Before studying organizational communication, Dr. Craig Engstrom, who joined the faculty in fall 2015, studied human resource management and accounting, started and sold a business, and served in the Peace Corps in Kazakhstan as an Economic Development Volunteer. So it is no surprise that he has been volunteering as a business plan advisor for the internationally recognized Prison Entrepreneurship Program for the past seven years.

"When I first read about the program in The Economist I was immediately interested in volunteering as a business plan advisor. It drew upon my interest in business, communication, volunteerism and contempt for the prison-industrial complex. Plus, the metrics on the program are amazing. Since its founding, PEP has crushed the national recidivism rate. Fewer than 5% of graduates return to prison, 100% are employed within 90 days of release, and 100 businesses have been launched,” he says. “With this program, you know you’re making a difference.”

Having worked with students in the past, Engstrom asked those in his Studies in Organizational Communication (CMST 483) course if any of them were interested in helping him with one of the members of the so-called “PEP Superior Spring Sixteen.”

Jimmy Ellis, a junior from Cairo, IL, immediately volunteered. Ellis is specializing in organizational communication; he is recognized by his peers, faculty, and staff across campus as an active student and talented drummer. When asked why he volunteered for the program, Jimmy explained, “I believe in the principles of servant leadership and have compassion for those who catch a case and end up in the belly of the beast. My father is both a small business owner and a preacher. So this compassionate project, (Engstrom Continued on page 2)

Warrants to Wall Street: Communication Student Uses Debate Skills to Land Summer Internship

Deborrius “DJ” Jeffries, a communication studies junior, already has an impressive list of accomplishments and achievements on his resume. But this summer, he’ll add one more. DJ will be working as a human resources summer analyst at Morgan Stanley, one of the largest investment banks in the country. He credits this accomplishment largely to the skills he gained from the communication studies department.

“The skills I’ve learned in my communication coursework played a huge role in landing this internship,” Jeffries said. “I think people often forget how important and practical this major actually is.”

(Jeffries Continued on page 2)
which focuses on helping those on the inside do market research and improve their business idea, excited me.”

From February to early May 2016, Engstrom and Ellis coached Josue, who hopes to start a restaurant and hospitality consulting company in Houston upon his release. As part of their consulting effort, Engstrom and Ellis assisted Josue writing a full business plan, tackling a part of it each week when staff at the Cleveland Unit (north of Houston, Texas) would email them the assignment.

“The most challenging part of the process was the marketing assignment. Prisoners do not have access to the internet and we don’t live in Texas, so I was putting to use all of the research skills I have learned in my courses,” Ellis laughed. “So that Josue could better prepare his financial and competitive strategy, we had to provide market information, competitor information, pricing info, and more,” he said.

Typically, once the final business plan is completed, Engstrom and Ellis would have reviewed it in its totality and Josue would have pitched his idea in a business plan competition to a group of CEOs and potential investors. However, Josue was paroled just before graduating from the program.

“Even though I didn’t see it all come together, I know what goes into a business plan. More importantly, though, I used my communication skills for constructive criticism and encouragement,” Ellis noted. “I got to put into practice many of the things I learned in my courses over the years and maybe one day I’ll be a consultant.”

According to Engstrom and Ellis, PEP’s name is a little misleading. It is not the entrepreneurship component that makes the program successful, but communication. The men in the Cleveland Unit are coached by executives, bankers, educators, civic leaders, and so on. Letters are exchanged between prisoners and advisors, many of them in elite MBA programs. During this communicative process, those in positions of power and hiring authority experience a fundamental change in attitude and perception.

This is why Engstrom sees this activity as a natural fit for our department, which has growing student interest in social justice, pedagogy, intercultural training, and organizational development. As Engstrom notes, “This program is a very good fit for our students. When I was a visiting professor at The University of Montana, I designed and taught Entrepreneurship and Communication as a service-learning course. During the semester, 11 teams of three students each advised a prisoner. I hope to teach this class soon here at SIUC, or find a way to incorporate PEP into some of the creative projects my students and I are working on.”

Ellis agrees, “I wish I wasn’t graduating before I got to take a service-learning class with Dr. Engstrom. Current and new students have something to look forward to: PEP provides an engaging skills-based assignment with professional implications—at the very least it’s an awesome activity to put on a résumé.”

Learn more about PEP: www.pep.org

DJ has held numerous roles while a student, including: multiple political campaigns; undergraduate assistant: Account Executive for the student-run public relations firm, Pyramid PR; and staff writer for the Odyssey Online. He is also an undergraduate representative for the College of Liberal Arts council.

As part of the interview process for Morgan Stanley, DJ was asked to participate in a debate with the other applicants.

“They wanted to see how well we could express our ideas. They were looking for people who could effectively construct an argument in a clear and concise way. I think I had the upper hand because I’m asked to do the same thing in my classes every day,” he said.

The topic of the debate was: “Is it better for managers to be loved or feared?” DJ says that he pointed to communication theories and statistics that he had learned in his coursework to strengthen his argument. As a result, all of the hiring managers were very impressed with him and his debate performance.

“They asked me how I got so good at debating. They were intrigued when I told them I took a class on it as part of my major,” DJ said.

In his spare time, he participates in a variety of student organizations, including the Marching Salukis, the Saluki Pep Band, PRSSA, and University Innovation Fellows. He currently holds the title of People Development and Operations Chairman for the Saluki Entrepreneur Corps. He is also a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, where he has previously served as the Fraternity Education Officer (Recruitment Chairman).

DJ is a recipient of multiple honors and awards including the Gates Millennium Scholarship (funded by Bill and Melinda Gates), the Department of Communication Studies’ Robert L. Carr and H. Paul Hibbs Scholarships, and the department’s Outstanding Sophomore and Junior awards. In addition, he has been selected as the opening speaker for the past two of the Department’s bi-annual Speakers Forums.

In the future, he plans to continue working on his business, spread innovation and entrepreneurship, and bring pride and harmony to his family, friends, and SIU.
Department Hosts Communication Studies Day

On Friday, March 25, our department hosted its first Communication Studies Day event. This event was designed to introduce both incoming students and non-declared undergraduate students to communications studies as a major. Speakers covered a range of topics including: undergraduate specializations within the department; national employment trends for graduates; our successful internship program; the Speakers Forum; and our registered student organization, the Raymond D. Wiley chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).

A special guest, department alumnus Megan Oestry (B.A. 2010), was invited to speak at the event. Megan, is currently a Learning and Development Specialist at Uber. She talked about her journey from Carbondale, to graduate school in Texas, to Chicago and working for Uber. She described her career path in ways that our current and prospective students could really relate to. She encouraged the audience to “Follow your bliss, and take risks.”

Dr. Jonathan Gray spoke to the audience about the positive employment trends for graduates with communication studies degrees. This topic was sure to capture the attention of our current and prospective students, particularly in light of their awareness of general concerns about the number and types of jobs available to new college graduates.

Students and their parents expressed their gratitude for the presentations that showed what many of our graduates have done with their degrees. “It was great to see so many students, as well as future students and their parents, come to learn what a degree in communication studies can help them accomplish,” said Dr. Nathan Stucky, Department Chair. “The success stories told by many of our recent graduates help our current students understand that their training is marketable and in demand,” he said.

Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook, the organizer of Communication Studies Day said, “It was a joy to help plan Communication Studies Day and reflect on the array of student groups and activities in our major.” He also reflected on the information shared at the event: “Meagan Oestry’s moving presentation about the value of the major as a way to ask questions and think deeply reminded me of what we all sometimes take for granted: that our discipline provides a unique opportunity to reflect upon our relationships, cultures, performances, organizations, and how these communicate our values.” Current undergraduate student Ben Friedman validated the wisdom of this approach: “After attending this event, I feel encouraged and confident that I chose the right major.”

University Honors Outstanding Student Employees

Sydne Rensing, PRSSA Vice President and Communication Studies Major

Sydne N. Rensing, a senior from Albers, majoring in communications studies with a specialization in public relations, is this year’s University Honors Outstanding Student Employee.

Rensing works as a marketing assistant for the Student Center. She was nominated by Beth Alongi, Marketing Assistant Director for the Student Center.

“As Sydne has been on fire since the day she walked in the door,” Alongi said of Rensing in her nomination letter. She said Rensing is a reliable and energetic self-starter with excellent ideas and an ability to work creatively on a limited budget.

“She is 100 percent personality and has never met a stranger,” Alongi said, praising Rensing’s people skills. “Her personable and magnetic personality sets her apart from any student in this position so far. Her engagement at our promotion tables even caught the eye of a community member who wrote a letter endorsing Sydne’s professional abilities.”

As part of her position, Rensing represents the Student Center at events such as open houses and new student orientations. She is the Student Center’s social media consultant, and gives feedback on postings and other interactions as a student eye on the information sent out and the manner in which it is delivered.

Rensing is also a consistent presence on the Dean’s List and is on track to finish her undergraduate degree in three years. She studied abroad in Grenoble, France, and received a certificate in marketing and international marketing as part of that study.
is vice president of the Registered Student Organization Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) for the second year. She plans all the main events and social activities with the help of a committee she oversees.

Rensing is a member of the Association of College Unions International, and a past member of Styling for a Cause, a Registered Student Organization that helps people dress for better employment on a budget. She is on the Saluki Strength Breast Cancer Scholarship Committee. She co-supervises a new internship program called Student Center Ambassadors, which teaches undergraduate event volunteers marketing skills and professionalism. She was also a member of the SIU Tennis Club, and is currently involved with SIU’s intermural volleyball team.

“Sydne is willing to take on any job and does it to her fullest ability with a positive attitude,” Alongi said. “She is the epitome of what a Saluki should be and is definitely worthy of the title ‘Student Employee of the Year.’”

“I really appreciate the good morale, the words of wisdom and the inspiration,” Rensing said. “I’ve never worked anywhere before where the people were so inspiring.”

Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) Update
Our Registered Student Organization

PRSSA Named The 2016 Outstanding Registered Student Organization (RSO)

At an awards ceremony on April 26, PRSSA was recognized by the Office of Student Involvement as the 2016 Outstanding RSO. This award recognizes an RSO that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment and contribution to SIU and the Carbondale community.

PRSSA was recognized, in part, for their philanthropy hosting such events as Operation: Sgt. Santa, and the Purple Gala. “We were so surprised and happy that our dedication to the SIU community was recognized,” said Grace Boudreau, President. Denise McClearay, Faculty Advisor, said, “I am so proud to have the opportunity to advise such a great group of students! They really work hard each semester to design, implement, and promote our events.”

PRSSA, a pre-professional organization, strives to provide an experience similar to what students will find when they enter the public relations profession. Dr. Nathan Stucky, Department Chair, said, “Participation in our PRSSA chapter has always given students a significant advantage when it comes to their success after graduation. It’s great that PRSSA is also being recognized for the ways in which it makes major contributions to our campus community and regional philanthropic organizations.”
Second Annual Purple Gala
PRSSA Hosts Epilepsy Fundraiser in Honor of Communication Studies Instructor

Members of SIU’s Public Relations Student Society of America have often found special fulfillment in giving back to their campus and community. However, there is one philanthropic event, which they created and have staged for the second year in a row, that is closest to their heart: The Purple Gala. At Blue Sky Winery, on April 22, 2016, they hosted their second annual gala to honor a beloved Communication Studies Senior Lecturer, Josh Houston. Mr. Houston was diagnosed with epilepsy, a chronic disease, two years ago.

All funds raised from the Gala go to the Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Southern Illinois in Mr. Houston’s name. Surveying all the fashionably dressed participants at this year’s gathering, Mr. Houston shared his grateful impression of the crowd: “Seeing these kids in my classroom every day allows for a relationship to be built. But to see them come together like this, in support of me, takes my appreciation and admiration of them to a new level.”

This year PRSSA donated $1,000 to the Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Southern Illinois. This donation helps bring services and education to those diagnosed with the disease in our region. Donations were made by way of ticket sales, raffles, a 50/50 drawing, and a silent auction. The auction produced spirited bidding for over 25 baskets, offering such popular items as: signed memorabilia from the History Channel’s Pawn Stars (whose owner has coped with epilepsy for many years); a signed basketball from the Salukis’ most winning men’s basketball team in nine years; a signed football from the Salukis’ football team; a night’s stay at Blue Sky Winery’s cabin; handcrafted jewelry and artistic works; wines, cheeses and gourmet snacks; and a host of themed baskets focused on particular events, such as “A Night at the Movies” (with tickets and a coupon for popcorn, soda and candy) and a “Laundry Basket” (offering everything necessary to get those whites whiter and those colors brighter!).

The night started with the 80 guests enjoying a delicious meal catered by Great Boars of Fire, followed by a speech from the event’s coordinator, PRSSA Vice President Sydne Rensing. Rensing informed the gala’s participants about the many ways in which the Epilepsy Foundation offers educational and supportive services to assist the one-in-26 people who are diagnosed with the disease. When asked about the Purple Gala, Sydne said, “So much work goes into preparing for this night, but that’s overshadowed when you think about the life changes those coping with the disease go through. I am just so grateful I am in a position to bring awareness about the illness and generate support for a mentor like Mr. Houston.”

When the dishes were cleared from the tables, the music was turned up and almost everyone hit the dance floor during the next couple of hours. The entire crowd was in good spirits, but also aware that the lighthearted night addressed a cause so real to SIU and a disease so threatening. Josh Houston perfectly summed up the impact of the evening: “There are tough days, sure. But knowing you have an army of support behind you, picks you up in an instant. And I have the people here at this gala to thank for that.”
PRSSA Rekindles the Holiday Spirit  
Fifth Annual “Operation Sergeant Santa” Brings Smiles to Everyone

As the winter break approaches, SIU students sometimes feel their holiday spirit wasting away. The end of the semester looms over them. Final exams and projects block their paths to all the fun and festivities.

Fortunately, our department’s Raymond D. Wiley Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) came to the rescue again this year. PRSSA members, along with Kohl’s and SIU’s Department of Public Safety, hosted “Operation Sgt. Santa” on Thursday evening, December 3rd, in Ballroom D of SIU’s Student Center.

“Operation Sgt. Santa” paired 20 children (ages 5-12) from Evergreen Terrace – SIU’s housing area for married students and their families - with officers from the SIU Department of Public Safety who volunteered to participate. Generous donations from Kohl’s, as well as a number of other businesses and individuals in Carbondale, meant that every team had $100 to shop for each child’s family at Kohl’s. The most special aspect of the experience was the enthusiastic collaboration between the police officers and the children. They got to know each other well, starting with a ride to Kohl’s together in an SIU police car. For many of the children, this was the highlight of the evening!

The teams spent more than an hour combing through all of Kohl’s departments, talking along the way about their families and their holiday plans. PRSSA members accompanied the teams to act as “Santa’s Helpers.” They carried the kids’ coats and potential purchases, helped team members stay together, and diplomatically handled difficult questions (such as, “Can I spend my whole $100 on candy?”). Although the police officers offered lots of helpful advice and friendly guidance to their young partners, each child made the final decisions about what to purchase. The officers then loaded up their police cars with bags and boxes, drove their teams back to the Student Center, and helped the children wrap all of the presents. It was often difficult to tell which member of each team – the police officer or the child – was having more fun!

More than 30 PRSSA members worked to decorate the ballroom, make sure everyone got a good meal of pasta from Fazoli’s, and ensure the children and their families had a great time. While the teams were out shopping, the children’s parents and siblings were treated to cookies and other refreshments, as well as games and entertainment. The most excited was generated a visit from Santa Claus (who tried to make some of the adults believe that he was actually Brent Gordon, father of the head of the PRSSA Event Planning Committee, Olivia Gordon).

“Operation Sgt. Santa” was a rousing success that revived everyone’s holiday spirits. It allowed SIU students to give back to other SIU students and their families. It allowed children – some as young as five years old – to buy gifts that their families could not otherwise have afforded. And, most important of all, it helped spotlight and reinforce the positive relationship between the SIU Department of Public Safety and the campus community they work so hard to serve. As Sydne Rensing, Vice President of PRSSA, summed it up, “Operation Sgt. Santa is an event that we enjoy putting on simply for the kids and their families. Seeing the children’s faces light up when they get to meet Santa Claus, spend happy time with a police officer, and buy special gifts for their families during the holidays - makes all of our hard work worth it.” “Since this is my last year on the Executive Board, I think this is the event I will miss the most,” she said. Olivia Gordon added, “We had a great time with everyone who attended. We know ‘Operation Sgt. Santa’ will be a special memory for the members of our chapter – and we hope the children and police will cherish their memories of it, too.”
Speakers Forum Fall 2015 and Spring 2016

The Student Speakers Forum is a semi-annual event, with a new topic each semester, hosted by the Department of Communication Studies and funded by the Society for Civil Discourse. “Thanks to the foresight of Barbara Jane Schwartz, whose personal enthusiasm and financial support led to the founding of the Society for Civil Discourse, for over a dozen years the Student Speakers Forum has involved thousands of SIU students in researching and discussing important social issues,” said Nathan Stucky, Department Chair. This year the speakers ranged from freshmen to juniors at SIU.

Speakers Forum Fall 2015: Communicating Safety
By Allison Brenneise, Speak Easy Student Writer

Five undergraduate students voiced their concerns on “Communicating Safety” to more than 150 students, faculty, and community members at the Fall 2015 Speakers Forum on Tuesday, November 10, 2015. This semester’s topic, “Communicating Safety,” stems from local and national concerns for safety, and offered student speakers opportunities to share their views with respect to how communicative practices make and shape our sense of safety.

The first speaker of the night was D.J. Jeffries, a junior Communication Studies major from Memphis, TN. He feels that a fear of difference has led to a culture of fear which is used to influence and incite a general sense of danger in society. He asks us to consider whether what we are being encouraged to fear is driven by a genuine danger. He suggests that we should question what we are told to fear and to verify that so-called “threats” are real before we react.

The second speaker was Betty Tendera, a freshman Personnel Management major from Wooddale, IL. She acknowledges individual agency when witnessing unsafe events and critiques rules and regulations on college campuses as being responsible for victim blaming. She feels that more training is needed and adequate resources need to be allocated to make necessary improvements.

Lynneesya Wilson, a sophomore Psychology major from Nashville, TN, spoke third. She felt there were too many interactions between civilians and police that result in loss of life for both groups. She suggested that education and community forums between the groups and increasing the number of police officers who have received higher education may be solutions to increase safety for all.

The fourth speaker was Aarren Minneyfield, a sophomore Psychology major from Rockford, IL. He talked about three ways for us to live and learn without fear and danger. First, we should become more aware about safety issues. Second, campus should be made safer in general. Third, no dangerous behavior should be tolerated. Aarren reminds us that we are a Saluki family and we need to protect one another, using communication to become closer.

The final speaker, Tatyana Harris, is a sophomore Animal Science major from Chicago, IL. She informed us about a culture of academic fear that makes students of color feel intellectually unsafe. She argues the secondary effects of intellectual fear are academic struggles. For example, she explained that some students of color are stereotyped as not being smart and when working with some White students on group projects, the input of students of color is not valued. Some faculty also make comments that have been perceived to be racist. Tatyana advocates that everyone at SIU - students, faculty, and staff - receive awareness training. Additionally, she calls for the increased visibility of minority students in our campus community.

Samantha Fentress, a Communication Studies doctoral student, moderated the Speakers Forum. The event also included an open forum that allowed attendees to share feedback on the topics raised. The open forum was facilitated by Heather Abell, an instructor in the Communication Studies department and a graduate of the SIU School of Law.

Student speaker Tatyana Harris said about the event, “It was a little scary to go last. I felt pressure to do well because the event is important.”

Lynneesya Wilson also shared her experience as a speaker: “I found my experience from this year’s Speaker’s Forum to be very rewarding. I was not only able to prepare a formal statement expressing my ideas on safety issues shared on a platform to be heard by the community of this University, but I was also able to hear what my fellow peers thought in regards to safety issues. I truly enjoyed the experience.”
Speakers Forum Spring 2016: Democracy: People, Politics, and Power
By Trevor Thompson, Speak Easy Student Writer

Six undergraduate students took the stage to express their ideas on Democracy and how it is and is not playing a role in today’s society at the spring 2016 speakers forum. This event, which was held on Tuesday, April 26, 2016, was attended by more than 170 students, faculty, and members of the Carbondale community.

The spring 2016 Forum had speakers that ranged from first-year to senior students here at SIU. The topic for this semester, Democracy: People, Politics, and Power, is in consideration of this being an election year. This topic was chosen to challenge listeners to realize that it is more important than ever to decide what democracy looks like and how they would like to see it play a role in their lives.

The first speaker of the night was Bryce Pulley, a junior Philosophy major from Marion, IL. His focus was to call for a tight-knit community in our country, and not just a society to live in. He feels that the difference between the two ways to live arises from the way we solve our problems. He stated “the real beauty of the event (the forum) was that everyone who spoke, in light of the unfortunate events taking place on campus, had a chance to pitch in their ideas while everyone else was intent on listening… it was a perfect example of what ‘The Great Community’ would look like in practice.”

The second speaker of the night was Chris Cole, a first-year double major in Art and Photography from Kalamazoo, MI. He discussed how democracy is being debilitated by the polar ends of the presidential election. He feels that the two party system of our society is causing the polarization of American citizens. He discussed that another result of the two party system is one of violence between members of opposing parties. His proposed solution to his concern was to rid ourselves of the two party system. He stated, “We have to find a way to rid ourselves of the two party system so that all voices can be heard and democracy can flourish.”

Nneka Garner was the third speaker at the Speakers Forum. She is a senior majoring in Communication Disorders and Sciences from Gurnee, IL. Her speech discussed democracy in a way that challenged others to think about who it is actually for. Garner argued that democracy is influenced by the power of those who take part in it, not the marginalized. She discussed ways in which marginalized groups are oftentimes overlooked or not considered when laws or decisions are made. She eventually proposed the challenging question to forum attendees, “What incentive does Congress have to vote for marginalized people?”

Jaclyn Parks, a junior student majoring in Hospitality and Tourism from Orland Park, IL, was the fourth speaker of the night. Her speech shed light on the decrease of funding that Illinois Tourism is currently facing. She states that tourism budget cuts will affect the middle and southern parts of Illinois, due to the fact that Chicago is the primary tourist destination in Illinois. She argues that instead of decreasing funding, it should be increased because of the increase of visitors and spending that it would bring to Southern Illinois.

The fifth speaker of the night was Doris Wesley, a senior majoring in Communication Studies with a specialization in persuasive communication. She is from Nigeria. Doris’ speech called for us to correct the misperception of immigrants in the nation. She feels that many individuals fail to realize that immigrants add to the diversity and economy to our country by their cultures and businesses. She also argued that immigrants’ voices need to be heard equally in our democratic society: “It is absolutely required that we are listened to.” She concluded her speech with the convincing and thought provoking question, “Should our ‘democracy’ be used to elect someone who doesn’t believe in what America is built on?”

The last speaker of the night was Jordan Henderson. Henderson is a sophomore majoring in Business Management from Bowling Brook, IL. Henderson’s speech focused on the oppression that individuals of color face on our campus and in our country. He gave examples about how he and his friends and family are hindered by racism every day. He made the connection close to home for the audience when we described examples of racism happening on our very campus. He concluded his speech with a powerful message by stating, “I too am SIU, and my voice will be heard.”

After the six students finished sharing their ideas, an open forum was held. This open forum allowed for members of the audience to respond and voice their own opinions regarding the speakers ideas, or the idea of democracy. This open forum was facilitated by Lauran Schaefer, doctoral student in Communication Studies. A reception including refreshments followed in the lobby immediately after.

Bryce Pulley recounted the events of the evening by saying, “I’ve come to realize the impact communication at this level has in light of really making a difference. I just had the goal to get up there on stage and use a brilliant philosopher’s work to apply to contemporary democracy and especially current events on campus. The experience of getting up on stage and really connecting with that many people was a great feeling.”

Chris Cole also shared his experience with the event: “The speakers forum was nice because it gave me an opportunity to gain experience speaking in front of large crowds while also getting to share my opinion on the current political system. I especially enjoyed listening to other speakers; everyone did great!”
Saluki Debate: Second Best in the Country!

Southern Illinois University finished as the runner-up at this year’s National Championships of Debate. The NPDA (National Parliamentary Debate Association) national championship tournament, from March 19-21, was hosted at California State University, Long Beach.

Reaching the championship debate, SIU finished higher than universities such as Tulane, Rice, Berkeley, Texas Tech, Missouri, Oregon, Washington, and Loyola.

The SIU team of junior Arielle Stephenson and freshman Bobby Swetz were the talk of the tournament. They won debate after debate before finally getting bested in the championship debate against a team from William Jewell College. Stephenson and Swetz finished with an outstanding record of thirteen wins and two losses at the championship.

“Super proud!” said Dr. Todd Graham, the Director of Debate at SIU. “Arielle and Bobby exceeded all expectations we had for them at the beginning of the year. I told everyone this was a rebuilding year, since we lost our national champions from previous years to graduation, and Arielle and Bobby were so young. When they heard me telling people that, well, I think I made them mad.”

So, to prove Graham wrong, they redoubled their research and practice times. Then, after winning the Mile High tournament hosted at the University of Utah earlier this semester, Graham pivoted his approach. “That was when I knew we had something special. I had to stop telling people we were rebuilding. Bobby and Arielle turned everyone into believers. Simply outstanding!”

SIU continued its record streak of having a team compete in the “final-four” of a national championship for its 9th straight year. “I know Dr. Todd really wanted to continue our final-four streak,” said Swetz. “Myself personally, I wanted to continue the SIU streak of winning a championship for a fourth record-setting year.” No other team had won a title three consecutive years until the Salukis achieved that last season. “Arielle and I were one win away, so I guess we’ll just have to start a new streak next year,” said Swetz with a smile. 2016 makes the sixth time in nine years SIU has advanced into the championship debate, winning four of those years.

“Bobby and I have contrasting debating styles,” said Stephenson. “And we complement each other so well. In any given debate, the judge will appreciate at least one of our styles, which gives us a unique advantage over our opponents. Generally, debate judges really like at least one of our approaches.” As Graham (who has judged every presidential debate for CNN.com this cycle) puts it, “The closest analogy I can provide in styles of debate would be this. Bobby is idealistic. This is most similar to either Sanders or Trump in style of presentation, whereas Arielle pays more attention to detail, which compares stylistically to either Clinton or Cruz.”

There were 165 teams competing at the championship tournament, out of a total number of 794 teams that competed this year. “There are no divisions in debate,” said Graham. “So, as you can expect, there are excellent teams from smaller institutions as well as large. We lost to a better team today, and they deserved to win the national title.”

“We get a different topic, or resolution to debate, for each new debate round, with about 20 minutes to prepare once the topic is announced. So it’s tough, and the topics were quite diverse this year,” said Graham. “Bobby and Arielle had to debate either side of topics ranging from the Fair Labor Standards Act, to whether or not the United Kingdom should leave the European Union, to Glass-Steagall and Dodd-Frank laws, to veto powers of the United Nations Security Council, to whether or not we should increase our ice-breaking fleet, to admitting Puerto Rico as a 51st state, to providing the United States government access to backdoor encryption protocols for telecommunication companies.”

Stephenson is a community college transfer from El Camino College, and she is new to SIU this year, while Swetz is a freshman from Homewood.
Meet Our Amazing Alumni

Building a Magical Career

David Ranalli (B.S. 2011) is a renowned and captivating magician, speaker, and event MC. Using simple, everyday objects, Ranalli creates a full-scale show of wonder, along with audience participation, sarcastic humor and charm. Traveling across the U.S., he is called upon to create unforgettable experiences at exclusive corporate meetings, conferences, and at celebrity events. As a student, David was often invited to perform magic in his classes while performing locally. “During my time at SIU, I was working as hard as I could to become a full time professional magician,” he said. “I was doing gigs at night and on the weekends at the bars, vineyards, and at private parties.”

He has performed for a who’s who of Fortune 500 companies like JP Morgan Chase and Walgreen’s, as well as TV personalities, politicians, business leaders, and top athletes. “The time I spent at SIU being a student was also the training ground for my current business. I laid a foundation to take on some of the most prestigious clients in the country one could aim for, like Wells Fargo, Walgreen’s, and Marathon Petroleum,” he said. His talents have also been featured in Entrepreneur Magazine, and a TV commercial for MDwise Marketplace Healthcare, as well as profiled by media such as NBC, NPR, and PBS.

David is currently based in both Chicago and Indianapolis, and travels nationwide to create impact at events. He can be frequently seen headlining at the new Chicago Magic Lounge, helping to keep the rich tradition of “Chicago style magic” alive.

Asked for any advice he could give our current students he said, “I encourage every student to not only be involved in their studies and clubs, but to also find ways to apply the skills you learn to real situations, whatever their desired field may be.” His biggest hurdle? “The biggest hurdle to clear for people who are new to the work force (or starting a freelance business) is having the credibility and portfolio of work to prove you create results,” he said. “The only way to have that portfolio tomorrow, is to get the experience today. So get to work now, your future depends on it,” Rannali said.

He was recently featured in Entrepreneur Magazine, http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/273192.

South Bend Shop Hires Chicagoan for New Business

Sarah Gitersonke of Explore Media

Explore Media, a full-service, multi-award winning South Bend-based production company, has hired Chicagoan Sarah Gitersonke (B.S., 2005), as business development director.

She is responsible for developing new commercial and brand opportunities with Chicago agencies and global brands, and will serve the Midwest and both coasts from the Chicago location.

Explore Media specializes in health care, financial, brand retail, collegiate and anything involving comedy. During its dozen years in business, the company has amassed more than 50 Telly and Addy awards, including an Addy “Best in Show” for 2009 and 2012.

Gitersonke joins from a decade with Chicago’s AKA Media, producers and distributors of broadcast and social media campaigns. She started as an executive producer and then became director of business development, working on accounts including Snickers, Ace Hardware, Kraft Foods, Omron Healthcare and the Got Milk? campaign, among others.

Earlier she’d worked as print advertising sales executive and began her career at a Carbondale ad agency.

Said director Jeremy Pinckert, who founded the company in 2004, “We feel Sarah is the perfect fit with our goal of introducing the creativity and quality of our commercial production capabilities to the Chicago market. It was evident almost immediately we chose the right person.”

Last February, Explore Media’s staff moved into South Bend’s growing East Bank community of artists. Gitersonke may be reached at 312/536-0066.
Alumni Updates

Anthony Petruzzi (B.S. 1992) is a Financial Planner, a career begun in 1998 and continuing at present. During his time at SIU, he was a member of Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity and later served as Alpha Sigma Alumni President. He was a member of PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) as well as a member of AMA (American Marketing Association). He is currently a member of the SIU Alumni Association. From 1992-1998 he worked in corporate equipment sales, which provided him with the contacts and experiences to realize that a career in Financial Planning was the direction for him. Anthony’s degree in Speech Communication provided him with a background that has led him to engaging in a number of initiatives. In 1995, he founded NBF (Nothing But Fun) Productions for band promotion and fundraisers. He became a Franklin Covey award winning Certified Trainer. He founded Impact Training Group in 2005 for providing corporate training, traveling across the country providing training to groups from company employees to financial planners. In 2015, he authored and published a book, “Connecting with People: Life Lessons from a PEZ® Dispenser.” Like a PEZ dispenser, what you put into your relationships with others, affects what you get out. With this book, Anthony hopes to encourage improved interpersonal skills for enjoying better relationships in one’s life. He believes that in today’s hectic world of deadlines, information overload, multi-tasking and constant technology, we need to be reminded that it is important to let people know how much they are cared for. Anthony is available to speaking engagements; see connectingwithpeople.com for details.

Dr. Aubrey Huber (Ph.D. 2013), Director of Public Speaking at the University of South Florida, was selected by The National Student Employment Week committee as USF’s 2016 Supervisor of the Year. She was nominated by their graduate students for her commitment to quality student employment, commitment to teaching new student employees during an on-boarding process, commitment to the professional development of student employees, and dedication to helping student employees with their academic pursuits.

Sharon Bebout Carr (Ph.D. 1991). After working in higher education for over twenty years, she has decided to take her life in a different direction. She currently resides in Lesterville, MO, where she works as a writer and a performing artist. She has a new book of poetry available through Amazon.com (God Spelled Backwards: Rescues and Revelations).

Dogs have been our companions throughout time, but they have suffered much at our hands. This book of poetry is inspired by the rescue dogs that share our home. Part of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to help animal shelters and rescue organizations do the work of saving lives. I urge you to do your part. Become an animal advocate, donate your time and money, adopt or foster. Together, we can make a difference.

If you would like to be included in our Winter 2017 Alumni Issue (and you weren’t included in our Winter 2016 issue) please send your name, degree, graduation date, and a short narrative about what you are doing now to Denise McClearey, denisem@siu.edu. Please be sure to include a photo with your submission.
Faculty Updates

Nilanjan Bardhan continues to teach courses in intercultural communication and public relations, and serve as the director of the graduate program. In 2015, she was honored to receive the Outstanding Faculty Service to Campus award during the Asian American Heritage Month at SIUC. She recently became a board member of the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations (University of Alabama), and is working with Center colleagues to develop and conduct research on diversity and inclusion in the PR industry. She also published two book chapters in 2015—“Building bridges along the edges of culture” in Globalizing intercultural communication: A reader, and “Interculturality, cosmopolitanism, and the role of the imagination: A perspective for communicating as global citizens” (with M. Sobre-Denton) in Perspectives on interculturality.

Bryan Crow teaches classes in Interpersonal Communication; Interpersonal Conflict; Language, Culture & Communication; Gender, Sexuality & Communication; Introduction to Oral Communication; and graduate seminars in Family Communication and Conversation Analysis. In Spring 2016, he taught a University Honors course on Irish Culture & Communication, and he will be a faculty chaperone/driver on an SIU Forestry Department Study Abroad trip to Ireland in June 2016. He was recent Chair of the Language & Social Interaction Division of the Southern States Communication Association. He is cross-appointed in the Linguistics Department, where he has been advisor for several thesis projects. He continues to host Celtic Connections on WSIU Radio, which has been on the air for over 25 years. He is doing ongoing research toward a book on the classic MGM film director Clarence Brown.

Suzanne Daughton taught classes in rhetoric and compassionate communication again this year, and traveled to Arizona last November for continued training with the Center for Living Compassion. She enjoyed the chance to visit the Grand Canyon “on the way” between that training and presenting at the NCA conference in Las Vegas. In March, her dramatically-diminishing energy made it clear that she needed surgery to replace her two-year-old pacemaker/defibrillator with a different model. Surgery in early April went well and she is recovering, hopeful that this will allow her heart to improve its function.

Craig Engstrom joined the faculty in August 2015 and taught organizational communication, business communication, and social media during the year. He wrote a grant (still waiting for NSF decision), published a co-edited book, and presented research at the Qualitative Research in Management Conference. LinkedIn recruited him to beta test one of its products currently in the pilot stage, so he looks forward to being able to give his 2016–2017 students unique recruiting insights not yet available to the general public. Learn about his courses and participate in some of his ongoing projects via http://craigengstrom.ninja.

Craig Gingrich-Philbrook co-directed Ashley Beard’s Slant in the Kleinau Theatre. He has work forthcoming in a variety of anthologies and special issues related to autoethnographies of home, queer community, and posthumanist trends in performance studies. He continues to work with digital sound and is developing a new solo work on queer futurity, as well as a group performance, Stardust Chicken, for next year’s Kleinau season. He is happy to have been promoted this year to Full Professor.

Todd Graham was featured on national media with his analysis of the presidential Democratic and Republican primary debates, and Dr. Graham continued his role analyzing the debates for CNN.com. The debate team also had great success this year. SIU finished as the national runner-up, placing 2nd at the National Parliamentary Debate Association national championship.

Jonathan Gray continues to serve as the Minor Professor of Creative Communication as well as the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the department. He presented work at NCA and SSCA this past year. In the fall semester he directed and co-ordinated “The Matter in Hand” for the Kleinau Theater, portions of which were presented at the Petit Jean Performance Festival; at SSCA he was selected to present the Page to Stage session devoted entirely to the process of creating this production. He continues to conduct research and creative projects regarding the use of puppetry in environmental education and advocacy. Jonny’s marquee puppetry workshop facilitator for a third year, working with Carbondale community members to put on the “All Species Puppet Parade” on Earth Day. He also continues to co-host the weekly talk show, "Isn’t It Queer," on local community radio station WDBX. The show is also available as a podcast on iTunes and iHeartRadio.

Rachel Alicia Griffin recently published “Black Feminist Thought and Disney’s Paradoxical Representation of Black Girlhood in Doc McStuffins” in a collection titled Disney, Culture, and Curriculum, and “Black Feminist Reflections on Michelle Obama’s Tribute to Maya Angelou” in a collection titled Michelle Obama: First Lady, American Rhetor. Additionally, Rachel was awarded the 2015 Scholar-Activist Award by the Critical Cultural Studies Division and the 2015 Rex Crawley Outstanding Service Award by the African American Communication Division and Black Caucus via the National Communication Association. In 2015, she delivered 10 anti-sexual violence and Inclusive Excellence keynotes at conferences and on campuses in the United States and Canada. Quite grateful for her time spent at SIU, Rachel will depart this summer for the University of Utah’s Department of Communication.

Josh Houston is teaching in the areas of public relations and organizational communication. He is particularly interested in PR in sports and in helping his Interviewing students prepare for future employment and media interviews.

Denise McCleary continues to teach courses in the areas of public relations and organizational communication. She is currently finishing her fifth year as the Faculty Advisor for the Raymond D. Wiley Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). After a successful year with PRSSA, and its marquee events including the “Operation: Sgt. Santa,” and “The Adult Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Southern Illinois Purple Gala,” she is looking forward to great things to come in PRSSA. She also serves as the Editor and Faculty Advisor of the Speak Easy. She continues to share her SIU office with a startled tribe of sock monkeys, which seems to be expanding with each passing semester.

Sandy Pensonneau-Conway continues her work as the Introductory Course Director for CMST 101, and enjoys being able to interact so closely with our graduate teaching assistants. In the past year, she published a book chapter with PhD candidate Julie Cosenza (“Disability Subjectivity in Educational Contexts” in the edited book The Discourse of Disability in Communication Educa-

(Continued on page 13)
tion: Narrative-Based Research for Social Change), and will soon see the publication of a manuscript co-authored with PhD alum Dr. Molly Wiant Cummins (“Towards Epistolary Dialogue”) in the journal Critical Education. She presented papers, participated in panel discussions, and responded to work at the National Communication Association and Central States Communication Association annual conferences. She planned the 2015 NCA program for the Disability Issues Caucus, and the 2016 CSCA program for the Basic Course Interest Group. She also facilitated a workshop at the 5th Doing Autoethnography conference. She continues teaching courses in communication pedagogy within the department, and was fortunate to teach her first honors course, The Institution of School. She was honored last May with the department’s Outstanding Teacher Award.

Nathan Stucky, Professor and Department Chair. At the National Communication Association conference this year he presented “Pedagogical Oxygen: Breathing Performance” and “We Can If We Want To: Embracing Power, Professorship, and Power” (with co-author Suzanne Daughton). He gave a solo performance at the faculty performance evening in the Kleinau Theatre of selected scenes from Shakespeare’s The Tragedy of Macbeth. He published two articles: “Cap Pistols and Rubber Tomahawks: Learning the Ways of Cowboys and Indians,” in International Review of Qualitative Research 8.3, and “The Paradox of Santoro’s At the Mercy of Ruin,” in Text and Performance Quarterly 35.2-3. He was pleased to advise to completion Michael Selck (M.A.), Diana Woodhouse (Ph.D.), Nic Zaunbrecher (Ph.D) and Meggie Mapes (Ph.D). He taught the Introduction to Graduate Study course in the Fall Semester, and Performance History and Criticism in the Spring.

Satoshi Toyosaki has had recent work appear in Connexions: International Professional Communication Journal (co-authored with Yusaku Yajima) and Journal of Multicultural Discourses. Satoshi continues attending and presenting his scholarship at various conferences. He enjoys teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses in the areas of intercultural communication and communication pedagogy.

Rebecca Walker wrote, performed, and co-directed her one-person show, Peacocks and Porches, in the Marion Kleinau Theatre. Her recent publication “Speaking from the Sidelines: The Double-Voiced History of Sideshow” appeared in both Text and Performance Quarterly and Communication Currents, an online web magazine created by the National Communication Association to translate current communication scholarship from NCA journals for a broader audience. Rebecca served as Chair of the Performance Studies Division of the Southern States Communication Association, and shared her work on both the national and international level by attending both the NCA and WCA conference in 2015. She currently has one book chapter in press on culture jamming and flash mobs, and continues to work on research related to flash mobs, public memory, and digital archiving.
Communication Studies Department Recognizes Undergraduate Students at College of Liberal Arts Honors Day Awards Ceremony

Paul Hibbs Memorial Scholarship
Ariana Arnone
Erica Dimmig
Deborrius Jeffries

Lavina Micken Award for Excellence in Debate
Arielle Stephenson

Elizabeth L. Toth Public Relations Student Award
Kelly N. O’Neill

Excellence Recognized at Annual Department Awards Ceremony

On May 6, 2016, the department recognized the outstanding achievements of our graduate students, as well as faculty. This year’s winners are as follows:

The John T. Warren Award for Excellence in Research & Creative Activity
Gregory S. Hummel and Lindsay P. Greer

The Thomas J. Pace, Jr. Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching
Master’s: Simon Jean Joseph Gaston Rousset
Ph.D.: Allison D. Brenneise

The John T. Warren Memorial Scholarship
Yusaku Yajima

The Ronald J. Pelias Graduate Student Service Award
Gregory Sean Hummel

Outstanding Teacher Award
Rachel Griffin

L-R 1st Row: Yusaku Yajima, Rachel Griffin, Simon Jean Joseph Gaston Rousset
2nd Row: Lindsay P. Greer
3rd Row: Gregory S. Hummel, Shelly Rawlins (newly appointed Kaleidoscope Editor), Allison D. Brenneise
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