susan Werner
James Wiggins and Christine Fleming
David and Jamie Yadgaroff

COMMUNICATIONS PARTNERS

(\$500 to \$999)
Mark Ashenfelter
Ronald Balasco
Madison V. Brightman
Lynne Johnson Games
David and Jane Conley
Robert and Teresa Villa Cook
W. Peter and Maria Bodine Desautelle
Nicholas Elia
Carole Feldman
Paula M. Froke
Herman and Judith Gibb
John and Diana Gibb
James and Kristen Gill
Stephen and Carol Gosser
Karen Hockstein
Tyler Jackson
Charles E. and Hillary Jetty
Mark Jordan
Yukari Kane
Jeffrey and Kimberly S. Klein
Savitha Kolar
Peter A. Kowalski and Sandra A. Miller
Justin and Suzanne K. Krane
Stephen and Pamela F. Kraycick
Cheryl A. Dunlap
Wendy Lichtenstein
David E. and Lisa A. Lucas
Jose Lugaro
Christopher and Lisa Lydon
David and Jodie Morris
Patrick Parsons and Susan Strohm
Shaheen Pasha
Michael Poorman
Lawrence and Deborah Raiman
Edgar Ramirez
Richard and Stephanie Rapp
Mark Cutkosky and Pamela Reasner
Colette M. Rodger
Jarred and Sarah Romesburg
Ernie Sadashige
Steven and Susan Sampsell
Laurie Saucke
Jeffrey and Stacy Schwartz
Paul A. Seltman
Gary Sheffer
Seth Silverstein
Virginia Sirocky
Joshua and Adrienne Snow
Jennifer and Richard Sparrow
Joseph D. Trabold
Michael J. and Julie A. Trabold
Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program
Christopher Wheeler

Jean M. Witkowski
David Wozniak
S. Charles Zdeb and Patrice Bradley Zdeb

CARNEGIE CLUB (\$250 to \$499)

Eric and Eileen Ambrose
James and Michelle Antonelli
John Atwater
Kendra Aucker
Brian D. and Michelle K. Baker
Douglas Baxter
John H. Beale
Kelsey E. Bell
Charles Dougherty and Mary L. Belli
Ryan Birchmeier
Mary Lou Christiana
Clifton W. Colmon
Pamela Cook
Melody Drummond Hansen
James Richard Dugan and Michele D. Dugan
Charles and Josephine Dumas
Stanley and Susan Ellis
Gary Ezard
Benjamin H. Feller
Brent R. Peters and Linda C. Feltman
Frank and Patricia Halvonik
Rachid Haoues
Stephen Heiser
Carl H. and Phyllis Hamilton Heller
Richard C. and Margaret A. Herring DiPippo
Lauren E. Raisl
Scott F. and Laura K. Horner
Thad Inge
Frederick A. and Marilyn Rinker Jennerjohn
Robert Junas
John Kaminski and Erin Tench
Yukari Kane
Shannon Kennan
Tanya Kennedy
Stella Kim
Roberta Knapp
Ronald Kolb
Ray Kotcher
Robert and Marie Kramer
Lila Lahood
Wayne Smith and Maureen Lally
Abby Mayer
Matthew P. McAllister
Kimberly Mehle
Walter T. Middlebrook
Michael J. and Julia Cipolla Mullen
Linda Murphy

Barbara Natalie
 Michael and
 Monica R. O'Sullivan
 Anne Oeldorf-Hirsch
 Michael B. and Amanda Oey
 Kristina A. Burlew
 Tim J. and
 Carla Tolino-Panaccio
 Scott Pellis
 David G. and
 Hyacinth M. Peterson
 Pamela Phillips and
 Richard Zanghetti
 Alexander E. Raiman
 Patrick J. Raring
 Sean and Danielle Reardon
 Lyn Reeves
 Larry Reibstein and
 Jennifer Streicher Frey
 Dyann Roth
 Hal Sadoff and
 Andrea Parsley
 Stephanie Schaeffer
 Maura E. Shea
 Ariel R. Siegelman
 Bette Jackson Smith
 Dillon M. Smith
 Alyssa L. Sovereign
 Perry Stambaugh
 Randolph and Frances Starn
 Monica Steinhubl
 Gloria Kay Stephens
 Robert S. Steranko and Allison
 L. Steranko
 T. Rowe Price Charitable Giving
 Laura Tambini
 Bailey Templin
 Brenna C. Thorpe
 Bjorn Trowery
 Alan and Mary Wagmeister
 Brooke B. Wagner
 Christine Wiley
 Brandon C. Woelkers and
 Michelle L. Bixby
 Wendy M. Zimmerman

CENTURY CLUB (\$100 to \$249)

Joseph Adamoli
 Eric and Patricia Adelman
 David and Erin Alderfer
 Michael R. Alexander
 Martin Aronoff
 Eugene and Alison Aucott
 Ann Barkelew O'Hagan
 Michael and Diane Bauhof
 Alan and Sally Bedrick
 Clara M. Benice
 Susan Berg
 Karen M. Bernardo
 Jonathan Bete
 Blackbaud Giving Fund
 Kathryn E. Blitz
 Matthew D. Brady
 Kristen N. Burke
 Conrad H. and Candice J. Busch
 Amy Andryszak Campbell

John and Kerrie Carfagno
 Michael Catalana
 Stuart H. Chamberlain
 Charities Aid Foundation
 of America
 Rabia Chaudry
 Steven and Julie Clemens
 William Collier
 Randall Cona
 Lauren M. Connolly
 Monica J. Cooney
 Joseph M. Corsi
 Noah and Marissa F. Coslov
 Jenna Cottrell
 John and Vicki Cousley
 Bradley M. Cox
 A. J. Crabill
 Christopher W. Crider
 Carlyn Crout
 Sherre Cullen
 Ron Culp
 Charles Curley
 Jessica Curtin
 Michael Deats
 Robert and Maureen Debicki
 Ron DeFeo
 Mike Degenhart and Carmella
 Mulroy-Degenhart
 William and
 Sandra Kroeger Dillon
 Dina Dinacci
 Sonya R. Di Palma
 Ashley Doerzbacher
 Rich Donnelly
 Maureen Dooley
 Marilyn Anne Doris
 Jens K. and Colleen P. Duerr
 Caleb B. Dyer
 Cynthia Epley
 William and Patricia Evans
 Tyler T. Feldman
 David Fernandez
 Mary Ann Reid Fink
 Steven and Joan Fliegelman
 Kevin J. Flintosh
 Patrick Ford
 V. P. Franklin
 Barry French
 Mark and Stephanie French
 Kim C. Friedman
 Michael A. Fuoco
 Kevin M. Gallagher
 Kiera Germond
 Samuel R. and
 Curwin McFarland Gett
 Michael G. and
 Michelle Gibbons
 Reed and Eileen Gidez
 Louis S. Glass and Lisa J. Linder
 Miguel and Gretchen Gonzalez
 Richard S. Greco
 Brett W. and
 Carol Rush Hagedorn
 Mark and Denise Hakowski
 Michael and Laurie Harding
 Curtis and Inez Hare
 Inez Hare

Thomas A. and Joy A. Harvey
 Kathy Heasley
 Sally A. Heffentreyer
 Heather A. Heigele
 Ricky Heinbach
 Carl and Sarah Heller
 Isabelle A. Helmich
 Chad Hershberger and
 Sarah Voorhees
 Frederick Herzog
 Susan Hirsch
 Vanessa Hua
 Thomas and Cheryl Huet
 Carl Hull and Kathleen Lyon Hull
 Robert and Shelia D. Hull
 Warren A. and Cheryl L. Hunter
 Amy Hussey
 Jordan and Jeannine Hyman
 Mayu Iwatani
 Matt Jackson
 Gregory John and
 Donna Cronenwett-John
 Karen Johnson
 Rebecca Jones
 Richard and Ann Jones
 Alyson and Michael Joyce
 Robert and Mary Joyce
 William D. Kalec
 Michelle Kalin
 Kathleen Kane
 Jessica Marie Kapadia
 Jake M. Kaplan
 Liana Katz
 Jacob Kaucher
 Glenn N. Kaup
 Kurt Keller and
 Michelle F. Keller
 Brenda A. Kelly
 Christopher Kelly
 Megan Kelly
 Jessica M. Kern
 Matthew Kincak
 Kristen Kinkella
 Scott Kintzing
 Joseph and Karen Klein
 Jeffrey and Maryann Klick
 Michael and Janet Klinefelter
 Derek W. Koffel
 William and Sharon M. Krupinsky
 Mike Ksczanowicz and
 Donna Ksczanowicz
 Maureen Lally
 Carolyn Lanza
 Rinaldo and Susan Leonard
 Christopher and Sabrina Liller
 Amy Takehara Lilly
 Mark X. Lima
 Brooke Lochiatto
 Carol Lochiatto
 Vincent and Heather Loss
 Christopher Loughner
 and Marianne Tropp
 Mary MacLaren
 Alexandra Mallick
 John Manna
 James C. and
 Donna M. Mansfield

James R. Shire and
 Fern E. Margolis
 Matthew T. Martell
 David W. Martinson and Jodie
 Hough Martinson
 Andrew Marzka and
 Lisa R. Marzka
 Eleanor Mascheroni
 Sara Matulonis
 Susan Matzat
 Robert and Vicki McAllister
 Daniel McIntyre
 Bryan M. McSorley
 Larry Gohn and Deborah Meder
 Linda M. Melvin
 Gerald D. and Cynthia C. Micco
 Monica L. Miller
 David Monfried
 William Monkowski
 Martin Mucci
 Hank and Jill Narrow
 National Press Photographers
 Association
 Sayaka Ninomiya
 Gary Noble
 Scott K. Nulty
 Dana O'Neil
 Mary Beth Oliver
 Matthew B. Otstot
 Mary Pace
 Mukul Pandya
 Patricia Panzera
 George G. and Sara Carson Peck
 David Pellnitz
 Timothy J. and
 Carolyn P. Pemberton
 Brenda A. Penderville
 Kelly Penna
 Jean Allen Petersen
 Martin M. McNeeley and
 Susan J. Petix-McNeeley
 Madeline Pryor
 Maureen Quinn
 Leena Raut
 Tom J. Resau
 Andrew H. Richards
 Paul and Linda Pavian Roberts
 Justin M. Roche
 Samuel V. and Mary F. Rogers
 Nancy O. Ross
 Richard A. Rossi
 Caitlin R. Rossmann
 Benjamin S. Rupp
 Maria Russell
 Paul Salmin
 Tina Samios
 Laurie Savage
 Michael Savage
 Brian and Susan Savitch
 Jay Friedman and Jane Schley
 Donna Schunk
 Schwab Charitable Fund
 Kevin and
 Noreen Stock Schwartz
 Cassandra Schwedfeger
 Jeffrey J. and
 Donna Getchen Schwoebel

Kristen Scribner
 Sean R. and Nicole M. Sedam
 Celine Selin
 Laura Sherr
 Shire Facial Plastic Surgery, PC
 Scott Shirley
 Bryan and Allison S. Siegelman
 Kevin A. Sinwell
 Eric Sion
 Christopher A. and
 Heather McGinness Smith
 Ronald G. Smith
 Samuel Smith and
 Donna Bruder-Smith
 Darian Somers
 Wynton J. Somerville
 James S. and
 Barbara White Stack
 Thomas and Donna Stewart
 Sean C. and Kathryn Sticker
 Robert Strang
 Erin E. Cunniffe
 Christopher and Julie Stroz
 Matthew J. and Carrie S. Sullivan
 Stephanie N. Taormina
 Peter Terpstra
 Linda E. Thomas
 Jonathan and Debra Thurley
 Meredith Topalanchik
 Christina Trabold
 Erin Trabold
 Steven and Lori Trapani
 Cheryl Trecoske
 Michael and Linda Trobich
 Scott F. Sautner and Lori M. Vail
 Richard and Esther Van O'Linda
 Frank and Diane Velona
 Josh Verlin
 Cynthia C. Viadella
 Joseph-Mary Beth Vivinetto
 Matthew J. and
 Jane Buck Vratarich
 Jennifer Vrentas
 Todd Wachob
 Steven Wagman and
 Ellen Venig Wagman
 Rebecca Wagner
 Stuart Wagner
 Heath R. Weber and
 Shannon L. Stager
 Robert Wechsler
 Gerald and Susan Wetzel
 Pamela Wilcox
 Penny Wise
 Mark E. Wishnia
 William H. and
 Mona Signorino Wunderlich
 Jeffrey A. and Nancy Young
 Ralph and Lou Ann Zeigler
 Bu Zhong

**Thank
 You**

Fauci, Woodruff, Robinson and Heyman honored

The four distinguished honorees shared their thoughts on combating disinformation, achieving social justice, inspiring future communicators and more

The discussions at the fifth annual Arthur W. Page Center Awards were as inspirational as they were timely. This year's class of honorees shared stories, principles, advice and reflection during the virtual event on Feb. 24.

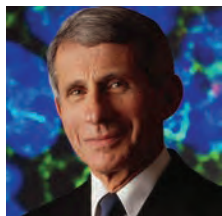
Honorees were Dr. Anthony Fauci, NIAID director; Judy Woodruff, anchor and managing editor of PBS Newshour; Eugene Robinson, Washington Post columnist and editor; and Bill Heyman, CEO of Heyman Associates.

The awards ceremony was much different than prior years. Instead of a dinner in New York City, it was virtual. However, hosting the event online allowed the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication to welcome a global audience. It beamed the honorees, among the country's most respected and trusted communicators, to hundreds of students, young professionals, faculty, executives and the public.

Viewers from more than 100 companies and 75 colleges and universities tuned in. Page Center advisory board chairman Bill Nielsen and Marie Hardin, dean of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State, hosted the event live from WPSU studios. The honorees and presenters all streamed in via Zoom.

THE ARTHUR W. PAGE CENTER
— for integrity in public communication —

2021 AWARDS



The purpose of communication by a scientist is not to show how smart you are. It is to have people understand what you're talking about.

— Dr. Anthony Fauci, 2021 Page Center Awards honoree



I think that CEOs do a great job at running businesses, but they did not know how to handle these things [the past year's events]. So, it was really important for communicators to be able to let them know how.

— Bill Heyman, 2021 Page Center Awards honoree



I still believe, and I still want to believe, that truth wins in the end.


— Eugene Robinson, 2021 Page Center Awards honoree



I know [future journalists] are out there. They are being educated right now at the Bellisario College.

— Judy Woodruff, 2021 Page Center Awards honoree

Each honoree received a Larry Foster Award for Integrity in Public Communication, which recognizes professionals who exemplify the importance of truthful communication with the public. What makes this award particularly unique is that it represents a number of fields — journalism, public relations, the public sector, and health — under shared principles of integrity and truth-telling.

This was the fifth installment of the annual event. More information about the Page Center and previous winners may be found at <https://www.bellisario.psu.edu/page-center/> online. 

Series on youth teams earns Award for Excellence

As youth team sports in the United States powered ahead despite the coronavirus pandemic, a group of journalists followed the story and found an array of inconsistent or nonexistent regulations, as well as mixed adherence to those guidelines — a combination that put participants, families and staff in danger.


In addition, the coverage team led by Tim Bannon, along with reporters from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Marquette University, followed the story over a period of months and produced a first-of-its-kind database, organized by sports, that provided information about the origin and scope of virus outbreaks.

Marquette students Margaret Cahill and Amanda Parrish assisted on the series and shared the byline.

Bannon, along with Cahill and Parrish, were selected as the recipient of the Award for Excellence in Coverage of Youth Sports for the comprehensive and timely series.

The award, presented annually by the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism at Penn State, recognizes creative, in-depth and innovative coverage of youth and high school sports by broadcast, print and online journalists.

Entries from across the country were submitted for the award and three finalists were forwarded to a three-member team of judges. Those judges, all Penn State alumni — Jim Buzinski of the Los Angeles Times and Outsports, Ryan Hockensmith of ESPN, and Emily Kaplan of ESPN — were unanimous in their praise of the winning work.

Bannon, an editor and writer serving as the O'Brien Fellow in Public Service Journalism at Marquette, has spent most of his career in Chicago. He previously worked with the Chicago Tribune for 25 years, most recently serving as a senior editor/writer and, before that, as sports editor. Earlier in his career he was the entertainment editor. He had moved to the Tribune after serving as the entertainment editor/writer for the Chicago Sun-Times. 



Tim Bannon




Washington Post's Sullivan earns Bart Richards Award

The media columnist for The Washington Post whose work focused on a variety of topics — including how the president impacts press freedom, the challenging future for small newspapers, flickers of hope for local journalism, and even a “mea culpa” looking back at a mistake she made earlier in her career — was selected as the winner of the 2020 Bart Richards Award for Media Criticism.

Margaret Sullivan was selected from a strong group of finalists by three external judges, after submissions for the award were screened by faculty members in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications. The annual Bart Richards Award recognizes constructively critical articles, books, and electronic and online media reports; academic and other research; and reports by media ombudsmen and journalism watchdog groups.

Judges supported Sullivan's work unanimously, saying it set a standard for media criticism. The judges for this year's contest were: Tony Barbieri, former managing editor of The Baltimore Sun and a retired Penn State faculty member; Cheryl Fair, president and general manager of KABC-TV in Los Angeles; and Mark Russell, executive editor of The Commercial Appeal in Memphis, Tennessee.

Sullivan has been a media columnist for the Post since 2016. She previously served as public editor of The New York Times — the first woman and fifth person in that position. Before that, she served as chief editor of The Buffalo News, the first woman to hold that position at her hometown newspaper, where she started her career as a summer intern.

Sullivan, who published her first book in 2020, “Ghosting the News: Local Journalism and the Crisis of American Democracy,” was honored publicly in May during a special online event coordinated by the Bellisario College. 



Margaret Sullivan



Watch the
Bart Richards
Award
Presentation

COLLEGE VISITORS

A

*David Abruzzese ('17), marketing generalist, Penn State Alumni Association

Kainaz Amaria, visual editor, Vox

Nancy Armour, sports columnist, USA TODAY

Ken Armstrong, reporter, ProPublica

Gina Asaro-Collura, senior vice president/creative director, FCB Health

*Laura Azar ('09), vice president/talent acquisition, Omnicom Health Group

B

John Derf Backderf, illustrator and writer

*Jill Beckman ('18), social media coordinator, Tampa Bay Buccaneers



*Dan Balton ('15), freelance video producer

Madeleine Baran, investigative reporter

*Ryan Beckler ('13), deputy head of social media, NBC News

*Mandy Bell ('18), Cleveland Indians beat reporter, MLB.com

Emma Bentley, camerawoman/journalist, BBC News

Regina Boone, photojournalist, Richmond Free Press

*Rob Boulware ('86), director of stakeholder relations, Seneca Resources

Tom Brenner, freelance photojournalist

*Maddie Brightman ('17), content producer, ESPN

Stacey Britt Fitzgerald, vice president of marketing, IMG Fashion

*Patrick Bunting ('13), vice president of communications, NBCUniversal Media

*Judson Burch ('92), coordinating producer, ESPN

C

*Joanne Calabria ('74), former VP of public affairs, CBS

*Sarah Carberry ('97), head of multicultural strategy and sales, Google

Jen Jortner Cassidy, customer success manager, LinkedIn

Vivian Chen, associate professor, Nanyang Technological University

*Erin Clark ('13), staff photographer, Boston Globe

Ariel Cobbett, photojournalist, Memphis Commercial Appeal

Suzannah Evans Comfort, assistant professor, Indiana University

D

*Arianna Davis ('09), senior director/editorial and strategy, Oprah Daily

Tiffany Davis, content director and co-founder, Context & Co.

Gene Demby, cohost/correspondent, NPR

*Catherine Driza ('12), senior social producer, The Drew Barrymore Show/CBS Interactive

*Bernadette Dunn ('91), senior director/global internal communications, ARRIS Group

E

*Kate Eckman ('00), leadership development and performance coach

*Jamie Ehrhart ('01), head of global brand marketing, Slack

*Matt Eichelberger ('07), regional director, Penn State Alumni Association

*Mike Esse ('15), program manager, TaylorMade Golf Co.

F

Paul Farhi, columnist, The Washington Post

*Tyler Feldman ('16), sports anchor/reporter, KVUE, Austin, Texas

*Mark Fischer ('18), digital sports editor/producer, New York Post

Pat Forde, columnist, Sports Illustrated

G

Ben Garvin, photographer/documentary filmmaker

*Amanda Gifford Lockwood ('04), Sr. coordinating producer/VP, ESPN

*Dejanae Gibson ('19), associate producer, Discovery Inc.

*Julie Gorbey, senior business lead, Google

*Lawrence Green ('19), relationship manager, Discover Financial Services

Chris Grosse, assistant athletic director/marketing, Penn State

H

*Cam Haldeman ('19), capture technician, Facebook Reality Labs Pittsburgh

*Tom Hannifan ('11), podcaster, sports broadcaster

*Angela Haupt ('09), freelance writer
Jason Hehir, documentary director

Tony Heriza, documentary filmmaker

*Ryan Hockensmith ('01), deputy editor/digital storytelling group, ESPN

Adam Housley, former network news correspondent

J

Steven Jiang, Beijing correspondent, CNN

Alexis Johnson, reporter, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Lynn Johnson, photographer

*Ryan Jones ('95), editor, Penn State Magazine

K

*Emily Kaplan ('13), reporter/anchor, ESPN

*Don Roy King ('69), director, "Saturday Night Live"

*Rob King ('82), senior vice president/editor-at-large, ESPN

*Ali Krieger ('07), women's soccer player, Orlando Pride

L

*Stephanie Layser ('10), vice president/advertising technology and operations, News Corp.

Joon Lee, staff writer, ESPN



Brent Lewis, *photo editor, The New York Times*

*Mark Lima ('87), *West Coast Bureau Chief, CBS News*

*Melanie Lesczynski ('15), *brand manager, Nike*

*Lisa Lucas ('85), *executive producer, Animal Planet/Discovery*

M

Eric Maierson, *writer, editor, producer*

*Derek Major ('08), *digital editor, Black Enterprise Magazine*

*Juliana Mangano ('20), *assistant account executive, FCB*

*Andrew McGill ('10), *editor of interactive news, Politico*

*Matt McGloin ('12), *radio host, Sirius XM*

*Kaleigh Miller ('13), *global brand relations, Amazon*

*Char Morett-Curtiss ('79), *field hockey coach, Penn State*

*PJ Mullen ('07), *director of marketing, Penn State Athletics*

N

*Jim Nachtman ('90), *assistant athletic director/media and video production, Penn State Athletics*

Leon Neyfakh, *podcast founder and reporter*

O

*Chima Okoli ('12), *founder, Marathon Mentors*

*Jeannie Gammon Olliver ('91), *former vice president/sales operations, The New York Times*

P

*Jay Paterno ('91), *board member, Penn State Board of Trustees*

*Kathleen Pavelko ('75, '79), *president and CEO emerita, WITF Public Media*

*Mala Persaud ('05), *director/communications, Milkin Institute*

Rosalind Pichardo, *community activist*

Tara Pixley, *photojournalist/filmmaker*

R

*Chris Raymond ('87), *deputy editor/electronics group, Consumer Reports*

*Kelly Ripplin ('10), *morning news anchor, WLWT-TV*

*Jerry Rizzo ('11), *senior communication manager/employee engagement and brand reputation, Panasonic North America*

Russ Rose, *women's volleyball coach, Penn State*

*Rich Russo ('84), *producer, Fox Sports*

S

*Lisa Salters ('88), *reporter, ESPN/ABC*

*Rena Samuels ('13), *video producer, Bleacher Report*

Michael Santiago, *photojournalist, Getty Images*

*Lindsey Schnitt Katz ('12), *manager/corporate events, NBCUniversal*

*Jamie Sellinger ('18), *sports sales planner, NBCUniversal*

Jim Shortal, *senior director of business continuity, Cox Communications*

Scott Sidwell, *deputy athletic director, Penn State*

*Amy Simpson ('15), *news reporter, WBFF-TV*

*Jen Simons ('98), *executive vice president/head of production, development and programming, Barstool Sports*

Claire Smith, sportswriter, ESPN



*Audrey Snyder ('12), *writer, The Athletic*

Susan Snyder, *higher education reporter, The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Francesca Sobande, *lecturer, Cardiff University*

Larry Starks, *senior editor, USA TODAY*

T

Matt Tabbi, *writer and podcaster, Rolling Stone*

*Rachel Tasker ('19), *communications and development coordinator, University of Georgia*

*Bjorn Trowery ('08), *communications and brand public relations, Facebook*

V

*Ashley Vargas ('14), *product marketing manager, Google*

*Tom Verducci ('82), *senior writer, Sports Illustrated*

***Daniel Victor ('06), general assignment reporter, The New York Times**



*Jenny Vrentas ('06), *NFL writer, Sports Illustrated*

W

*Michael Weinreb ('94), *freelance writer/author*

Juleyka Lantigua Williams, *digital media producer, founder/CEO, Lantigua Williams & Co.*

Lisa Wilson, *NFL editor, The Athletic*

*Brittany Wolf ('09), *vice president/head of operations, PebblePost*

Yanique Woodall, *senior director/corporate communications and external affairs and head of brand communications, The Home Depot*

Z

Daniella Zalzman, *documentary photographer*

*Alumnus

Several members of our current Alumni Society Board and Ad/PR Alumni Network Board visited classrooms as well. For a list of those board members, see page 46.

CORRECTION From 2019-20 Annual Report:

*Jennifer Patterson ('08), *executive/producer assistant, Valhalla Entertainment*







PennState
 Donald P. Bellisario
 College of Communications

201 CARNEGIE BUILDING,
 UNIVERSITY PARK, PA 16802

BELLISARIO.PSU.EDU | @PSUBELLISARIO

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
State College, PA
Permit No. 1



 9,226
 6,151
 6,078
 2,895