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## THE CLASS OF *2008* – WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

Recently, a returning senior Communication Major and Honors student was heard to say, “these incoming freshmen are awesome ... I’m not sure that I would even be admitted to this class.” That’s unlikely, of course, but this incoming freshman class is arguably the “best and brightest” in UD Blue Hen history. How good are they really? Here are some statistics from Lou Hirsh, UD director of admissions.

- In the past five years, the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores of entering UD freshmen have climbed 44 points ... the average SAT score is now 1189. Moreover, this class includes 34 high school valedictorians and 32 salutatorians and 435 freshmen who amassed a 4.0 grade point average in secondary school.
- The class of 2008 is among the most diverse in UD history, with more than 500 freshmen of color among the total of 3469 incoming freshmen and 577 transfer students. Our youngest member of the class was born in 1988 and our oldest freshman was born in 1935.
- Again this year UD set a record for applications (not necessarily due to the Blue Hens’ 2003 National Football Championship, though that certainly hasn’t hurt). We received more than 22,000 applications for the available freshman slots, with 64 percent of out-of-state students declaring UD as their first choice school.
- The class of 2008 comes from all over the US, plus eight foreign countries. Most, however, come from the Mid-Atlantic Region – 1252 from Delaware, followed by New Jersey, Pennsylvania New York and Maryland. One hundred twenty VIP freshmen are “Double Dels,” or the offspring of two UD alumni.

The majority of freshmen – including the Communication Interest majors – are enrolling in the College of Arts & Sciences (1306), followed by the Lerner College of Business and Economics (445), the College of Human Services, Education, and Public Policy (359), the College of Engineering (345), the College of Health and Nursing Sciences (319), and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (123). The remainder are undeclared.

# UD Commentator

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2004

### *Are we there yet?*

This question is more than a child's perpetual query about reaching a destination. It's a question that applies to many aspects of life, including whether we're achieving our personal or organizational goals.

In the academic environment, "are we there yet" might suggest that a destination or significant milestone is at hand.

Not long ago, our Communication Department faculty and administrative staff completed a day-long strategic retreat to discuss aspects of "are we there yet?" I thought that I'd share a bit of the proceeds of that Retreat with you.

We began where we should – with a light breakfast and a free form discussion of our Department's Mission. It has yielded a Department Mission Statement, a portion of which appears on page 2.

As a Department of Communication stakeholder, you may have a point-of-view about what today's undergraduate and graduate education should contribute to talented individuals and to our communities and society. If you do, I'd like to hear your viewpoint at [eperse@udel.edu](mailto:eperse@udel.edu)

This Fall 2004 semester marks my second year as Chair of the Communication Department, succeeding long-time Chair John Courtright. As many of you know, John serves the University today as Director of Undergraduate Studies, an important administrative post on campus. I am truly amazed at how much changes within the context of a predictable academic calendar and stable University environment.

Steady growth is part of it, of course. Overall applications to the University of Delaware increase annually, and we now attract more out-of-state applications than any state university in America. Potential Communication majors arrive very well prepared, and build their skills as "COMM Interest Majors" eager to compete for the one hundred or so "COMM Major" slots available to juniors each year. These talented young people challenge our faculty and staff to do our very best as well.

New technology is also part of what changes here on campus. In this sense, I suppose that we'll never actually "be there yet." Nonetheless, we have been the beneficiary of several remarkably generous gifts in the past year which help us stay up-to-date with digital communication technology for our students and faculty to use.

One of my strategic initiatives as Chair is to enhance our fund-raising prowess, in close coordination with the University Development Office. Development Director Kevin McCullen works directly with a number of the Arts & Sciences academic departments, including ours, and is helping us refine our fund-raising priorities. Obviously, we depend heavily on the understanding and generosity of alumni and other stakeholders in the future of communication research and teaching excellence.

Finally, are we there yet in building our reputation as one of America's high-quality academic programs, with superb classroom teaching, ample meaningful research, and a focused sense of community service? No, I don't suppose that we are "there" yet. But we're definitely underway in that clear strategic direction. We're very good now and getting better. I am always interested in learning your thoughts and perspectives; please email me anytime at [eperse@udel.edu](mailto:eperse@udel.edu). And thank you for your enduring support.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Perse, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of Communication

### OUR NEW LOOK ... OUR NEW NAME

This is our first issue of The **COM**mentator newsletter. Formerly known as *Communicate!*, this periodic newsletter is largely the work of undergraduate students enrolled in our **Public Relations Writing and Editing** course. In fact, senior Communication major Abby Baron (BA, 2004) suggested the new name to her classmates who endorsed it unanimously as describing our relationship-building function.

The editorial purpose of The **COM**mentator remains pretty much what you might expect – to help build strong, enduring relationships with our alumni and other key stakeholders who collectively help us realize our potential.

The appearance of the newsletter is totally redesigned, thanks to Judy Frezza, Art Director and Liz Dunkle, Editorial Coordinator in the University's Publications Office. Moreover, we have transitioned from a print-only newsletter to a print-and-electronic newsletter. Each issue of The **COM**mentator will be posted to our Departmental Web site for the convenience of many stakeholders who prefer to access their information online.

It is my privilege to guide the students who develop the content and who are learning about how to write and edit expository and persuasive communications materials. In a way, it is a return to my early professional experience after undergraduate school when I

served as Executive Editor of a weekly military newspaper.

Today's students face some new and different challenges from communication students of previous generations. Many arrive on campus quite accomplished with the newer technologies, but still in great need of mastering the principles and practices of oral and written communication. Our faculty and our curriculum, plus work-study and internship opportunities, enable them to become proficient communicators over their period of study here in Newark. Writing and editing for the **COM**mentator is yet another opportunity to hone these skills.

Of course, you are a vital component of this communication endeavor. We teach students that successful communication involves a two-way flow of information and opinion. Frankly, we need to hear **your** opinions – about this newsletter, about our curriculum, about the job-readiness of our graduates, and especially about **you**.

We have included as an insert to this newsletter an area where you can tell us about yourself – or tell us what you think about the various aspects of communication work and practice today. Please take advantage of our desire to learn from you – you can fax the form (or your own version if you prefer) to (302) 831-1892. Alternatively, you can email me at [pwescott@udel.edu](mailto:pwescott@udel.edu) ... I will be very happy to hear from you.



Elizabeth Perse, Ph.D.

# Our Mission

The mission of the Department of Communication at the University of Delaware is to both empower students in their personal and professional lives, and to provide an ethical compass for navigating the complexities of modern society. To this end, the faculty is dedicated to providing rigorous and comprehensive instruction to students, and to generating important new knowledge in the field of communication.

Would you like to comment on this Mission Statement? We are always open to new and improved ideas ... just send a brief email with your comments to [pwescott@udel.edu](mailto:pwescott@udel.edu)



## ABOUT THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT... “YOU COULD LOOK IT UP”

Was it Casey Stengel or Yogi Berra who quoted an obscure statistic to a reporter, then followed quickly with “you could look it up”? Our own Department of Communication “Hall of Fame” – or at least **Corridor of Capabilities** – is online and ready for your casual viewing.

Point your browser to [www.udel.edu/communication](http://www.udel.edu/communication) to see who is here and what we’re saying about ourselves.

In fact, as believers in motivating and eliciting desired behaviors, we’ll offer a token Department of Communication gift for answering these Web-based questions correctly. Consider it a “pop quiz” for Communication alumni and other friends of the family. (The answers to all these questions can be found on our Web site.)

1. “*Behind Bars*” is the name of a student-produced television documentary about people wrongfully incarcerated  
**TRUE FALSE**
2. Lambda Pi Eta is the name of the National Communication Honor Society  
**TRUE FALSE**
3. Carolyn Clark is the younger sister of General Wesley Clark, a former candidate for the Democratic Presidential Nomination  
**TRUE FALSE**
4. “*Click Here, Kids! Advertising Practices on Popular Children’s Websites*” is one of the research papers co-presented by professor Cai to the International Communication Association  
**TRUE FALSE**
5. A virtually famous and long-serving member of the UD Department of Communication faculty who has taught scores of successful alumni about Mass Communication and Mass Media Law earned her doctorate at Temple University. Her name is JULIET L. DEE, Ph.D.  
**TRUE FALSE**

OK, time is up. What have you learned or updated your knowledge about your favorite academic department at the University of Delaware? Just email your answers to [pwescott@udel.edu](mailto:pwescott@udel.edu) to claim your reward.

## “WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION?”

This question ranks as one of the most common queries from both prospective students and their family members at *Delaware Discovery Days*, the annual fact-finding, impression-creating campus visits that take place each summer.

The answer, as all of you reading this realize, is “practically anything you want to do.” That’s more than merely a glib answer when you peruse the occupations reported to the UD Development Office.

In addition to the expected positions like “News Reporter/Anchor,” “Publicity Manager,” “Film maker,” “Ad Agency Account Executive,” “Sales Manager,” and “Video Producer,” our alumni describe themselves as “Director of Men’s and Women’s Track & Field,” “School Nurse,” “Airborne Traffic Reporter,” “Professional Basketball Player,” and “Yoga Instructor/Health Educator.” And then there are two alumni who describe their occupation as “Comedian.” Or is that “**COMM-edian**”?

In a world beset by troubles on a global scale, the ability to connect with dozens or hundreds of people in a light and sharing style is a valuable application of the oral communication skills and abilities learned and refined in the UD Communication Department, often many years ago.

One of these alums who claim “Comedian” as his primary occupation is David Goldstein, class of 1988, of New York. (Please see the accompanying alumnum profile of Goldstein in this issue.) Across the continent, in Los Angeles, 1985 Comm graduate Cynthia Eaton describes herself as “comedian/writer/actor.” She is well located for applying her UD academic experiences to the always-interesting entertainment industry. In fact, today’s Communication undergraduates often proclaim a probable interest in a music or entertainment communications career, and discussions with the UD Department of Music about cooperative course content have taken place.

Now, as another academic year proceeds, all of us on campus think about you – an important stakeholder in our past, present and future success in developing the young talent who have chosen to come to Newark en route to ... well, en route to ... virtually any career destination they can imagine. Even as the next great stand-up comm-edian.

# Successful Alumni:

## A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO MY CAREER...

Hey, that friendly-looking guy on the outfield grass at Yankee Stadium can't be a Comm Department alum. Wait a minute, that's **Dave Goldstein**, BA, 1988, and this is part of his sketch on NBC Television's *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*! Actually, Dave is more-or-less a "regular" guest on *Late Night*, with a dozen appearances so far – including one as a naked traffic cop in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

So how did Dave Goldstein get from Pearson Hall in Newark DE to Yankee Stadium and national exposure at Rockefeller Center? Very methodically, it turns out.

"When I graduated UD, I knew I could write with a goal in mind ... and communicate that goal," he reflected recently. The UD Communication Department was truly the first place where I learned to develop an idea, craft a message, and see if I was able to communicate my point." Evidently he was able to communicate his point with thousands of live audience members and network television viewers. A *New York Post* entertainment reporter singled out Dave as the one member of a Gotham Improv cast who could pull off "a funny bit" interacting with the live audience.

"The hard part is finding what's common

to people even if they don't realize it, and then using the shared experience to make people laugh ... my time at the University of Delaware taught me that I had the talent or the gift to do something in entertainment. Whether it was writing and shooting video shorts, discussions in class, public speaking classes, or performing on and off campus, I learned that I could do it ... I wasn't just another funny guy in my apartment with my friends."



Dave Goldstein

*Dave Goldstein, B.A. 1988, has established himself as a comedic talent and guest performer on network television and other venues since graduating from UD*

His advice to today's Communication Majors is simple and straightforward. "Do the work. Whether it's writing, shooting and editing video, or designing an ad campaign.

You'll learn the fundamentals at UD, but you've got to develop the skills you'll need in your field. It's the same thing I tell younger comedians ... *write!* There's no substitute for working. ... And, most importantly, if you come to one of my shows – **no heckling!**"

If you'd like to enjoy more of Dave Goldstein's wit and wisdom, we suggest that you take in one of his upcoming comedy appearances ... or learn more about him and DJ New Orleans Slick on his Website [www.davegoldstein.com](http://www.davegoldstein.com). Plus, Dave won't mind if you send him an adulatory email at [comicgold@prodigy.net](mailto:comicgold@prodigy.net)

## COMMUNICATION STUDENTS GET OUT OF TOWN

Plenty of learning takes place daily on the Newark campus. But sometimes it benefits our Communication students to gain a really fresh perspective in another locale.

Example one is the remarkable Winter Session 2004 Study Abroad in Antarctica trip organized and led by professor Ralph Begleiter and professor Jonathon Cox. This unprecedented Study Abroad opportunity offered a limited number of undergraduates six academic credits over the three week trek way down under. Students learned about the continent's wildlife, political significance, and explored an ice ship manned by a Russian crew – as well as spending a week taking classes in Argentina.

Photo images of the trip are available online at [www.udel.edu/studyabroad](http://www.udel.edu/studyabroad) and preparation is already underway for a Winter Session 2005 Antarctica Study Abroad reprise.

Example two is the Public Relations Student Society of America National Conference. A contingent of 15 Blue Hen representatives attended the New York City Conference at the end of October, giving these students a wonderful personal development and national networking opportunity. We thank the PRSA Delaware Chapter for helping with Conference registration fees for our students. Senior Communications major Elizabeth-Shaheen-Demke has served as the PRSA Chapter President this year, and described the sessions as "a great learning and socializing experience." Elizabeth also interns in the Public Affairs department of leading drug maker, AstraZeneca in Wilmington.

In October 2005, the PRSSA Conference will take place in Miami, and we are hoping to be well-represented at next year's national Conference.



Two Blue Hen Communication Department partisans pose together at the annual Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) International Conference in New York in late October. Grace Thompson Leong, APR, B.A. '88 and Phil Wescott, APR and Fellow PRSA, a current Department faculty member are leaders in the PR profession. Leong is the principal in Hunter PR, a Manhattan-based agency that serves a roster of major national and international clients, and also chaired the PRSA Conference. Wescott chaired the Conference in 1999.



A handsome representation of the 15 Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) Chapter members who attended the annual PRSSA National Conference in New York smiles about the learning and networking opportunities they experienced at the Conference. The PRSA-Delaware Chapter, consisting of some 80 professional practitioners, defrayed the students' Conference attendance with a generous stipend.