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## Annual Report, 2014-15

University of Mississippi. School of Journalism and New Media

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*University of Mississippi*

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## **MEEK SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND NEW MEDIA**

**Will Norton, Jr., Professor and Dean**

**2014-15**

### **Undergraduate Programs**

Despite decreases in journalism/communication enrollment at other universities, the number of students enrolling for a B.A.J. and B.S.I.M.C. in the Meek School continues to increase.

#### **Journalism**

The Journalism program remains strong, with summer orientation sessions including a slightly larger pool of journalism majors than in some recent years. We believe curriculum changes, new faculty hires, student awards and achievement have contributed to growth and stability within the B.A.J. program. In terms of concrete numbers, the journalism program began Fall 2014 with 444 majors and had 454 on graduation day 2015.

The program has been expanding and improving online instruction. In spring 2015, the largest single section online course at the university — JOUR 101 Introduction to Mass Communication — was taught online. This course is ideally suited for distance learning as it is scalable; 240 students enrolled for Spring and enrollment will increase to 300 in Fall. Two faculty members were honored for the quality of their online instruction this year — winning both the Paragon Award and an honorable mention in the

competition. Another faculty member is developing a hybrid course — JOUR 375 Photojournalism — to be taught online with monthly in-person meetings.

A team of students and faculty traveled to Ethiopia during Winter Intersession to produce a multimedia journalism project and a depth report; a team of magazine students flew to New York for the May Intersession. Students in JOUR 480 - Advanced TV Reporting continue to provide special event coverage for local stations such as WTVA in Tupelo. Students in JOUR 500 Journalism Innovation won a student innovation showcase with the content they provided weekly for HottyToddy.com, and students in advanced reporting sections produced a documentary on the casino industry, which has been broadcast on Mississippi and Tennessee PBS affiliates. Two faculty members partnered to take 10 students to Columbus, Mississippi, to produce a series of features for *The Commercial Dispatch*.

Thanks to the efforts of one faculty member, Ole Miss is now among 11 international institutions forming the Planet Forward University Consortium, which focuses on the use of multimedia and digital storytelling to educate and give voices to sustainability issues.

Two Meek students received Taylor Medals, and many others graduated with honors.

The focus on increasing the rigor of the journalism degree continues, and this year's graduates are evidence of that effort. (A more detailed list of student awards is included in the section on student media.)

The faculty focus on strong advising and teaching is reflected in freshmen retention in the Meek School, which continues to be among the best on campus. Scheduling advising sessions earlier in the semester and streamlining the freshmen counseling process are contributing factors. Nonetheless, minority student retention is not as high; thus, new initiatives will be implemented to improve that percentage.

Journalism faculty members have made some outstanding contributions in the area of research and creative activity, as well. This year, the school will see five or more books published — from a photo-driven book that explores the experience of church mothers in the Delta to an exploration of modern news media management; from the impact of bloggers in covering Hurricane Katrina to an exploration of journalism during the Confederacy and a fictional crime noir novel — all of these books are being generated by an engaged faculty.

In addition, faculty were published in a number of other high-profile venues — from a co-authored article in *Sociological Forum* that deals with TV news and race during Hurricane Katrina and a Journalism History article on the premier civil rights reporter for *The New York Times*, to a narrative piece in *Harper's* and an invited feature for PBS MediaShift.

In addition, faculty are expanding their skills in a way that supports their scholarship, creative activity and teaching. For example, one faculty member participated in an intensive workshop on iPhone photography; several others

have presented papers and participated on panels at top international and national journalism conferences during the last year.

Faculty regularly do service at the school, university, state level and beyond.

One faculty member was elected president of the Mississippi Associated Press Broadcasters and will serve on the governing board of the News Division for the Broadcast Education Association. Another faculty member serves as vice president of Criminal Justice Journalists and helps organize the annual Journalism Interactive Conference.

The Magazine Innovation Center hosted the fifth annual ACT Experience, which brought in dozens of high-profile media speakers who spoke to industry representatives and students.

One of the largest school-wide efforts involves the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association (MSPA). More than 1,000 students attend the fall and spring conventions at the Meek School.

Two Journalism faculty and the Dean made accreditation site-visit evaluations for the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. The Dean ended his term as chair of the Committee of the Council.

### **Integrated Marketing Communications**

In May 2014, there were 515 undergraduate students seeking a degree in Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). By May 2015, that number had

increased to 747 — a one-year increase of 45 percent. Soaring enrollment has been the story of the program since its inception in 2011. Only about six other colleges and universities in the United States offer an undergraduate degree in IMC and, while our goal has not been to be the largest, indications are that is now the case.

Despite the challenges of rapid growth, students indicate they are pleased with the program because they are learning and are finding jobs after graduation. Research each semester consistently demonstrates that nearly 90 percent of the IMC students are satisfied, would choose the same major again if they were to begin college again, and would recommend the degree to others. Additionally, in the most recent survey (May 2015), 96 percent report they understand IMC well, and 87 percent of all students indicate they grasp key concepts of the discipline (that figure increases to 97 percent for seniors).

Fifty-one students graduated in May 2015 — the largest class yet — and another 30 or so plan to graduate in August. These students are accepting jobs with a variety of organizations, including the Los Angeles office of worldwide communications agency FleishmanHillard; global company Relativity Media (also in Los Angeles); New Regional Planning (a real estate strategy and consulting firm based in Houston); agencies in St. Louis; tech companies in Dallas; a web design and digital company in Memphis, and other corporations, agencies and non-profit entities in Oxford and beyond.

Some also are pursuing graduate degrees at, among others, Northwestern University, New York University and the University of Virginia.

Two new faculty members were hired last year, and another starts in August. This will bring the number of full-time IMC faculty to seven. In any given semester, another six to eight adjunct instructors (executives from such companies as Baptist Memorial Health Care, Burson-Marsteller, BancorpSouth and others) teach in the program. Several faculty from the Journalism program also teach IMC courses.

Two new undergraduate electives were offered for the first time last year, Persuasion and Non-Profit IMC. These courses will be rotated into the schedule on a regular basis.

A big emphasis in IMC is writing. Two years ago, an advanced writing course (IMC 390) was added as a requirement. This class emphasizes working with local businesses to develop creative promotional copy (ads, social media, direct marketing pieces, press releases, etc.). Last year students wrote for Blue Delta Jeans, Buffalo Wild Wings, the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, Allen Samuels Chrysler, North Mississippi Outpatient Therapy and several other organizations.

In the capstone campaigns course (IMC 555), students spend an entire semester of hands-on experience working with a client. This includes market research, the development of campaign strategies and creative concepts and presenting a campaign to the organization. During the last year, students

worked with the Renasant Center for Ideas (Tupelo), Sweet Magnolia Ice Cream Company (Clarksdale); Bank of Commerce (Oxford); and the Mill at Plein Air (Taylor).

IMC faculty members were published in the *International Journal of Integrated Marketing Communication*, and reviewed articles for the Journals of *Media Psychology* and *Journalism and Mass Communications Quarterly*. One recently published a textbook on persuasion and led a series of workshops on journalism and persuasion for students, faculty and media practitioners in Sucre, Bolivia. Faculty also keep their skills current by consulting in the marketing communications profession. Their work last year included a research project for General Electric (via an agency in Atlanta), magazine editing and other endeavors.

Two IMC faculty members made visits to other universities as part of an accreditation team for the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC).

One member of the IMC faculty is pursuing her PhD.

Many alumni visit regularly to speak with classes and meet with IMC students. Among the visitors last year were Harold Burson, founder of the public relations firm Burson-Marsteller and one of the most influential PR figures of all time; and real estate developer Blake Tartt, president of New Regional Planning.



In April, the IMC and Journalism programs hosted the second annual new media conference. The focus was on innovation. Speakers included Lewis D'Vorkin, chief product officer at Forbes; Hank Price, president and general manager of WVTM television in Birmingham; and Fred Anklam, senior editor of *USA Today*.

Several student leaders from the Ole Miss chapter of the American Marketing Association traveled to New Orleans for an international student conference. It is the first time this two-year old student group has had a presence at this annual gathering.

### **Graduate Programs**

The Meek School Graduate Program is a three-track program: traditional academic, professional journalism and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC).

Thirty-five students are scheduled to continue in the Fall. These include five students in the traditional academic track, seven students in the professional master's track, and 23 in the IMC track.

One student in the academic track is expected to complete his thesis and graduate during the Summer 2015 semester.

Joining these students will be 33 new students accepted into the graduate program for the Fall semester. This includes one new student in the academic track, eight students in the professional master's track, and 25 students in the IMC track. Because of continued growth, the graduate program has instituted

a priority deadline of February 15, which is in line with peer programs. This will allow program directors to use a cohort model and schedule courses more efficiently.

Thus, the Meek School is expected to have six students in the academic track, 15 in the professional track and 48 in IMC during the 2015-16 academic year.

The first cohort of seven students for the new professional master's track began their studies in Fall 2014. These students now have completed their core courses and are beginning to work on their thesis projects.

The newly accepted students will begin with the first of their core courses—Journalism 578 Documentary and Journalism 590 Multimedia Storytelling<sup>1</sup>. Faculty realized in Fall 2014 that some incoming students need additional preparation in video. Thus, the Meek School is offering IMC 504/Creative Development and Direction as an elective for the Fall 2015 semester.

Professors Joe Atkins and Dr. Robert Magee have met with UM Graduate School leaders on several occasions during the summer to develop new brochures for the graduate tracks as well as an updated page on the Meek School website.

Six women and one man are enrolled in the professional master's track. Among these were an African-American, a Mexican-American, a Chinese, a South Korean and a Nigerian. Newly accepted journalism track students

include five men and four women: a Russian, a Chinese, an Indian, two African-Americans and four Caucasian-Americans.

Twelve students were awarded the M.A. degree in May 2015. One of these had completed the degree on the DeSoto campus. Three students left the program because of attractive job offers, two of them in the IMC field, the third for a coaching position.

During the Fall 2014 semester, five students were accepted to begin the program in Spring 2015, one is on the DeSoto campus. Offers of admission were made to 23 qualified students. Of these, 17 accepted the offer for the Fall 2015.

The IMC program's other immediate goal is to increase recruitment of qualified students. As noted above, the graduate program directors have been in consultation with the Graduate School to develop optimum methods to increase recruiting and enrollment.

### **Student Media Center**

The Student Media Center had a spectacular 2014-2015. Page views for theDMonline.com in 2014 totaled nearly two million. *The Daily Mississippian* and NewsWatch 99 provided more breaking news and in-depth content, with significant improvements in visual journalism and increases in social media efforts.

The SMC includes *The Daily Mississippian*, the only daily college newspaper in the state; NewsWatch Ch. 99, a daily, live, 30-minute TV

newscast; Rebel Radio WUMS 92.1, one of the few student-run commercially licensed FM radio stations in the nation; *The Ole Miss* annual; and several websites. The SMC is open to all students at the University of Mississippi. About 150 students are on the payroll each semester. The operation is a major recruiting tool for the university and the Meek School of Journalism and New Media.

A number of faculty played key roles in helping SMC students produce award-winning work, including Patricia Thompson, Nancy Dupont, Deb Wenger, Bill Rose, Darren Sanefski, Mikki Harris and Vanessa Gregory.

Several faculty, including SMC Director Patricia Thompson, led a Study Abroad international multimedia project in Ethiopia in January. Ten students were selected for the project. They spent Spring semester in a companion production course. The group will produce a depth report, photo book, and multimedia content.

Rebel Radio WUMS 92.1 was the focus of an IMC campaigns class in Fall 2014. The class, under the leadership of Chris Sparks, conducted research and designed marketing campaigns to improve the radio station and its brand.

Student Awards for the School of Journalism and New Media and Student Media Center:

- Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence: *The Daily Mississippian* was named national finalist in the category for large daily

newspapers, meaning it was ranked as one of the top three student newspapers in the nation.

- Hearst: Journalism Awards Program: Clancy Smith won fourth place for Personality/Profile Writing. She won \$1,000, with a matching \$1,000 award for the school. This is the highest showing ever for the school/department in the Hearst competition.
- Three other journalism majors placed in the Top 20 in Hearst competitions: Sudu Upadhyay for television features; Karson Brandenburg for enterprise reporting; and Thomas Graning for photojournalism news and features.
- Broadcast Education Association: NewsWatch 99 won honorable mention in the category for television newscast airing 4 or 5 days a week, for its newscast covering tornadoes in Tupelo and Louisville, Mississippi. Honorable mention is the equivalent of fourth place nationally. This is the first time Ole Miss students have placed in the BEA competition.
- American Society of Engineering Education Film Festival: A short video shot and edited by Sudu Upadhyay has been named a finalist. The video chronicles construction of a school in Togo, West Africa, by the Ole Miss Engineers Without Borders chapter. Winners will be announced later this summer.

- Southeast Journalism Conference, which includes more than 45 universities in seven states: University of Mississippi students won 26 awards, including the Grand Championship Team award. Four of the last five years UM has been named Grand Champion. SEJC includes more than 45 universities in seven southeastern states.
- SEJC sponsors two major competitions. In Best of the South, which covers student work from late 2013 through late 2014, Ole Miss students won 17 awards, including three first-place awards; two second-place awards and four third-place awards.
- In the on-site competition, in February at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Ole Miss students won nine awards, including five first-place awards; three second-place awards; one honorable mention; and the Grand Championship Team award.
- Two sophomores — Sudu Upadhyay and Cady Herring — each won two first-place SEJC awards.
- Society of Professional Journalists Region 12 Mark of Excellence, which includes universities in four states: UM students won 15 awards, including eight first-place awards and seven finalist awards.
- Public Relations Association of Mississippi: UM students, led by faculty member Robin Street, swept the competition, winning 14 awards. Journalism major Clancy Smith won the Student Best of Show Award, the top award for PR students in the state. Six students won Prism

awards—the top award in each category. Seven students were awarded Excellence awards, and one student won a merit award.

Meek School students were the only university students in the state to be honored. This is the most awards ever won by students from the school/department in the PRAM contest.

- Mississippi Associated Press Broadcasters Association, honoring the best in broadcast journalism in the state: UM students won 10 awards, including three for first place and seven awards of excellence.
- NewsWatch 99 was named Best College TV Newscast for the fourth year in a row. For the second year in a row, it took both first and second places in the newscast category. The winning newscasts showcased a preview of the Ole Miss/Alabama football game and tornado coverage in Mississippi.
- The documentary “Casinos in Mississippi: Worth the Gamble?” — produced in a course taught by Brad Schultz and Kathleen Wickham — placed first in Student TV Documentary.
- Rebel Radio won three awards, including a first-place and q scholarship for IMC major Ferderica Cobb for news reporting.
- Recent Meek School alumni took home top honors in the contests for professional work. In the large-market category for TV Documentary, alumnus Joe Doolittle took home a first place award. Margaret Ann Morgan and Gerard Manogin, both 2013 Meek school graduates, won

in three prestigious professional categories: Morgan for Best Public Affairs Reporting and Best TV Reporter in a small to medium market, and Manogin for Best TV Newscast in a large market. Ryan Moore, a 2009 journalism graduate, won first place for TV News Videographer.

- Mississippi Press Association Advertising Awards, in competition against professional newspapers in the state: *The Daily Mississippian* won third-place.

School of Journalism and New Media students landed outstanding media jobs and internships in 2014-2015. Employers include: *Harper's Bazaar*, New York; Bloomsbury USA, New York; Hearst, New York; WTVA-TV, Tupelo; BCBG MAXAZRIA fashion house, Los Angeles; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; *Vicksburg Post*; AL.com; ABC-24 Memphis; Riot Games, Los Angeles; ESPN; and National Press Foundation, Washington, D.C.