Experiencing Los Angeles

Six students arrive with quickened heartbeats and dreams of careers in this sun-splashed capital of creativity. What happens next may change their lives.
It has been a wonderful first year at Marquette, and I am grateful that I have the opportunity to work at such an incredible university. My travels this year have taken me to Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., New York and Minneapolis to visit alumni, hear what they are doing and get feedback on how to make the J. William and Mary Diederich College of Communication even better. As I continue to make my way around the country during the upcoming year, I look forward to having the opportunity to engage with even more alumni.

For more than a century, this college has provided students with a well-rounded liberal arts background that reinforces valuable skills in writing, public speaking and critical thinking. With special emphasis on the ethical and moral questions facing communication professionals, students receive the foundation they need to become successful, ethically minded leaders in their workplaces and communities.

As you read through this magazine, you will discover some of the interesting things we are doing in the college. You will see that we have dedicated and talented faculty who are committed to bringing their research and creative activities to fruition. For example, the work of Dr. Karen Slattery on Milwaukee's Bronzeville, capturing oral histories and analyzing news coverage, helps tell the rich history of Milwaukee's first African-American neighborhood. Slattery's work is fascinating and provides insight into a community that played an important role in Milwaukee as we know it today.

While this issue’s cover story focuses on our students who experienced Los Angeles for the first time, the real heroes of this story are our alumni. Like Joel Andryc, Sp ‘79, who recommended that the college find a way to better connect with alumni in the LA basin, and Jenna Santoianelli, Comm ’06, who provided great advice to our students before, during and after the trip. Our alumni are special, and the willingness of the Los Angeles group to mentor our students is greatly appreciated.

Finally, the highlight of our college is our students. Whether they are performing in our theatre, working for student media, starting a magazine for Milwaukee teens or creating documentaries, they have received national attention for their work. In the many things they do during their time at Marquette, they provide us with constant proof that we are doing things right.

I am proud to work for a college that includes incredible cadres of students, faculty and staff. The content you find in the following pages, while only a small snapshot of what we do, is compelling, and I hope you enjoy the reading. I encourage you to visit the college should you find yourself in Milwaukee.

Dr. Kimo Ah Yun
Dean
J. William and Mary Diederich
College of Communication
Marquette University

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Comm is published for alumni, colleagues and friends of the college. We’d love to hear your feedback and story ideas for future issues. Email stephen.filmanowicz@marquette.edu.

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Razed but remembered

Born of segregation, demolished by bulldozers, Milwaukee’s Bronzeville speaks through professor Karen Slattery’s documentary.

Residents and their memories were all that survived the bulldozers that destroyed Bronzeville, Milwaukee’s first African-American neighborhood, to make way for public housing, urban renewal and Interstate 43. Now, a half-century later, a Marquette University journalism professor is co-leading the creation of a documentary that will capture those memories before they’re lost to time.

“The people who grew up in postwar Bronzeville can speak to a time in which black families were segregated into an old, crowded neighborhood, with Walnut Street at its heart,” says Dr. Karen Slattery, professor of journalism and media studies. “Their stories need to be recorded while they can still be told.”

Slattery and her filmmaker husband, Mark Doremus, began work on the documentary about two years ago, with support from a 2016 grant from Marquette’s Strategic Innovation Fund. They have conducted hourslong video interviews with 16 former residents. Slattery is also producing academic research papers drawing on these oral histories and analysis of news coverage of the neighborhood’s demolition in examining social values and practices in Bronzeville and greater Milwaukee.

The neighborhood emerged in the early 1940s as African Americans relocated from the South to Milwaukee for jobs. Pervasive racial segregation confined the new residents into a community that blossomed into a vibrant center of nightlife, culture and commerce.

Before the bulldozers moved in: Despite its roots in segregation and struggles with poor housing conditions, Bronzeville became a vibrant center of nightlife, culture and commerce.

Bronzeville, roughly defined by West North Avenue and North Third, West State and North 12th streets.

In an interview for the documentary, former resident LeHavre Buck recalls the neighborhood’s demolition. “They wiped out every business from Eighth Street to 12th Street, every business both sides of the street,” Buck says. “You didn’t have nowhere to go. ... People who lived in those houses just disappeared. We never saw them anymore.”

Slattery says people who grew up in Bronzeville remembered poverty and segregation but also a close-knit neighborhood with professionals, shops and people who watched out for each other. “They wanted us to know that despite segregation and poor housing stock in some areas, there was a strong sense of community that made them feel like they had good childhoods,” she says.

Slattery expects the hourlong documentary to be completed within the next year. — Jeff Bentoff

“People who lived in those houses just disappeared. We never saw them anymore.” — LeHavre Buck
**Smarter faster**

*Accelerated degree options help students go further in a compressed amount of time.*

After trying on a couple of different communication majors in the Diederich College early in her college career, Tyler Vicknair tapped the breaks and surveyed her options. That kind of delay in settling on a focus can leave a student struggling to earn a degree without an added year, but Vicknair avoided that scenario — and then some.

Pursuing a new passion for corporate communication, she became one of the first students to take advantage of an accelerated degree program in that field launched last fall as a partnership between the Diederich College of Communication and the College of Business Administration.

The program helped Vicknair, Comm '16, hit the accelerator and effectively jump ahead of her peers as they prepared to hit the workforce. She began taking graduate-level classes during her final year as an undergraduate, often alongside MBA students in the Graduate School of Management. After several heavy-load semesters, Vicknair earned her bachelor’s degree midway through her senior year and became a graduate student. After squeezing in another course this summer, she’s on track to earn her master’s degree in corporate communication in December — a semester earlier than the abbreviated five years projected for participants in her program.

In addition to her own hard work and ample talent, Vicknair is benefiting from a conscious effort in the Diederich College to make valuable graduate-level study more accessible. Students in the college now can pair any of the eight undergraduate degrees with a master’s in communication, earning both in five years. In the pipeline as well is a partnership to offer communication students at nearby feeder colleges the opportunity to simultaneously enroll in Marquette and earn a graduate degree at an accelerated pace. And in another innovation, an all-online corporate communication master’s program is scheduled to launch this fall.

“Compared to their peers with bachelor’s degrees, graduates of these accelerated degree programs gain a deeper understanding of communication concepts, along with valuable skills in research and analysis,” says Dr. Sarah Feldner, associate dean of graduate studies and research. Vicknair and her peers in corporate communication also build knowledge of finance, accounting and other business fields, in which they’ll engage more thoroughly as they rise the corporate ranks.

“Communication as a field is multifaceted. As students gain breadth in experience, they become more versatile and better at working in diverse teams representing many specializations,” says Feldner. “The better they are at communicating across these specializations, the more opportunities they will have.” Vicknair can hardly wait for those opportunities. “I want to move up faster in my future organization,” she says. And thanks to her grounding in business and communication, she feels absolutely ready for that challenge. — Brian Boyle

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**Lose yourself**

*Students experiment with immersive video using the Wakerly Lab’s VR camera.*

A camera the size of a tennis ball in the Wakerly Media Laboratory for Innovation and Creativity could be the future of multimedia. The Samsung Gear 360 — a virtual reality camera — gives students a window into what video could look like in the coming years. “This is dipping the toe into that form of production,” says James Brust, Wakerly Lab director.

The VR camera takes video images in 360 degrees, which allows viewers of the video to scroll around in all directions, or view it with a virtual reality headset to feel immersed in the scene.

The Wakerly Lab provides virtual reality tools — including a headset — to allow students to experiment with the next generation of video production. The VR camera has been tried out in a journalism classroom and used by broadcast students to film a basketball game.

Beyond the visual impressiveness of virtual reality, the feeling of watching immersive video and sharing deeply in another’s perspective has been shown to create feelings of empathy with the subjects. “This can build bridges,” Brust says, “during a time when we’re very divided.” — Tim Cigelske, Comm ’04
Recorded berth

A student film documents the unlikely rise of Marquette lacrosse and achieves viral success.

For most students, class projects are the criminally underseen passion works toiled upon for hours only to be viewed inevitably by an exclusive audience consisting of a single professor and, at most, one or two TAs.

Not so for the foursome of student filmmakers — then-juniors Matt Unger and Patrick Thomas, and Grant Becker and Brian Georgeson, both Comm ’17 — who devoted an independent study last fall to producing Lucky to Win a Game, a 20-minute documentary in the narrative-driven style of ESPN’s “30 for 30” series, tracing the rapid ascension of Marquette’s nascent lacrosse program over three seasons to the top of the Big East Conference in 2016 and consecutive NCAA playoff appearances.

Since its debut online on Jan. 29, 2017, the film has picked up more than 85,000 views on YouTube. And the story it captures of a no-name team triumping through extreme dedication and an unusually strong team-first ethos has made waves across not only the Marquette campus, but the larger world of NCAA lacrosse as well.

“The week that it was out, honestly, probably more than any win or any moment in our program’s history, I got just an enormous response. … People contacted me saying what a great, great piece it was,” Marquette Men’s Lacrosse Head Coach Joe Amplo says. “(The documentary) will have a drastic impact on who we are. Social media is such a big platform now, and I think these young (prospective recruits) utilize that to help make a lot of their decisions. … We’ve heard some kids saying they’ve seen the film, and that is the sole reason they are interested in Marquette.”

Amplo attributes the success of the film directly to the filmmakers who crafted it. Their clear passion toward the project was greeted with candid and open interviews from both the head coach and players past and present. “For some interviews, (getting comfortable) took a few minutes, but by the end of it, pretty much everyone was willing to talk about anything that came up in the conversation,” Unger says. Then, hours spent reshaping the content in the basement editing room of Johnston Hall, often until well-past midnight, brought a quickening pulse to the narrative of a team of college-level castoffs that snowballed into a powerhouse Big East program.

The result has been a win-win on both sides of the camera, with the team’s renown rising with every YouTube view. “At the end of the premiere, the whole team was in attendance, and they walked down one by one to shake our hands and thank us for telling their story,” Unger says. “We were just trying to tell their fairy tale the best we could.” — Brian Boyle
Well-placed advisers

How students benefit from Marquette’s close relationship with corporate communication leaders.

With a membership consisting largely of chief communication officers of Fortune 500 corporations and CEOs of the world’s top public relations agencies, the Arthur W. Page Society is the ultimate heavyweight organization. And thanks to alumni such as Nicholas Ashooh, Jour ’76, senior director of corporate and executive communication at APCO Worldwide (and former senior communication officer at five Fortune 500 companies), and John Bernaden, Jour ’78, former director of corporate affairs at Rockwell Automation, the Diederich College has close ties with the organization.

“At Marquette we have a history of educating students in communication,” says Dr. Sarah Feldner, associate dean for graduate studies and research. “Both Nick and John were journalism students who perfected their craft at a time when corporate communication roles did not exist. The relationship has grown over time. They are trusted advisers — we share with them our growing curriculum, and they welcome us into their network.”

Marquette benefits in numerous ways from its relationship with the society, named to honor corporate communication pioneer Arthur W. Page. “It allows our faculty to engage directly with highly respected thought-leaders, and it’s an invaluable source of guest speakers and advisers for our students,” says Feldner, an associate professor of communication studies and strategic communication. “Several Page members have spoken at our Corporate Communication Summit, and they’re very open to developing young talent. This gives students a chance to apply what they’re learning and gain a broader understanding of all the directions that a career may take them.”

Even with Bernaden’s recent retirement from Rockwell, Feldner is confident this connection will continue to flourish, in part through Page Up, the society’s organization for emerging leaders. “There are several Page Up members who are also alums, like Mick Trevey (Comm ’03, Grad ’12) at Northwestern Mutual,” she says. “And as a member myself, I am committed to continue building and maintaining these relationships.” — Guy Fiorita

Reel experience

Partnership gets students’ long-form reporting on local airwaves.

Students in the broadcast media course taught by Julie Rosene, adjunct lecturer of journalism and digital media, are fortifying their “demo reels” with real-world experience — and real airtime. Through a partnership with Milwaukee’s WDJT-TV, students have produced more than a dozen long-form segments for the station’s CBS 58 Sunday Morning newscast.

Working in teams of digital media majors and journalism majors, students handle the researching, writing, shooting and editing of stories on topics such as the improv group ComedySportz or two close sisters who battle each other on opposing roller derby teams. Andrew Levinson, the station’s executive producer, and Rosene work together to critique the students’ work and ensure that it meets the station’s broadcast standards.

“Julie constructed the course not as a class in school but rather as her own little newsroom in the real world. We had story meetings where we could pitch our ideas for approval,” says Lisa Roman, Comm ’17. “It’s one thing to show your broadcast package to a professor and hope for an A. It’s another to pitch to an executive producer hoping he’ll pick it up for broadcast television.” — Clare Peterson, Comm ’10
Journalist for change

A student earns a prestigious honor for a harrowing report, while helping Milwaukee teens find their journalistic voices.

It was in extending her junior-year internship at Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service — the Johnston Hall-based community journalism partnership that reports untold stories from overlooked Milwaukee neighborhoods — that Allison Dikanovic, Arts ’17, plunged into telling the story of human trafficking in Milwaukee. Her haunting series “A Crime Hidden in Plain Sight” explored the issue through the eyes of two advocates who’d escaped sex trafficking. This spring, it was honored with a regional Edward R. Murrow Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association, a prestigious distinction that typically goes to accomplished professional journalists.

Less heralded has been Dikanovic’s difference-making work helping city teens become published journalists through Youth Rise Magazine, a project she initiated, putting an original spin on the NNS mission to “put storytelling in the hands of the community.”

Dikanovic’s partner in Youth Rise is Urban Underground, a Milwaukee organization focused on building “inclusive and courageous leadership” in youths ages 14 to 18, where she began volunteering as a freshman. Drawn to Marquette by the Burke Scholars Program — which awards full tuition to students who show a passion for social justice and a mission to serve — the Racine, Wis., native put those qualities to work immediately in weekly tutoring visits with teens at Urban Underground. That was just a first step, however. “I was embedding myself further and further,” she says in true reporter fashion. “They couldn’t shake me.”

The summer before Dikanovic’s senior year was pivotal. By then double majoring in both journalism and international affairs, she abandoned the idea of a traditional media internship to take on a weightier challenge that embodied the Burke leadership vision. Securing a $3,500 grant from Marquette’s startup-friendly Dorm Fund, she collaborated with Urban Underground to create the student-led publication, reaching out to her network to help make it all happen. NNS reporters held workshops on reporting and writing, the computer lab at Johnston Hall served as the newsroom, and 18 students from Urban Underground worked together as a team to produce profiles of unconventional teen leaders — a spoken-word poet and activist; a young woman who became a SafeZones ambassador after experiencing the shooting death of a friend — as part of an issue that truly reflected their experiences.

Dikanovic’s biggest challenge — “the whole process of creating what doesn’t exist, one of those crazy ideas that doesn’t have to stay an idea” — was also her biggest reward.

As she heads off to Oakland, Calif., for postgraduation service with leadership-fostering and considers where journalism may take her, Dikanovic settles on a lesson from her diverse Marquette experiences. “It’s incredibly important who is telling the story and how it’s perceived,” she says. “So often the people affected have the least say on how their stories are handled.” — Ann Christenson, CJPA ’90
Marquette’s pioneering public service journalism fellowship leads again with an award launched in partnership with America’s news editors.

As then-director of Marquette’s O’Brien Fellowship in Public Service Journalism, Herbert Lowe had an idea soon after the Online News Association’s 2014 annual awards banquet in Chicago. After the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel won the inaugural University of Florida Award in Investigative Data Journalism for its series “Deadly Delays,” an investigation exposing flaws in the nation’s newborn screening program, he learned that the winners would receive both a monetary prize — and an invitation to the UF campus to share their experience with students and faculty.

“Why not here?” Lowe, also the Diederich College’s journalism professional-in-residence at that time, thought before reaching out to the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) with a plan for a twist on the Florida example — recognizing top public service journalism distinguished for its impact as well as its quality. “It made sense because the O’Brien Fellowship was established to support journalism that changes communities and lives,” says Mizell Stewart, president of ASNE. Lowe also knew the award would boost the O’Brien program’s prominence in the minds of news editors who could encourage their best and brightest to serve as fellows.

Less than three years later the O’Brien Fellowship Award for Impact in Public Service Journalism is a reality. Its inaugural winner, the Pulitzer Prize-winning team behind the “Panama Papers,” a collaborative investigation by the Miami Herald and International Consortium of Investigative Journalists that exposed the use of international shell companies to commit crimes and evade sanctions. “The first winner of the O’Brien award is an outstanding example of journalism with global scope and impact,” says Stewart. And one of those winners, Marina Walker Guevara of ICIJ, is to visit campus in September to share her team’s story.

The award is one of the lasting impacts left by Lowe, who this summer became director of the Summer Media Institute and a lecturer in journalism at the University of Florida’s College of Journalism and Communications. He joins his wife, CNN veteran Mira Lowe, who recently became director of the school’s Innovation News Center. Diederich College Dean Kimo Ah Yun praises Lowe for building the O’Brien program’s structure, “setting values and principles it will continue to promote … and, most importantly, creating a great system for students to gain experience as interns.”

Working on high-impact journalism projects alongside fellows has brought Marquette students to locales such as Brazil, South Florida and Flint, Michigan. “They learn from our fellows what it’s like to be tenacious, caring, flexible and to think broadly about public service,” reflects Lowe.

In another sign of the program’s maturity, Pulitzer Prize-winner and former fellow Dave Umhoefer of the Journal Sentinel is serving as interim director of the O’Brien program. “The fellowship provides students with an experience they can only get at Marquette,” Ah Yun says. “We are fortunate to find a person such as Dave to work with and mentor them as he also guides the program during the coming year.” — Edgar Mendez, Grad ’14
An inspired collaboration honors St. Joan of Arc through dance, costume, poetry, music and more.

By Laura White

Long before its premiere in April, *Hearken to My Voice: Iron. Fire. Breath.*, an original interdisciplinary play honoring St. Joan of Arc, began with the artistic vision of Catey Ott Thompson, adjunct dance instructor in the Diederich College. As a dancer and choreographer, who typically expresses herself through movement, Ott Thompson struggled originally with the challenge of “putting into words what I do.” But inspired by the saint’s intrepid spirit, Ott Thompson persisted and found the words needed to gather support from faculty colleagues specializing in costume design, music, visual art and English. With support in hand from a Marquette Way Klingler Teaching Enhancement Grant and inspiration supplied by numerous St. Joan of Arc pieces in the Haggerty Museum of Art’s collection (as coordinated by curator Lynne Shumow), this core team not only helped realize Ott Thompson’s vision but also created a high-impact learning opportunity for students in senior capstone courses.
The performance’s six, 12-minute acts were staged at stations outside St. Joan of Arc Chapel (or inside the Helfaer Theatre during inclement weather) and commenced with an original carillon composition by Dr. Mark Konewko, Marquette’s carillonneur and director of university chorus. During brief interludes between acts, ushers burned incense and led audience members to the next station.

Students from the advanced costume technology course taught by Connie Petersen, artistic assistant professor of digital media and performing arts, designed and created costumes reflecting St. Joan’s French Renaissance milieu while meeting the production’s dance and theatrical needs.

Songs from the Marquette Chamber Choir led off the six acts, followed by a performance of a medieval court dance choreographed by Ott Thompson, spoken-word performances by Dr. Sarah Wadsworth’s English students, a monologue from theatre student Anna Otto, Comm ’17, as St. Joan of Arc, and contemporary dances choreographed and performed by students.

A concluding bonfire gave performers and audience members a moment to honor St. Joan of Arc’s martyrdom and reflect on her example. Audience members reported being left with a view of St. Joan as three-dimensional, inspiring and still relevant today, says Ott Thompson, who agrees with them thoroughly. “I am now profoundly aware of her saintly courage, strength, uniqueness, independence and loyalty. She inspires me daily.”

See the creation of *Hearken to My Voice* chronicled, week by week, in the project’s blog — mujoa.com.
Through a new Diederich program, six students arrived with anxious hearts and dreams of careers in this sun-splashed capital of creativity. Can four days with alumni help them see their path forward?
Experiencing Los Angeles

By Martina Ibañez-Baldor, Comm ‘15
It’s an unusually chilly January morning, by Los Angeles standards. The few people crossing Loyola Marymount University’s campus green this early on a Sunday are bundled up in jackets and winter hats. Yet on one edge of the green, a black SUV parks and six students and a professor walk out, most of them wearing short sleeves and sun dresses. They’re not from around here.

The students are upperclassmen studying digital media and broadcast journalism in the Diederich College of Communication. Selected based on essays they’ve written and other application materials to take part in the college’s first “LA Experience,” they’ll spend four days and evenings meeting Marquette alumni from film and television in the settings where they work and network. With their hopes set on working in LA postgraduation, the sextet is eager to learn from insiders in the field before making the cross-country move.

Dr. Kimo Ah Yun, dean of the Diederich College, was inspired to commission the trip after meeting Joel Andryc, Sp’79, managing director of Saban Capital Group, an investor in entertainment ventures ranging from Univision to the Power Rangers franchise. That was in May 2016, in one of a series of meetings Ah Yun took before formally starting as dean a month later. Ah Yun was impressed by the vision, drive and generosity Andryc had shown in founding Marquette Entertainment and Communication Alumni, a 3-year-old group that helps alumni in those industries serve as mentors to recent Marquette graduates pursuing careers in Los Angeles.

Suddenly at their meeting, Andryc and Ah Yun were discussing what it would take to involve current students in a compressed form of this LA networking and mentoring. “My visit revealed that the LA basin has exceptionally gifted, successful and giving Marquette alums,” recalls Ah Yun. “How could we fail if we invited some of our best students to meet with some of our best alums?”

Launching the LA Experience—or at least beginning to plan it—became one of Ah Yun’s first actions as dean. And as the fall temperatures dropped in Milwaukee, and Andryc filled up the experience’s planned itinerary with opportunities such as dinner meetings with accomplished producers and agents, and guided tours of television sets, Ah Yun came to view it as a pilot for something bigger. He started working on how to launch similar Diederich Experiences in other cities, each connecting motivated students with alumni in a field such as advertising, corporate communication, journalism or theatre.

As the LA-bound students huddled around a conference table in his office for final instructions just before winter break, the dean didn’t hide his high expectations. “If you return from this trip with fewer than 12 alumni contacts — people you can pick up the phone and call about a job opportunity,” he told them, hitting them with both a serious gaze and encouraging smile, “I’m going to be disappointed.”
Hannah Kirby’s eyes light up the second she walks into the *E! News* studio in Universal City, Hollywood. It’s midafternoon on Monday, the students’ second day of scheduled encounters around LA, escorted every step of the way by Dr. Amanda Keeler, assistant professor of digital media and performing arts. The students follow Rebekah Ingraham, Comm ’03, a senior line producer, into the control room where she’s directing the taping of a segment for a show that will air the next day.

Ingraham speaks into a mic to host Jason Kennedy. “I’m afraid the copy for this one might be light compared to the first one, so if you want to take your time,” she says. With her fellow students and Keeler fanned out behind her, Kirby sits next to Ingraham at the controls, watching eagerly, asking questions whenever there’s an opportunity. This is her dream job, except she wants to be on the other side, in front of the camera.

Kirby, Comm ’17, spent her senior year as general manager of Marquette University Television (MUTV). A journalism major, Kirby forged through the program’s hard-news curriculum, but found her passion in entertainment news after interning for the upbeat *Morning Blend* on Milwaukee’s WTMJ-TV during her sophomore year. “It seemed like a much better fit. The content aligned more with my interests,” she recalls.

After the taping, a tour of the set and of the *E! News* offices, Ingraham shares her journey from Marquette student to *E! News* producer. “My dream was to work at *E! News* and when I saw that the (LA-based TV Academy) internship program was going to allow me to work here, I did whatever it took, and by some miracle, I was selected,” she tells the students. “A position at E! happened to open up one week after graduation. So, I packed up, came out and I’ve been here ever since.”

Kirby is inspired. “(I learned) realizing your dreams is possible, even if you have to start out as a receptionist or production assistant or someone’s assistant,” she says. “If you’re willing to do the work and work hard, you will succeed.”

During a visit to the *E! News* studio in Universal City led by alumna Rebekah Ingraham, students get a front-row seat as producers create transitions for an upcoming entertainment news broadcast.
Connor Cacciottolo, Comm ’17, is the type of person who can quickly befriend anyone he meets. On day one, Sunday — which started with Mass at LMU and left time for exploring tourist spots before dinner downtown with six alumni — the senior digital media major hit it off right away with Dr. Bryant Keith Alexander, dean of LMU’s College of Communication and Fine Arts. “I made some joke to him, and he turned around, put me in a friendly choke hold and gave me a noogie,” Cacciottolo says laughing.

Cacciottolo breaks out in mini improv scenes throughout the trip. At one stop, he practices his character in case he is selected as a participant on The Price is Right (no one makes it on, unfortunately). It’s not surprising coming from Cacciottolo who’s done improv comedy for more than seven years, and this year started doing stand-up comedy. “My dream job would be to host a late-night talk show similar to (David) Letterman,” he says.

But first, on Sunday evening, the students have that dinner downtown with alumni such as Jenna Santoianii, Comm ’06, senior vice president at Sonar Entertainment where she’s overseen development of series such as Taboo on FX. Others include Sam Bringardner, Comm ’11, a talent agent at Creative Artists Agency, and Alex Gelhar, Comm ’10, a head writer at NFL.com.

Unexpectedly, Rondell Sheridan, Sp ’80, most famous for playing Mr. Baxter on the Disney show That’s So Raven and a veteran stand-up himself, shows up before dinner is served. Sheridan’s advice — “Do not get comfortable; once you get comfortable, you get lazy” — stays with the aspiring comedian, as does the Hollywood veteran’s accessibility. “He was so personable,” Cacciottolo says. “If we didn’t say we had to leave he would have talked for hours.”

Amid several close runners-up, Cacciottolo’s highlight comes on the last day of the trip during a backstage tour of Sony Studios, where the students were able to walk onto a replica set of the show Seinfeld. “That was unbelievable,” says Cacciottolo, a huge fan of the show who has written a Seinfeld spec script. “I got to do a couple clips of me walking (into the apartment) like Kramer. It was a dream come true.”
Alessandria Rhines, Comm ’17, recalls that she was in class a few weeks before Thanksgiving when she found out she had been accepted for a spot in the LA Experience. “… literally my hands were shaking — with excitement in my seat,” she wrote in a Medium post.

After throwing herself into a variety of creative pursuits at Marquette over three and a half years — performing spoken-word poetry, acting in Uprooted Theatre’s production of In the Red and Brown Water, and performing and serving as co-president of Marquette’s only improv troupe — she needed to think about channeling these interests into a career path. In LA, she’ll feel really fortunate to find an alumnus or alumna who’s survived a similar predicament.

Fast forward through two months of anticipation and nearly four whirlwind days and Rhines gets her wish. At a MECA alumni mixer at the Palomino Restaurant in Westwood, Rhines is able to strengthen an existing connection she had been trying to nurture across a 2,000-mile separation. Through another Diederich College resource, the Communication Mentoring Program, Rhines had been paired months earlier with an LA-based mentor, Lauren Bradley, Comm ’12, a script coordinator at DreamWorks Animation. Meeting face-to-face in November at Marquette, Rhines had made a good impression. “She immediately jumped out as just super intelligent and driven,” says Bradley.

Now meeting up again at the mixer alongside an impressive mix of recent and more established alumni, the two seem like old friends. “We were able to talk to each other on a more personal basis. Now it feels like a friendship and a mentorship,” Rhines says.

After the mixer Rhines joins Bradley and a couple other alumni for late-night pancakes at an old-school Hollywood diner. Bradley recalls her move to LA, how her mother had cried after getting her settled and how she shared a single fork for months with her fiancé, Chris Visser, Comm ’12.

Despite that challenging start and a demanding day job, Bradley isn’t slowing down in her creative life. She recently added voice lessons to tap-dancing and acting classes. She’s also brushing up some rusty piano playing skills and doing improv shows at the Groundlings, LA’s answer to Second City.

In keeping her passions and hobbies alive postgraduation, her mentor is clearly speaking Rhines’ language. “Hearing Lauren speak about how she basically needs improv in her life to keep herself balanced, that gave me confidence in my other hobbies,” Rhines relates. “That’s how I feel about poetry.”

“There’s no doubt in my mind that I will always remember the LA Experience. This was a once-in-a-lifetime sort of thing.”

Connor Cacciottolo, Comm ’17

“I feel really lucky to have had that experience. I feel a lot more motivated to get things done, just to get going.”

Alessandria Rhines, Comm ’17
“I had no idea there were so many (Marquette alumni) working out in Los Angeles in the entertainment industry—all these different jobs, all these different levels of experiences.”

Isaac Vineburg, Comm ’17

“It was an amazing learning experience for the students. Most importantly, it connected them with our alums in California, all of whom provided the students with great advice about working in the entertainment industry.”

Dr. Amanda Keeler

“Why am I so scared to move to LA?” Isaac Vineburg, Comm ’17, asks the group during the young alumni breakfast on the second-to-last day of the trip. After backstage studio tours and a meeting with well-established alumni in the industry, the students have spent the last hour-and-a-half talking to two recent grads who gave them a reality check. The two young women are honest with the group. They aren’t at their dream jobs; they are working as assistants. And they didn’t land these jobs right away; they had both spent time unemployed.

“After graduation, looking for a job is going to be difficult anywhere,” Rhines reassures the group. Although undoubtedly still nervous, they are mostly hopeful. “The biggest thing is just seeing that it’s possible. There are a lot of alums who came out here and did it,” Michael Hendricks, Comm ’17, says. “It’s encouraging.”

“There’s a Packers bar on Hollywood Boulevard,” points out Vineburg, in case the Wisconsin natives ever get homesick.
Haley Veres, Comm ’17, sounds confident about pursuing her dream of a career in television. “I feel very reassured that this is something I’m not only capable of doing, but something I can find success in doing,” she says. “If it doesn’t work out, the cheese curds will still be there;” she jokes about the comforts of her home state.

They seem in agreement. It will be tough, but LA is where they are headed. So they start making living arrangements. “I’m coming to crash on your couches for the summer,” Veres says. “I can cook.”

Rhines laughs, “I’m going to need you to cook.”

With every stop, every new alumni connection and every conversation as honest as this one, the students are doing more than experiencing LA, they are becoming LA-experienced.

“I felt very reassured — after hearing (the alumni’s) stories, their successes, their challenges — that this is something I’m not only capable of doing after I graduate but something I can find success in doing.”

Haley Veres, Comm ’17

“Every single alum that we met out there said they’re going to help if you ask for it. That put me at ease in a fantastic way.”

Michael Hendricks, Comm ’17

An LA encore — and possibly much more

The reviews are in. The student participants and their alumni guides valued the first LA Experience so much that plans are already set for a return trip during Spring Break 2018 with a fresh group of entertainment-world aspirants from the college’s digital media program. And the project’s example is proving contagious. Faculty members from other programs — communication studies, advertising and public relations, journalism, theatre — have been busy this summer and early fall contacting alumni and exploring the potential for future experience trips to Seattle, Chicago and New York.

To view students recalling their experiences, search “Marquette LA Experience YouTube.”
For six years, Anthony Crivello sang the title role in The Phantom of the Opera in Las Vegas. He won a Tony Award for portraying the revolutionary Valentin in Kiss of the Spider Woman on Broadway. But neither role has stretched him in the way that playing legendary Marquette Basketball Coach Al McGuire has.

“It’s a load to strap this guy on your back,” says Crivello, who starred in a Milwaukee Repertory Theater production of McGuire, a one-man play written by the coach’s former broadcast colleague, Dick Enberg.

After the initial run filled houses, the Rep brought Crivello back for several weeks of encore performances in June.

As an actor in character, Crivello is accustomed to tying one thought to the next and then the next, in a progression. But when McGuire talked, Crivello says, echoing the coach’s words, sometimes he made a right turn at a left turn. “From that standpoint, he is not like any character I have done,” Crivello says.

It’s not merely the content of the non sequiturs that makes playing McGuire daunting. “Al’s rhythm is pretty rapid fire,” says Crivello, whose offstage voice is both pitched lower and delivered slower than the coach’s. “Those words are firing out of my mouth.”

For 85 uninterrupted minutes on stage, Crivello fires those words, taking the coach through victories and defeats on and off the court. McGuire led Marquette to the NCAA Men’s Basketball Championship in 1977, the last of the 13 seasons he coached Marquette. He became a national figure as much for his New York swagger, fiery showmanship and street-poet diction as for his tournament victories.

Crivello says McGuire is one of three roles he has played that was so demanding he had to guard his health obsessively during the production. (The Phantom and Che in Evita were the other two.)

That meant some nights he couldn’t schmooze in the green room or the Rep’s common areas because Stage Manager Richelle Harrington Calin told him the flu was going through cast and crew of another show in the complex.

Crivello and Associate Artistic Director Brent Hazelton worked with Enberg to deepen and darken his celebratory original script. The actor cited McGuire’s remark that he had broken all the Commandments except the one against murder and would need a deaf priest for his confession.

Crivello spent hours watching footage of McGuire, absorbing cadence and gestures, including a bringing together of his hands that almost resembles prayer. But Crivello also had a view that can’t be found on YouTube. As a Marquette cheerleader in 1974–75, he watched McGuire, the ringmaster, on and off the hardwood floor. McGuire’s partnership with Medalist Industries on daring uniform styles, including the famous “bumblebee” look, was among his many “brilliantly calculated” moves to change the image of the program, Crivello says.
Leaving the nest

Born in Milwaukee, Crivello grew up on Holton Street and graduated from Thomas More High School. He spent two years as a Marquette theatre major before leaving school to launch his professional career, a move validated by a famous visitor to town.

Crivello performed opposite Lucie Arnaz in a summer theatre production of *Bye Bye Birdie* at Milwaukee's former Melody Top Theatre. One night the audience included Arnaz's mother, TV star Lucille Ball. After the performance, Ball beckoned him over to compliment his performance. What was he planning to do when the production ends, she wanted to know.

After he told her he planned to look for work in Milwaukee productions, "Her eyes went wide and she started shaking her head," Crivello recalls. "She said to me, 'It's time for the little birdie to leave the nest.'"

"I carry the torch of Marquette," says Crivello, who has a Marquette bumper sticker on his car and an MU decal on his front windshield.

The university has warm feelings for the actor, too. Crivello was named Communicator of the Year in 2003 by the Diederich College of Communication and was inducted into the college's Hall of Fame in 2016. He returned to the Helfaer Theatre this March for a conversation with students, staff, faculty and alumni.

While Crivello stands alone onstage during McGuire, he is not working alone. "The biggest primary additional player is the audience," he says.

"Sometimes they will talk back or make a comment," Crivello says. "I always look for that opportunity to then improv with them. So that the experience becomes much more real in the room.

"What happens is Al becomes that much more real."

When McGuire talked, Crivello says, sometimes he made a right turn at a left turn. "From that standpoint, he is not like any character I have done."

In his 13 years as Marquette's head men's basketball coach, including the National Championship season of 1976–77, Al McGuire was as charismatic as coaches come — a fiery, heart-on-his-sleeve showman and psychologist of sport. With a script by the late coach's longtime TV broadcast partner, Dick Enberg, and an unblinking performance by Crivello, the play *McGuire* illuminates both the legend and inner life of a true original.
The more things change

Alumni return for a student media centennial celebration — and discover what unites them across decades of change.

Nearly a half-century separates Marquette alumnus Frank Clines and current communication senior Patrick Thomas. Yet when the two met at Milwaukee’s Newsroom Pub before a Marquette men’s basketball game this past March (above), they found themselves kindred spirits, thanks to one formative, enduring commonality: Marquette student media.

The pregame gathering was a core element of the one-and-a-half day Centennial Celebration of Student Media at Marquette, commemorating 100 years of the Marquette Tribune, 40 years of MUTV and the rich legacies of WMUR Marquette Radio, the Marquette Journal magazine and Hilltop yearbook. Kicking off with a Student Media Mashup open house in Johnston Hall and culminating in the Centennial Dinner the next night, the celebration drew hundreds of enthusiastic student media veterans, some from faraway states.

As the generations mingled, conversations quickly revealed how much has changed over the years. Clines, Jour ’72, for example, thinks himself a retired Tribune veteran, while Thomas is executive director of the 5-year-old digital-broadcast-print umbrella known as The Wire. “I tried to remember whether I was as well-spoken and professional when I was their age. I doubt it,” remarks Clines, who retired from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in 2007 after nearly three decades as copy editor, national editor and sports writer (some of those for the former Milwaukee Journal).

Still, what distinguishes old from new student media alumni (and current students) pales next to what connects them: the deadlines extending well past midnight; the windowless basement of Johnston Hall serving as a second home (at least until renovations move media operations to the second floor in 2018); the rush felt breaking or just telling a good story; and the lifelong friendships, memories and journalistic spirit that flow from these experiences.

“I enjoyed meeting so many inspiring alumni. It was an opportunity to assure them that their traditional student media departments are alive and well, and that we are adapting to the digital age,” Thomas says. “I hope this event rekindled their interest in Marquette.” – Brian Boyle

To see a photo gallery with scenes from the Centennial, search “Marquette student media photo gallery medium.”
“People tend to think you are either born creative or you are not,” Menck says. “I don’t think that is true. You can practice divergent thinking.”
Communication gets creative

By Laura Merisalo

Taking Linda Menck’s Introduction to Visual Communication class is like learning to be a kid again, one poised to succeed in a grown-up profession.

Anthony DiSanto, Bus Ad ’17, signed up for her class in the final semester of his senior year, and it transformed his worldview. “It brought me back to when I was younger, to when everyone used to draw and build,” DiSanto says. “I am finally coming back to looking at the world as a kid,” able to discover new possibilities in even the most mundane matters.

Take a stick on the sidewalk, for example. For a kid, it isn’t just a bit of debris cluttering the path, something to kick aside. Viewing it with a fresh perspective (the entrepreneurial mindset Menck teaches), he says, “It’s a sword or a wand.”

Menck’s fresh perspective, gained over the past three of her 16 years as a professional-in-residence in strategic communication at Marquette as well as the dozen years before that working as an adviser to the Student Media Advertising Department and then the director of the Wakerly Lab, drives her curriculum. It began to take shape when she reconnected in 2015 with a former student, Megan Carver, Comm ’08, associate director of the Kohler Center for Entrepreneurship. The center, once housed within the College of Business Administration, was moving under Marquette’s newly created Office of Research and Innovation, and allowed for expansion of innovation and entrepreneurship programs across campus. “We recognize the intersection of disciplines provides the greatest opportunity for innovation,” Carver says.

Their goal was to get more faculty involved from other disciplines ... and she knew that if anybody would want to be involved in this whole innovation, entrepreneur thing, it would be me,” Menck says.

A domino effect ensued. Menck met Dr. Jay Goldberg, clinical professor of biomedical engineering, at a Kohler Center event. He was intrigued by her visual communication course, which then focused on teaching students to use visual storytelling to communicate technical ideas to non-technical audiences. “Our engineering students need this;” he told Menck and invited her to a three-day faculty training session in 2015 as part of the Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network (KEEN), a national network of 30 institutions formed to forge an entrepreneurial mindset among aspiring engineers.

“It was a room of engineers and me, and it was really uncomfortable,” Menck recalls. “But I remember walking out of there thinking, ‘It’s not just engineers who need an entrepreneurial mindset. It’s every student at this university.’”

Dominoes continued to topple as Menck applied KEEN principles — the three Cs of an entrepreneurial mindset:
curiosity, connections and creating value — to revamp her Introduction to Visual Communication course. “Mindset is different from skill set. It’s a way of approaching your life and your world ... and creating value. That does not just mean monetary value, but value to humanity, and that’s Marquette’s mission,” Menck says. “I thought, ‘This needs to be in the world of communication.’”

Uniting entrepreneurship, engineering and communication creates a natural and essential nexus, according to Menck, Grad ’97. Indeed, she believes the three Cs of an entrepreneurial mindset should be expanded to include a fourth C, communication.

Engineers “want to tell you all the specs of this thing-a-ma-bob that is going to change the world,” Menck says. “But when you get to the point where you are talking to a venture capitalist, they don’t care about the technical aspects. That will come down the road.”

In the real world, an engineer, or anyone, may have only five minutes to sell an idea, Menck says. Storytelling with visuals, she says, is the most powerful way to do it. “They have these tremendous, amazing ideas that are going to change the world, but they need to work with our Comm students to make that happen,” Menck says.

Creative storytelling is a key focus of Menck’s project-based class that centers on teams of students puzzling through challenges using design-thinking, an approach that involves literally sketching out thoughts and solutions. Students rely on visual techniques, such as mind mapping, through which they use words and images to depict as many ideas as possible, culling a handful as priorities for fuller development. The class culminates with pitch presentations as each team tries to sell their ideas in just a few minutes.

Since its evolution began, buzz surrounding the class has grown. The new iteration of “Intro to Visual Comm” lures students from other colleges, with somewhere between a half and a handful being communication majors. Such diversity winds up being a boon for Diederich students, says senior advertising major Rebecca Streightiff. “You are with engineering, health sciences, education and business administration majors,” Streightiff says. “You have all those different mindsets in one course ... working on the same project, and that (diversity) is how you come up with the most innovative products and solutions.”

DiSanto agrees. As a finance major, he says, “You get pretty focused. Everything is rigid in terms of structure. ... Fresh eyes, a new perspective can help down the line as you apply it to what you are focusing on. You can create value through it.”

Reigniting innate creativity and rebuilding creative confidence are among Menck’s goals. Her first question for students is: Who among them is creative? Few raise their hand. Yet most are more creative than they know or allow themselves to be, typically doubting themselves because of a trigger moment in their youth that quashed their belief in their creative abilities.

Unleashing creativity, however, is essential for divergent thinking, which Menck describes as airing a bevy of ideas to discover inventive and innovative solutions.

“People tend to think you are either born creative or you are not,” Menck says. “I don’t think that is true. You can practice divergent thinking.”

Many students are leery, at least at first, particularly those in majors such as business administration, which may not seem to skew creative. Among the design-thinking processes Menck teaches is to flesh out ideas via sketchnoting, so class supplies include a sketchbook and colored markers.

“To tell an econ or business administration major that they are going to draw, they freak out,” she says.

But they come around.

Erica Day, a junior economics major, signed up for Menck’s fall 2016 class. Since friends who took the class gushed that it was “awesome and amazing,” she expected it would be a great experience, but not necessarily one that would be tangibly enduring. But by the time Day bumped into Menck at the Brew Bayou during finals week in spring 2017, she plainly brimmed with gratitude, telling Menck her class “changed my world.”

Day shared with Menck how she applied mind mapping — the visual diagramming of ideas she learned in Menck’s course — to her poetry class the following semester. With the title of the poem at the center of the page, she sketched in possible interpretations. “Poetry is not my thing,” Day says. But by using the design-thinking process, she visually mapped out and ultimately crystallized her ideas so she could analyze “and figure out what this (poem) might be. I got an A.”

Menck’s class not only gave Day a new perspective on how to think, but the challenge she and her peers took on as a class project created an opportunity for her to leave a lasting legacy at Marquette.

In fall 2016 the class challenge came via the Athletics Department. The objective: Figure out a way to boost student
Creative storytelling is a key focus of Menck’s project-based class that centers on teams of students puzzling through challenges using design thinking, an approach that involves literally sketching out thoughts and solutions.

Exercises such as Build-A-Duck help give students confidence that they can think creatively.

**Design thinking in a nutshell**

**Empathize**
It's about them. Asking questions to understand audience needs.

**Define**
Creating a solid point of view that reflects the user’s needs.

**Ideate**
Thinking of as many ways as possible to solve a problem.

**Prototype**
Developing a visual solution to explain your ideas to others.

**Test**
Sharing a prototype with original users to get their input.

Visual communication students Arthur Jones and Erica Day (above) learned to create mind maps as a form of channeled brainstorming.

Source: Linda Menck
attendance at basketball games, which had dropped despite discounted tickets and free transportation to the BMO Harris Bradley Center, home court for the Marquette Golden Eagles.

Menck’s 40 students that fall represented a mix of majors: business, arts and sciences, engineering and communication. Among the ideas were cheaper brats, beers and burgers, and better transportation.

A common theme was that students want more tradition, a sense of community, a personal experience. And each team agreed a key way to build community and a personal connection to the games was to give the Golden Eagles’ mascot a name.

Day continues her work on that challenge via a student committee to come up with a name for Marquette’s mascot. (Spoiler alert: Iggy is a top contender, to align with St. Ignatius.) Day and Menck were at once awed yet not quite taken aback by the idea that a class project could lead to an abiding difference.

“You can make change, and that is really what it is all about,” Menck says.

Tapping into one’s creative side is imperative in today’s highly visual world, Menck says, as “we’re moving out of the knowledge worker to where it is really important to use both sides of your brain and to think creatively because that is where innovation comes from.”

An entrepreneurial mindset is not relegated to the realm of startups, she says. CEO surveys consistently reveal that top executives seek creative thinkers, people who can tackle challenges and innovate even within a larger organization.

In spring 2017 students made their final pitches at the 707 Hub, a new student-initiated innovation space supporting idea generation, entrepreneurship and social innovation across campus. The space is also home to the Kohler Center for Entrepreneurship and the Social Innovation Initiative. With its movable glass walls, exposed structural elements and tools such as a 3-D printer, it’s the hottest space on campus. And Menck was involved in the 707 Hub’s early development stages through Carver. At the grand opening in March, she and some of her students were there wearing blue and gold 707 Hub T-shirts just like the staff and others involved in the planning process.

Menck sustains her connection to the hub, in part by sharing it with her communication students. She encourages them to use the space and
“build relationships, kind of like I did, to meet these other great students who are doing great things. And they need your help ... to communicate their great ideas and be part of these innovative and entrepreneurial teams.”

“Communication has got to get out of the communication building,” Menck says. “We can’t just be in our own little silo. We have to get our students to work with other disciplines. That is just the way our world works now.”

Such collaboration, Menck says, “is the future. You’ve got to be entrepreneurially minded. That is where the job growth is.”

Streightiff is fully on board and is crafting a self-designed minor that, for now, she dubs Leadership and Innovation, which springs from her experience in this course. She also is a University Innovation Fellow, a national program based out of Stanford University that empowers students to become change agents at their schools.

Among her goals as an innovation fellow, Streightiff says, is to integrate entrepreneurial mindset learning campuswide, “trying to get Marquette overall to be more like (Menck’s) class.”

“The fact that all of these other students from other colleges are coming to the College of Communication really reflects our college in a great way,” Streightiff says. “It is bringing a new way of thinking into our college, helping our students to be more innovative ... and opens our audience, helping to make our college more diverse.”

The Core of Creativity

More courses prepare students for the essential role of communication in collaboration and innovation.

**Computer Applications for the Theatre**

Theatre design once relied on watercolor sketches and 3-D physical models as stepping stones to full theatrical sets, says Stephen Hudson-Mairet, associate professor and chair of digital media and performing arts. But in this course, students learn to achieve theatrical visions with design tools such as Google SketchUp, Adobe Photoshop, Corel Painter and ArtStudio for iPad.

Students work in teams to apply the tools to a real-world challenge of designing the sets, lighting and costing for a campus production. The collaborative design process also helps prepare students for another stage: real life.

Focusing on all aspects of theatrical design as a team “is a sneaky way to involve all those other things” essential for collaboration, Hudson-Mairet says.

Theatre major Lex Gernon, Comm ’13, agrees. Now based in Los Angeles and working in the set-designing field for TV, theatre and film, Gernon says the course’s value goes beyond theatre. “The hot word ... no matter what business you are in, is collaboration,” Gernon says. “What is it that you are going to bring as an individual to create a cohesive unit.”

Whether the setting involves a theatre producer transporting an audience, an engineer providing assurance to a client, an attorney convincing a jury, or countless others, Gernon has learned the ability to tell a persuasive story, in words and visuals, is essential to nearly any profession.

Offered every four years in spring to create a set design for a fall Marquette Theatre production, the course will be offered next in spring 2019.

**Organizational Communication**

Ambiguity implies a certain elusiveness, something inexact, and even unsettling. But uncertainty also opens the door to innovation, and Michelle Fetherston seeks to prop open that door for her Organizational Communication students.

“A lot of them are coming up ... being told, step by step, what to do for everything,” Fetherston says. “Check the box, get an A. That doesn’t help.”

Fetherston, adjunct instructor of communication studies, designed her curriculum to help students navigate ambiguity to arrive at new ideas and initiatives that add value. Students work in teams to tackle the challenges of a startup — most recently crafting the mission, values and goals of an organization and then brainstorming to develop and pitch its products or services.

The startup approach helps students prepare for that “some day (when) you will be given an initiative, and you are not going to be told how to do it. You have to come up with the best way and present it.”

Whether pitching an idea to a boss, colleague or customer, communication — verbal, written and visual — is critical, says Fetherston. “You have to think about the person on the other end of the message ... and frame things based on the audience.” — Laura Merisalo
ADVERTISING’S LITTLE WHITE SECRET

Through research and curriculum, Dr. Jean Grow works to diversify the industry.

When Dr. Jean Grow looks inside the world of advertising, she sees important creative voices missing. “The lack of diversity and the small number of people of color in advertising management is shocking,” says Grow, chair and professor of strategic communication.

And while women have been shown to make 80 percent of consumer buying decisions, there’s a “horrific scarcity of women in creative departments,” she adds. It’s only 20 percent, a figure she knows from tabulating it with former graduate assistant Tony Deng as part of a study that used Red Books, an industry database.

She cites the controversial Pepsi commercial — that drew protests and an apology because it seemed to trivialize the Black Lives Matter movement — as a symptom of this lack of diversity. “Probably 15 to 20 people passed on that ad, and it didn’t occur to anyone that there would be blowback? Something is terribly wrong,” she says.

While there’s little research on the lack of women in creative roles, there’s even less on diversity issues. Grow is working to change that. With a faculty fellowship from Marquette’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion, she’s traveling to Chicago and two other cities to conduct ethnographic research within multicultural ad agencies and general market agencies. She also acquired more Red Books and will analyze data across five years on the underrepresentation of women in creative departments worldwide.

With support from the grant, she’s also developing a new class on multicultural advertising and public relations. It will include student field trips to diverse communities for discussions on messaging and perceptions, she says.

This approach fits a teacher-scholar who’s made a career of searching often unexplored places and communities for insights on advertising and its role in people’s lives. Throughout her career, Grow has traveled widely, including to Europe, Asia and Mexico. She takes students on popular Global Brand Tracking program trips to track how Brits and Czechs relate to products and how advertising reflects those relationships. Because of her global perspective, Grow was invited to travel to Hong Kong this year to give the keynote at the Research Institute for Digital Culture and Humanities conference.

Whether addressing creativity or diversity, here or abroad, Grow calls for confronting systemic limitations that keep advertising hiring so homogeneous. This results in “a lack of diversity in creative thought,” she argues. “These limitations are not just bad for creative women and people of color; they are bad for business.” — Georgia Pabst

Limitations that keep advertising hiring so homogeneous result in “a lack of creative thought,” says Dr. Jean Grow.
BRANDING WITH A PURPOSE

Ebony Ssali, Comm ’03, often has the four pillars of Marquette’s mission in mind at work.

“Leadership, excellence, service and faith,” she says. “Before I start any project I always think ‘Where is God in this? How can I show leadership in this? And how do I do it with excellence?”

Ssali, who majored in advertising and minored in psychology, leads her own marketing firm and this year will take the helm of Marquette’s Ethnic Alumni Association.

After graduating, Ssali worked as a graphics creative at Fox 6 and CBS 58 in Milwaukee, each time as the only African-American woman on the crew. She learned how to project a story visually and realized the importance of integrating storytelling and new technology.

Despite having the skills and drive to enter Milwaukee’s advertising market, she found opportunities for women and, especially, women of color hard to come by. “She said, ‘Well if they’re not going to open the door to me, I’m going to open my own door,’” recalls Dr. Jean Grow, one of Ssali’s former strategic communication professors. Ssali credits Grow as one of the influential women inspiring her to chart her own path in advertising.

In 2011 Ssali founded Ssali Media Group, a branding, marketing and media firm. “I carved out this space in marketing that was young, fresh, innovative and woman-driven,” Ssali says. “I found a unique niche doing high-quality pieces in a multicultural space.” What started small with a client roster of about 10 businesses in the health care and education fields has grown to serve around 50 clients including major medical groups and Fortune 100 companies. Her vision for branding people, places and things has led to speaking engagements with organizations like NEWaukee and AIGA.

Now Ssali will bring her trademark passion and drive to the EAA presidency. During her time at Marquette, she noticed people of color across campus experiencing similar issues but not connecting with each other. This same problem followed her after graduation, and her fellow graduates, too, she believes. “You have people all over the country … dealing with issues in their professional workplaces and having nowhere to put that,” she observes.

Her goals for the alumni association include “connecting in an authentic way, making sure people know we exist and letting current students know there is a powerful network that they can tap into,” she says. Chiefly for those students, the EAA will host a career symposium that will bring in speakers to facilitate discussions focusing on diversity and inclusion within professions.

“She’s commitment to and passion for the EAA is really something to see,” says Grow. With EAA active membership currently sitting at 60, Ssali seeks to grow that number to 200 during her two-year term.

“I’ve got big dreams,” she says. — Martina Ibáñez-Baldor, Comm ’15
SCHOOLS VS. CYBERBULLYING

Dr. Eric Waters seeks successful models for tackling an elusive new danger.

From the time they get their first iPods, young learners start sharing knowledge and tapping into vast cloud resources. But how do schools deal with the dangers that result from children communicating so freely from behind their screens?

Funded by a summer research grant from Marquette, Dr. Eric Waters, assistant professor of communication studies, is studying the challenges schools face in creating and implementing cyberbullying policies. Using suburban and urban K–12 school districts as their sample, Waters and two research assistants are analyzing interviews they conducted and archival documents they collected.

“Cyberbullying is a very interesting situation in communication for two reasons,” Waters says. “First, unlike conventional bullying, it takes place off school grounds, so it’s difficult to police without infringing on people’s First Amendment rights,” he says. “Second, fake profiles and email addresses help bullies remain anonymous, making it even more difficult to thwart them.”

It’s a vital topic for a teacher-scholar who joined Marquette in 2016 with a doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin and more than 10 years of previous experience in managerial and supervisory positions for large international corporations. He considers himself a “pracademic,” searching for solutions that can be applied in practical ways.

“Hopefully, through this research, I’ll contribute to a model schools and interested stakeholders — such as parent groups and law enforcement — can use to administer effective ways to implement policy,” he says. From there, Waters hopes to continue his work, eventually replicating the model within university and corporate settings. — Sara Rae Lancaster

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NAVIGATING THE MINEFIELD

The challenges corporations face communicating in today’s polarized landscape is enduring focus for college’s Scholar of the Year.

Dr. Nathan Gilkerson began his career as a press assistant for a U.S. senator in Washington D.C. and a political campaign aide in his home state of South Dakota. His political experience then led to opportunities working in public relations and advertising. After a career switch to academia, Gilkerson naturally gravitated toward the study of mass communication, politics and how people are persuaded through media content and political campaigns.

In focusing much of his recent research on “how companies and organizations navigate polarized political issues in a fast-moving communication landscape,” he acknowledges the field of strategic communication has grown more challenging since he practiced there. “Today’s communication professionals face an environment of instant controversy and crisis, in which situations are often exposed and exacerbated via social media channels and then by a fragmented news media,” the assistant professor of strategic communication says.

Research on these timely topics helped earn Gilkerson 2017 Scholar of the Year honors in the Diederich College of Communication, as did projects on an impressive range of subjects. He’s also been working with colleagues on a project tracking the influence of health communication advertising campaigns on college student binge-drinking behavior, and another evaluating the communication evaluation and measurement strategies deployed with greatest success by leading corporate communication departments. “It has been fascinating to learn what has worked well but also what barriers may be holding back less successful organizations,” says Gilkerson. — Joe DiGiovanni, Jour ’87
SOCIAL MEDIA SCHOLAR

When alumnus Dr. Jacob Groshek turns on Netflix, he’s informing his scholarly research.

Watching *Mr. Peabody & Sherman* with his kids or catching up on *Big Little Lies* with his wife has social value, according to studies he has done with Boston University colleagues.

“The activity of viewing with others is a vitally important consideration,” he says. “Bingeing takes on a different function when it is done as a social event rather than an individual one.”

Groshek, Grad ’03, is currently working on a study called “Netflix and ill? How streaming television and binge-watching might actually be good for you.” His goal is to look closer at everyday activities — such as using social media or streaming Netflix — and analyze their effects in an academically rigorous way.

Does binge-watching streaming TV negatively affect college students’ academic performance, health and trust in others? Following up on preliminary results that suggest heavy use of streaming television actually doesn’t hurt GPAs, Groshek will examine these questions further in a forthcoming book about streaming television. “I just try to put on an empirical lens and find patterns in things that we do every day, and that we sort of intuit, but don’t definitively see,” he says.

His findings suggest that emerging behaviors like binge-watching and social media defy easy evaluations. Behaviors that involve new technology — like watching on-demand streaming entertainment — can have measurable benefits or drawbacks like any traditional behavior.

“It’s a little early for us to determine that streaming and binge-watching are bad. The scholarship in this area is tiny. As a field, we’ve barely scratched the surface,” he said during an April visit to a classroom of Marquette students, many of whom had smartphones and laptops out. On the same trip to the college where he earned a master’s degree in communication studies, he also lectured on these themes as a headliner of this year’s Diederich Research Scholarship Week.

The recent tenure awardee and associate professor of emerging media studies at Boston University is also working on research about “how the internet makes everything true, nothing real,” and how individuals can help minimize the spread of viral misinformation. Again, he seeks to equip people with practical knowledge about the everyday modern world.

“I want to publish more research that solves problems,” he says. “I want people to read my research and have it answer questions that are important to them.” — Tim Cigelske, Comm ’04
In any industry, culture or situation, communication is the most essential skill. Information has power only if it is known. Stories inspire only if they are told. In the Diederich College of Communication, we immerse our students in an environment that encourages risks and demands excellence. Here they learn through experience, drawing on our diverse array of talent and resources. They become accomplished communicators, adept at navigating the changes of a complex, technological and multicultural world, and equipped with the vision and the agility to stay ahead. But more importantly, they become ethical communicators, prepared to speak for those unheard with the wisdom to know what to say.