

Summer 2021

# InterCom

THE COLLEGE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS ALUMNI MAGAZINE



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## NAVIGATING THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY

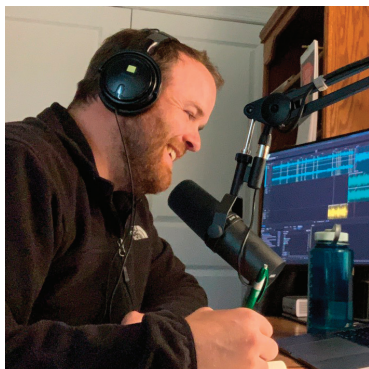
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Anna Wiederkehr, a 2012 visual communications alumna, is the senior visual journalist for FiveThirtyEight.



## FOUR-HUNDRED NINETY-TWO.

That's how many students were part of my latest challenge — online teaching.

COVID-19 meant going above and beyond to mitigate budget concerns and keep things running as smoothly as possible, and everyone did their part. Staff members became adjunct instructors, faculty members helped students navigate mental health issues and many of us took the plunge into online teaching for the first time.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't anxious. Thankfully, I had colleagues like Jeff Williams, Jeff Salter, Van Kornegay, Augie Grant and my teaching assistants to help me learn the ropes.

After successfully teaching nearly 200 students in my fall Principles of Advertising and Brand Communications class, I breathed a sigh of relief. Then spring rolled around and I found myself teaching it again — this time with more than 300 students.

I wasn't alone. Most of our faculty members were either

teaching online or simulcasting their courses for the first time (managing both online and face-to-face, akin to double duty) while dealing with the personal and family challenges the rest of the country was facing as well.

Last year was tough. But I want to acknowledge how much we accomplished despite everything. Here are a few highlights:

**Academics.** We educated 1,800 majors, 600 minors and 500 graduate students — 567 students graduated. We held more than 5,000 advising appointments and connected more than 400 students with employers at the career symposium. We launched new minors in social media and sports media as well as a new master's degree and certificate in data and communication. And we expanded our MMC degree to an online format.

**Awards and accomplishments.** There were too many accolades to list, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the researchers who won Breakthrough Awards from the

university — assistant professor Vanessa Kitzie and Ph.D. students Travis Wagner and Denetra Walker. Nicole Cooke, our Augusta Baker Chair, won a social justice award from the university. And the iSchool rose in the U.S. News & World Report rankings.

**Fundraising.** Alumnus Ken Baldwin gave us yet another generous gift to support our business and financial journalism initiatives. And we met our goal of raising \$25,000 for the new CIC Student Experience Fund.

**Diversity.** Not only did we finalize a historic 4+1 degree program with Claflin University, we also approved a college-level diversity plan to guide our future efforts. The iSchool launched a certificate in equity, diversity and inclusion. And in the fall, we'll welcome four new hires — the best among over 200 applicants nationwide — whose expertise focuses on ethnicity and race at the intersection of data, media and society.

If this seems like a lot, remember that it's only a snapshot of what we achieved last year. I'm proud of the many ways our team here at the college came together to help our students, support each other and continue working toward our mission.

And we couldn't have done it without your support and generosity. We know you've had your own challenges during the pandemic. Please reach out if there is ever anything we can do to help you or if you need a spot in an upcoming section of Principles of Advertising and Brand Communications — I know the professor.

Tom Reichert



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**Emily Britman**



**Sydney Campbell**



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**Kate D'Alessandro**



**Contessa Davis**



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# QUICK TAKES

News and notes from the  
College of Information and Communications



"ANDREA HICKERSON"

TEA SMITH 4-21

## DEBUNKING DEEPAKES

SJMC Director Andrea Hickerson is part of an interdisciplinary team of researchers working to develop a cloud-based tool to help journalists detect deepfakes — artificially generated videos that look real.

Designed to be user-friendly, the program will supplement conventional methods of fact-checking. Users will paste the URL to videos they suspect are fake into the cloud-based tool. The videos will be run against multiple data sets — and analyzed with a variety of technical methods — to give users a score of the likelihood the video is fake.

The research team recently received a two-year grant from the Knight Foundation to grow a community of journalists and fund technical efforts.

Hickerson hopes that the University of South Carolina will become synonymous with debunking deepfakes.

"I want us to be the place where when people talk about deepfakes and journalism, they think about us," she said.

— Téa Smith

## The Master of Mass Communication Goes Online



The J-school's Master of Mass Communication is the perfect program for aspiring leaders. Or at least that's how Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, the school's director of graduate studies, describes the degree, which was recently expanded to an online format.

"One of the ways you have to think about careers is that you begin and make your way by demonstrating skills at a high level of proficiency," she says. "Talented people are expected to move into management, which requires a different set of skills and approaches. The professional degree is really designed for students to keep increasing their skills at a high level."

The MMC is a 36-credit, two-year program that offers focuses in multimedia journalism and strategic communication. In addition to building students' communication, research, analytical, budgeting and creative skills, it also gives students the chance to understand management and grow as leaders.

Fitzpatrick notes that SJMC faculty have become very conversant in online education, and the professional world has seen that a lot can be done virtually. Now, students do not need to quit their jobs and relocate to South Carolina to take advantage of the program.

The SJMC is the only school in the Palmetto State offering a professional master's degree of this kind.

— Matt Edwards





## A NEW BREED OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

SJMC associate professor Kevin Hull has found ways to keep his classes interesting for students with the help of his dog, Zoey.

Zoey began assisting Hull in teaching photography lessons by allowing him to photograph her as examples for his students. When COVID-19 put everything on lockdown, Zoey didn't let that stop her from keeping their attention.

"The last thing that was fresh in those students' minds was Zoey," Hull says. "When we went online, I sent this questionnaire to the students and asked, 'What kind of questions do you have?' and several people asked, 'How is Zoey?'"

There's no doubt that Zoey has left her mark on Hull's students, especially after helping them learn certain techniques. "There's a whole six years of journalism students at the university who learned how to frame a picture through Zoey," he said.

The pandemic has dampened some spirits, but Hull and Zoey won't let that happen to any of their students. "It's been a challenge for sure, a big adjustment for everybody," Hull says. "Having her there helps relax everybody a little bit."

– Cassidy Wight



**ZOEY**

# Insects to iSchool

What do insects and libraries have in common? Most people would say nothing, but Karen Burton sees it differently.



Burton is completing her Master of Library and Information Science in the School of Information Science, but her background may surprise you. Her undergraduate degree is in entomology — the study of insects. She discovered something she loved in the overlap of libraries and insects — databases and metadata.

This career change is new for Burton and comes after years of working in entomology. She worked with beetles raised to prey on an invasive species from Asia after graduating from Clemson in 2003. A day in the life "basically consisted of going into work and counting the number of beetles in a jar," she says. "It was very labor intensive."

The flexibility of the iSchool's MLIS program has allowed her to balance her home life, schoolwork and an internship — all while exploring topics she likes.

"I love the ability to customize my program to my interests," she says.

– Erin Springer

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more information!**



## iSCHOOL LAUNCHES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CERTIFICATE

iSchool graduate students can now take their education to another level thanks to the school's new certificate in equity, diversity and inclusion.

"With our world changing so often and so rapidly, we need to be ready and equipped to work with and advocate for highly pluralistic populations and communities," says Nicole Cooke, the school's Augusta Baker Chair. "This certificate will get current students and practicing professionals ready for this exciting work. And the courses will help students develop a deep and practical understanding of diversity, inclusion and social justice that will compliment and strengthen any disciplinary experience."

Electives count toward the 12-hour certificate, meaning students can earn it without spending extra time in the program. Courses include Diversity in Libraries, Social Justice Storytelling and Advocacy, Critical Cultural Information Studies and Materials and Services for Latino Youth.

The school's goal is for students to enter the workforce prepared to advocate for change and equitably support the diverse communities their libraries or organizations serve.

– Isabelle Caraballo

[More information at bit.ly/ischool-diversity-certificate](https://bit.ly/ischool-diversity-certificate)

## DIVING INTO A SUMMER OF DIGITAL MEDIA

College students from all over dove deep into an immersive digital media experience this summer through the Media Innovation Academy and Digital Media Academy. These programs were possible through a partnership between the CIC and creative industry leader Adobe. The academies gave students access to Adobe professionals and tools, helping them gain the hands-on experience and skills top employers seek.

At MIA, students worked side by side with representatives from Twitter, Getty Images and others. "It's communication but focused on the delivery of content in the latest and most innovative ways," says program organizer and instructor Nina Brook. "It's a skill-building experience where people will gain some competencies they didn't have —



*This year's Digital Media Academy participants.*

some tools they didn't have in their toolkit." Course offerings included multimedia sports storytelling, drone photography and social media analytics.

DMA, which is open to underrepresented students, focused on the integration of pictures, graphics, videos and text to tell stories in innovative ways. "We are a university that places a priority on diversity," says Randy Covington, director of special projects at the CIC. "The idea is to give good students coming from schools that don't have the resources that we have at a major university a boost up in their career."

– Lauren Arabis





## A PROMISING FUTURE

Advertising alumnus Johnathon Fuerte's future looks bright.

Fuerte, who graduated in May, was named one of the American Advertising Federation's Most Promising Multicultural Students for 2021. The program – first introduced in 1997 — connects the advertising industry with the brightest multicultural college seniors across the nation. He is the 32nd SJMC student to receive the award.

For Fuerte, this opportunity provides a taste of stability at a time when uncertainty has become the norm. "It's really common for people my age to have imposter syndrome," he says. "It's nice to know that I have potential. I can do this."

It's not the first time Fuerte's hard work has paid off. He served as president of the university's Latin American Student Organization — his "home away from home" — and he pinpoints his acceptance into the American Association of Advertising Agencies' Multicultural Advertising Intern Program last summer as the turning point of his college career.

Fuerte's focus lies on polishing past projects while further developing his niche: creative technology. He credits advertising instructor Jeff Williams for first pitching the idea.

"I think positioning myself in that way has helped me and allowed me to get these opportunities that I've been able to have," he says. "I'm hoping that I'll be able to become some kind of creative technologist or work in experience design, UX [user experience] — that kind of thing. That's my end goal."

– Gillian Haviland

## JOSH DAWSEY'S NEW BEAT

Josh Dawsey is usually the one writing headlines — but in November of 2019, he made them when President Trump called him a "lowlife reporter" on Twitter. Though still writing about politics for *The Washington Post*, he is no longer covering the White House.

In his new role as a political investigations reporter, Dawsey will focus on the future of the Republican Party and other long-form projects. The 2012 SJMC graduate has been writing for *the Post* since 2017.

Dawsey describes covering the Trump White House as "one of the most high-octane, high-pressure news beats one could ever imagine." There has been no shortage of excitement during Dawsey's time with *the Post* — flights aboard Air Force One and personal shoutouts in President Trump's colorful tweets are just another day in the office.

His favorite part of the job? The people. "I work with some of the most talented, enterprising, decent colleagues you could ever ask for," Dawsey says. "It's hard to overstate how much I both personally like and professionally respect my colleagues."

The two-time recipient of the White House Correspondents Award for Deadline Reporting has also written for *Politico* and *The Wall Street Journal*. But his earliest writing gigs were right here in the Palmetto State.

Hailing from the rural town of Aynor, South Carolina, Dawsey's early mentors played a major role in his success. "I am very grateful to a number of editors and professors for being so helpful to propelling my career," he says.

– Mary Kate Griffin





## True Grit

MMC and health communication certificate alumna Sara Sinclair wants to help people live a healthy lifestyle and improve their food mindset through her business, Get Gritty Nutrition.

In 2019, she discovered the power of tracking macronutrients — also known as carbs, fat and protein. With moderate exercise, tracking macronutrients allowed her to ditch fad diets and over-exercising and reach new fitness goals she had never dreamed of.

Now she teaches her clients how to track their macros and creates personalized daily plans to help them live a healthy lifestyle through balance and moderation.

Sinclair loves “blowing people’s minds” with the results that this non-restrictive diet yields. “I’m eating more food more frequently and have lost five pants sizes,” she says. She credits former SJMC Director Andrea Tanner for much of her success. Tanner served as Sinclair’s mentor during her time at the university and is now a two-year client of hers. Sinclair hopes to make Get Gritty Nutrition her full-time job and continue helping others become happy and healthy.

– Maddy McCartney

*Top left: Sara Sinclair.*

*Top right: Bo Wood, left, with golfer Gary Player.*



## PLAYING THE MEDIA

Bo Wood, '12, found himself inside the ropes at the 2015 Masters Tournament — but not as a golfer.

Right out of school, the public relations major and a couple friends created Good Ole Boys Apparel, a clothing company targeting golfers. In 2015, Wood got the chance to work as a media manager for golfer Gary Player — “The Black Knight” and member of the Big Three along with Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. “The entrepreneur route that I took with Good Ole Boys Apparel really resonated with the company, and so I was hired,” Wood said.

From coordinating Player’s interviews to running the media content for charity events, Wood found himself in the champion’s locker room at the Masters Tournament and even ended up caddying for Player at the Old Course at St Andrews in Scotland.

Wood is a risk-taker and wanted to make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime experience. In all, he traveled to 15 countries with Player for various golf and charity events. The 2015 Masters was one of his favorite trips. There, he captured not one but two holes-in-one.

“There are really two things you can take with you from a job — the experiences you make and the connections,” he said. “It was quite the run — something I will remember fondly for the rest of my life.”

– Sydney Campbell



# CIC EVENTS GO VIRTUAL

## THE MODERN-DAY CAREER FAIR

Each year, employers travel from all over the country to meet promising undergraduate students at the CIC's career fair. But one traditional component was missing from this year's event — handshakes. That's because safety was the college's main priority. Career services manager Shirisha Mudunuri worked diligently to adapt to COVID-19 while providing students and businesses the best opportunities.

Nearly 40 employers attended the virtual event, which was sponsored by Nebo, a marketing agency in Atlanta. Though unconventional, virtual career fairs are cost-effective, accessible and convenient.

Any job search during a pandemic comes with challenges. Mudunuri's advice? Be flexible. "It's not abandoning but putting some of those bigger dreams on pause just for a little while and thinking of doing a job that you didn't fully imagine just because of the state of the world," she said.

In addition to organizing this year's virtual career fair, Mudunuri and her colleagues also organized virtual seminars, reviewed resumes and provided students with internship programs within the university.

– Alexa Porter

## HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM CONVENTION GOES VIRTUAL

Each March, high school journalism students spend a weekend at the downtown Columbia Marriott for the Southern Interscholastic Press Association convention. They go to classes, participate in on-site competitions, receive awards and critiques for their publications, and meet other student journalists. This year's event took place from their own homes.

SIPA is a scholastic media organization within the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Many SJMC students and graduates have participated in SIPA programming, including Leslie Dennis.

Dennis, director of Scholastic Media Organizations at the J-school, knew she had to rethink this year's convention because of the pandemic.

"We decided to do a virtual convention so that we could still educate students and hopefully have as much fun as we normally do," Dennis said.

The benefit of having a virtual convention? The content produced will remain on the SIPA website for a year.

"Teachers can use the lessons and the sessions in their classroom next fall," Dennis said. "When they've got new kids coming in, they can use the intro to writing sessions or the yearbook sessions that normally wouldn't really apply in the spring."

The convention's virtual format made it possible to bring in high-profile speakers, including NBC and MSNBC anchor Craig Melvin, and senior economics correspondent Neil Irwin from the New York Times.

Dennis was a SIPA student herself and knows the impact it has on young journalists.

"I've seen all types of students come from the program and find success," Dennis said. "We have people who work in all variety of positions, whether it's in broadcasting, public relations or advertising — it's just interesting to see where the students have gone."

– Ananda Kobierowski

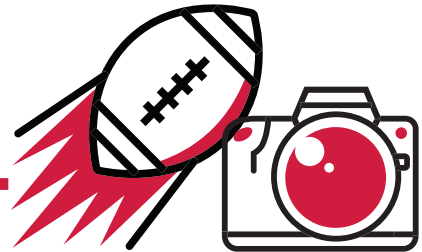


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## TORI RICHMAN SCORES BIG AT THE SUPER BOWL



Nearly 6 million Americans gathered to watch the 2021 Super Bowl as Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers brought home the title. But as most people watched from their TVs, SJMC alumna Tori Richman watched through her camera lens on the sideline.

Richman graduated in 2019 with a visual communications degree and now works as the Buccaneer's team photographer — and she even gets to hang out with them. "There was one moment when they were all in this big huddle and I'm in the middle of it and they're all passing around the trophy," she says. "It's really cool getting to build those relationships."

Her teachers at the SJMC encouraged her to go for different ideas and fostered her creativity — even when she wasn't in their classes. "I remember I was going to shoot my first Panthers game and [associate] professor Kornegay vouched for me to be able to use equipment that was outside of my class level because he said it was a huge opportunity. And I didn't even have him for class," she says.

The freedom to take risks with her photography and the support she got from the SJMC have helped in her new role. "As I got into my job, I felt like the ideas I had could be trusted," she says. "It's a tight-knit school and the professors honestly just want you to be prepared for the future."

– Abigail Martin

*Top photo provided by Tori Richman*





# A LASTING IMPACT

Story By Kassidy Wright, Senior, Visual Communications

After 20 years of teaching, Lisa Sisk has proven that she will leave not only a lasting impact on her students but also on the University of South Carolina.

The SJMC and many alumni made the decision to honor Sisk by naming her office after her. In 2018, she was diagnosed with primary progressive aphasia, a degenerative neurological disorder that affects her ability to communicate.

Faculty and staff in the J-school have offered her their help with things like making presentation slides, staying organized and even stepping in when she is struggling to find words. “The outpouring of support from my colleagues when I first announced my diagnosis of primary progressive aphasia was astounding,” Sisk said. “My colleagues are like family.”

They aren’t the only ones she sees as family.

More than 70 former students and friends donated the funds to name the office. “They all gave because of the impact that Lisa had on them either personally or as a student,” said Karson Terry, former assistant director of development for the College of Information and Communications. “This decision was made because Lisa has had such an incredible effect on the lives of so many people, and our alumni and friends wanted to honor her in this way in the J-school.”

Sisk was noticeably overwhelmed when asked about the honor. “My initial response to the naming of my office was one of awe, and then I became very humbled by it,” she said.

She treats all her students and



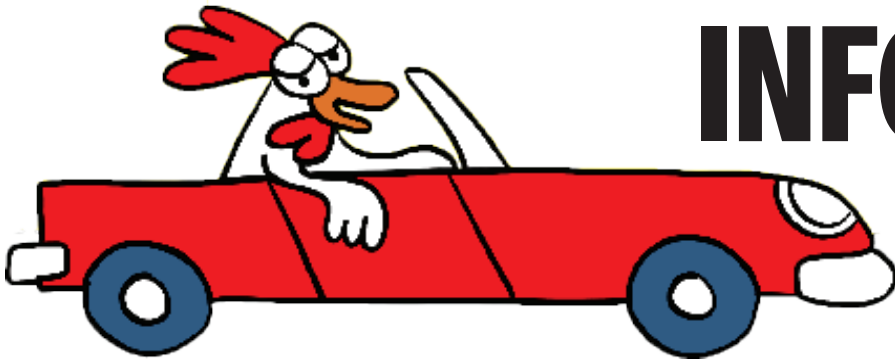
colleagues as if they were her friends, and most of the time they are. She’s known for having a very close relationships with all her students, even after they graduate. She can be seen having dinner with them, connecting on Facebook and even meeting with them to just catch up. Although she struggles with communicating, she won’t turn down an opportunity to get to know her students better.

Sisk is still teaching a few classes even after her diagnosis, and she wants to do so as long as she can. “I would like my legacy to be kindness, understanding and compassion for my students,” she said.

*Top photo: Instructor Kelly Davis, left, poses for a photo with Sisk at the plaque unveiling.*

# Navigating the

# INFORMATION HIGHWAY



## Putting Children in the Driver's Seat

Story by Téa Smith, Senior, Journalism

Just a few years ago, it was commonplace to see children reading books as they waited with their parents in doctors' offices and restaurants. Now phones and tablets occupy their hands, and the internet is just at their fingertips. But the ability to discern what's fact and what's fiction hasn't kept pace with advances in technology and internet accessibility. Faculty and staff in the J-school and iSchool are working to bridge that knowledge gap with *Dot Buys a Bike* — a children's book about news literacy. The book began in 2019 as a project for Give 4 Garnet, the university's annual giving day.

"We've been having conversations on both sides of the college about misinformation and disinformation for a while now, so collaborating on a news literacy project just made sense," says CIC communications manager Rebekah Friedman, who worked

on the project. "When we began looking at the resources that were already out there, we realized most target older audiences whose news consumption habits are already established. That really solidified our decision to make something for elementary-aged children."

Christine Shelek, executive director of the South Carolina Center for Community Literacy, also worked on the project. She says literacy is key to strengthening the state's workforce, and teaching children to "navigate the information highway" is one step toward that.

"Access to information isn't enough — it's also about knowing how to analyze and assess it," she says. "We want them to go and check it for themselves and not just have the impression that, 'Oh, it's out there on the internet, so it has to be true.' Knowing how to do that sets South Carolinians up for success, and it's something that's especially important to those of us



That chicken bought a sports car!!!

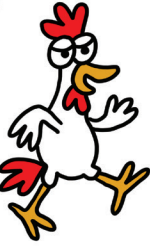
Dot is so lucky to have a red sports car!



What is Dot thinking?



Dot should ride a bike!



Dot sold her bike and bought a red car!

How did Dot afford a sports car?

I saw Dot driving with a bunch of other chickens!

in the library world.”

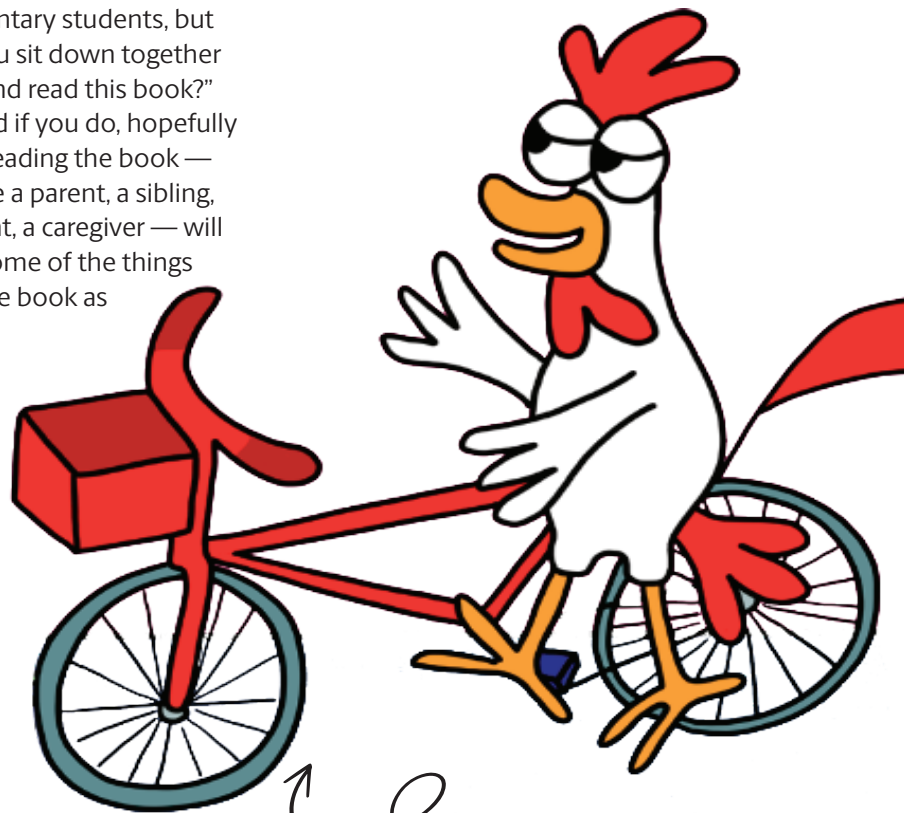
In the future, those involved with the project want to develop supplementary material for the book in classrooms, such as lesson plans or resource guides. But the initial plan is to share the book with elementary schools through Cocky's Reading Express.

“I hope that the book gets a lot of positive press — that it's something that a lot of schools will request and want to use,” Shelek says. “Hopefully, we'll hear things like, ‘Hey, can we purchase that book? We want to add it to our home library, or we want to add it to our classroom library or media center.’”

And the impact of *Dot Buys a Bike* could go beyond the classroom. Shelek sees it potentially sparking conversations at home.

“This book is geared toward

those elementary students, but why can't you sit down together as a family and read this book?” she said. “And if you do, hopefully the person reading the book — whether it be a parent, a sibling, a grandparent, a caregiver — will pick up on some of the things that are in the book as well.”



Meet Dot the chicken!

Interested in *Dot Buys a Bike*? Email Rebekah Friedman at [rebekahb@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:rebekahb@mailbox.sc.edu) for information on getting a copy.



# RESEARCH RABBIT HOLES

Story by Gillian Haviland, Senior, Public Relations



With boundless information at our fingertips, it's easy to get lost in curiosity. A simple search can lead to a page, which leads to another, which leads to several more until you're 10 tabs deep and 45 minutes short. MLIS alumna Jenna Strawbridge channels this same unique, relentless curiosity daily — and she's lucky enough to call it her career.

Strawbridge, '20, works as a federal contractor for the Environmental Protection Agency with Oak Ridge Associated Universities. As a digital research librarian, she helps teams of scientists connect the dots between their own research projects and related references.

"The goal is to provide transparency to the research process at the EPA," she says. "It's this kind of back and forth of trying to start with a really big pool of information and get it down as narrow as possible.

Then we go in, and we connect all of those citations to a central database."

Strawbridge and her team make those enticing "rabbit hole" research moments possible through work on the Health and Environmental Research Online database. Her team compiles thousands of references through major online databases for scientists to review, and from there they refine, and link the references back to HERO for publication. The finished product — a public research report — wraps all the featured references into an accessible, hyperlinked list of works cited for anyone to explore.

While completing her MLIS, she was originally called to librarianship in higher education, but her work with the EPA has inspired a new perspective.

"I feel like librarianship has really changed in the past 20 years," she says. "So much of librarianship now is online, it's digital, it's information-based, it's technology-based. The fun thing about being a librarian is that you're not a subject specialist, and I can tell that this is my thing. I like going down rabbit holes, and I love doing research."

Her experience at the iSchool made the transition to digital librarianship even sweeter. Stand-out courses that she calls upon in her current role include an introductory reference services class with associate professor Susan Rathbun-Grubb, an information retrieval class with associate professor Feili Tu-Keefner and assistant professor Amir Karami's design and database management class.

"What I appreciated most about this program was that they wanted you to be prepared to find a job as soon as you graduate and be successful," she said. "I was just shocked at how applicable almost all of my classes were to my daily work."

The relationships with her professors have also left a lasting impact on Strawbridge. Take her connection with associate professor Dick Kawooya. Once a student in Kawooya's academic libraries course, the two still keep in touch and have even run into each other through work on side projects.

"Jenna was an outstanding student, and her successes come as no surprise due to the standards she set herself in everything she does," Kawooya said. "We challenge our students to apply their information science skills to every situation involving organizing information in support of community or organizational needs. Working for the EPA is an excellent example of that."



# A Chance on EDUCATION

Story by Macaylee Jones, Senior, Public Relations

Larry Thomas says he could have done a lot of things with his gifts to the university, but that there was no doubt he wanted to invest in underrepresented students.

“It matters that they know somebody is out there, wanting them to achieve,” says Thomas, who joined the university as vice president of communications in 2020.

The '83 SJMC alumnus says his time at South Carolina was so rewarding that he wanted to give back when he reached the point in his career that he could. Eventually, he set up the Janie Mae and Lafayette Thomas Scholarship to honor his parents.

“My mom and dad never passed the sixth grade,” he says. “Back in those days they had to work the fields to make a living. Since they didn't get a chance to go to higher education, they were committed that my siblings and I would go.”

Further into his career, he established the Larry and Delores Marie Thomas Scholarship with his wife. He says it was important because he knows how challenging financing college as a minority can be.

“I worked my way through college because I had to,” he says. “If I can create an opportunity to make life a little easier for someone who's needing a little boost financially, I am happy to.”

The Thomases recently met this



Left to right: Marie Thomas, scholarship recipients Trenton King, Kayla Jeffers and Caroline Tolly, and Larry Thomas.

year's recipients at a luncheon. He says it's exciting to meet promising young J-school students.

“It reminds me of that youthful exuberance I had when I was there,” he says. “I try to give them words of wisdom on how I've survived throughout my career in communications and PR.”

One of those students is junior visual communications major Kayla Jeffers.

“It was nice that they wanted to get to know us and give us advice for our careers,” Jeffers says. Jeffers is a CIC ambassador, a member of the Association of African American students, public relations chair of the National Association of Black Journalists and co-news director of NABJ TV.

Jeffers says she is grateful for

the scholarship and hopes to be a creative director for a company like Nike or use her love for storytelling to work on documentaries.

“It means a lot for someone to invest in my education — for someone to see potential in what I'm trying to do in life and want to help,” she says.

Thomas knows what a difference it makes for students to feel like someone is taking a chance on them.

“There were always points in my career where I was asking someone to believe in me — to take a chance and give me an opportunity to achieve, and if they did, I would not let them down,” he says. “It's important for our alumni to take that chance to give back to the next generation.”

# JOURNALISM THROUGH NUMBERS

## Alumna Anna Wiederkehr tells stories with statistics

By Lauren Arabis, Senior, Visual Communications

If you turned to the internet for insights leading up to the 2020 presidential election, there's a good chance you're already familiar with Anna Wiederkehr's work. Wiederkehr, a 2012 visual communications alumna, is the senior visual journalist for FiveThirtyEight, a website that uses statistical data to explore everything from sports to politics. As the design leader of the team, she edits other journalists' work, leads critiques and ensures things look and feel FiveThirtyEight across the board.

Having a journalistic background, as opposed to one in design or computer science, has been an asset. "I have that edge of understanding editorial and understanding that it's not always about the beauty of the design and the technical implementation — it's also about if the story is relevant and what the editorial drive is behind why we're publishing it," she says. Telling stories with data has helped her to create work that is trustworthy and compelling. "FiveThirtyEight is almost primarily data-driven work," Wiederkehr says. "I think people are much more willing to see us as a credible organization based on the type of data journalism that we produce."

Her father, a geography professor at South Carolina, brought her to tour the J-school in high school. That's when she met associate professor Van Kornegay. "Anna stood out before she was ever a student," Kornegay says. "I could just tell by the way she talked that she was full of energy and full of life. I was teaching a workshop on animation, and I invited her

to come and learn. It was obvious to me pretty quickly that she was really talented and a quick learner." The two have been in contact ever since. He sees himself as more of a coach to her than a mentor, cheering her on and pointing her to resources and opportunities. "Being a mentor seems like you have a lot to teach a person but she's a self-starter," Kornegay says. "I knew right away that she was a student who was going to be better than me real quick."

When Wiederkehr first graduated, she took a role that was web- and graphic design-focused, but she got more into data visualization after a couple of years. "I was creating really amazing websites and explorable databases, but it wasn't the same audience that a newspaper or news website serves," she says. "I wanted to approach it like that and try my hand at creating work for a wide and large audience."

Storytelling is a critical element of data visualization. "If you don't have a sense of how to take data and make a story out of it, make it accessible, memorable or relevant to an audience, then knowing how to scrape a database and turn it into a graph is not necessarily that helpful unless you're a really good storyteller," Kornegay says.

Wiederkehr hopes the work she's doing to tell those stories at FiveThirtyEight will help people make more informed decisions. "I think that data is helpful in this very polarizing world that we live in and helpful when people have a lot of different information coming at them from a bunch of different places," she says.





# Social justice in the media

Story by Mary Kate Griffin, Junior, Public Relations

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones was the keynote speaker for the joint CIC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Research Symposium and SJMC Media & Civil Rights History Symposium in March. The event was sponsored by the CIC and the university's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The theme of this year's Media & Civil Rights History Symposium was "Social Justice and the Media," which made Hannah-Jones an obvious choice.

Hannah-Jones is an investigative reporter who covers civil rights and racial injustice for The New York Times Magazine. She is also the creator of the landmark 1619 Project which commemorates the 400th anniversary of the beginning of slavery in the United States. The project aims to examine slavery's modern legacy and reframe the way history and the contributions of Black Americans are understood.

"Media has had a significant influence on not only how the broader audience sees people of color, but how people of color see themselves," said associate professor Kenneth Campbell, who organizes the history symposium. "We get a lot of what we think about one another from mass media. The more accurate the media represents people, the more we will be able to see beyond stereotypes in one another."

The history symposium is held every two years, and the research symposium is held annually. Considering the recent activity

in the civil rights movement, the symposium presented a timely opportunity for the CIC and the university's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office to collaborate.

"This is a great time for the school and for the university given the social justice movement of the last year," Campbell said. "I think minds and eyes have been opened. We have become more receptive to a more accurate presentation of open history."

In addition to the symposium, the CIC is searching for more ways to engage students in conversations about social justice and race. Campbell helped develop the SJMC's Minorities, Women and Mass Media course. He said that it has become a significant course in the SJMC curriculum – but there is more work to be done.

The CIC has also hired three new faculty members whose research focuses on ethnicity and race at the intersection of data, media and society.

"We need to bring in more faculty who can help us with that focus in individual courses," Campbell said. "We hope they'll be



able to help us in to incorporate more diversity into already existing courses when it comes to race, ethnicity and the media."

As with anything, there is always room for growth.

"My hope is that we continue to grow and move in the right direction as we prepare students to understand themselves and one another, and to realize the significant role that the media plays in that understanding," Campbell said.

Shirley Staples Carter, the CIC's associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion, hopes Hannah-Jones' appearance raised awareness of social justice issues and provided an opportunity to share ideas.

"People are thinking about diversity, equity and inclusion in ways they haven't before," Carter said. "Anytime that we can provide intellectual stimulation and engage all of our audiences, internal and external, we think that's a win."

*Photo provided by Twitter user @LoreneK025.*

# PARTNERSHIP POSSIBILITIES

Story by Maggie Gries, Sophomore, Visual Communications

A new partnership between the University of South Carolina and the Charleston County Public Library system will create learning opportunities for librarians in South Carolina and beyond.

The Information Institute of the South is the working title for the effort. Organizers hope to develop an integrated clinical teaching environment for current and future library staff.

Libraries hold the responsibility of helping communities make better decisions and helping people find meaning in their lives, yet how that happens is changing.

“Doctors train by working in hospitals as students, so why can’t we do that?” says former School of Information Science Director David Lankes. “The idea is that students would gain experience in libraries and at the same time would be sharing new ideas and thoughts with the librarians who are already there.”

Lankes hopes the institute will provide more

opportunities for hands-on experience, helping graduates stand out in the job market. Joining scholarship with practice will also allow for the advancement of current librarians and library staff who can benefit from continuous education as the world around them changes.

This partnership will also raise the profile of Charleston’s libraries internationally.

“This is in direct alignment with our strategic visioning process,” says Angela Craig, executive director at CCPL. “We want to reach out to universities to help further that education for our staff, which also then cascades out to the public because if we have a well-educated, well-resourced staff and that becomes a resource feature as well. And we have just really benefited from being able to connect with USC ... and I’m just very excited about these next steps that we’re taking.”



EXPAND RESOURCES

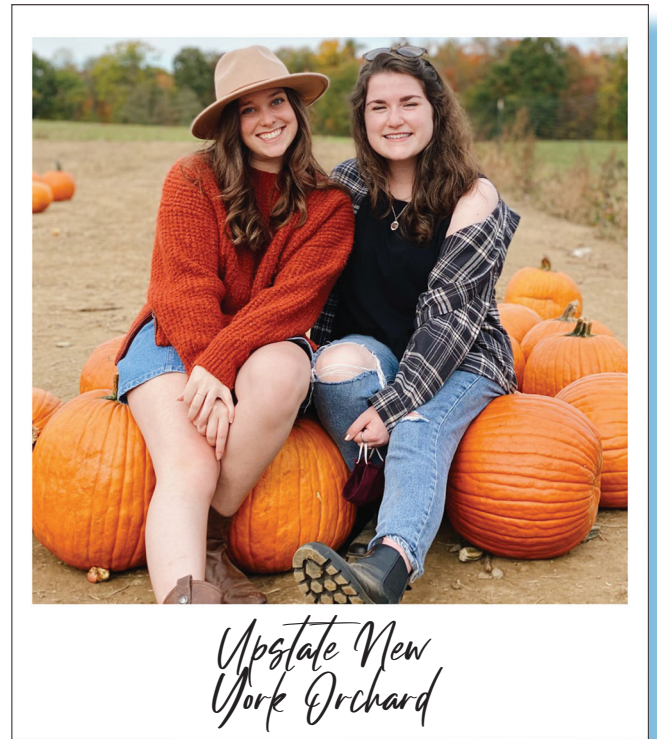
CONTINUOUS LEARNING

GLOBAL RECOGNITION





*Central Park  
Pre-Pandemic*



*Upstate New  
York Orchard*



*Central Park  
during the pandemic*

# FROM THE CITY OF DREAMS TO THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS

Story by Erin Springer, Senior, Public Relations

SJMC alumnae Jordan Grimmesey and Kathryn Stoudemire brought a piece of the University of South Carolina with them by moving together to New York City.

The two 2019 graduates never saw themselves moving to the Big Apple and didn't even know each other as students. Each took a chance moving far from home to work in a new city with a stranger, but they quickly became friends and adapted to the fast-paced life New Yorkers live.

"I feel like I have to move a little faster," Grimmesey says. "I've noticed I've become a little less patient after living here."

Since the onset of COVID-19, they've both worked in their living room at opposite corners. Grimmesey is an experience designer for Verizon, and Stoudemire is an account executive on the digital health team at Burson Cohn & Wolfe Global.

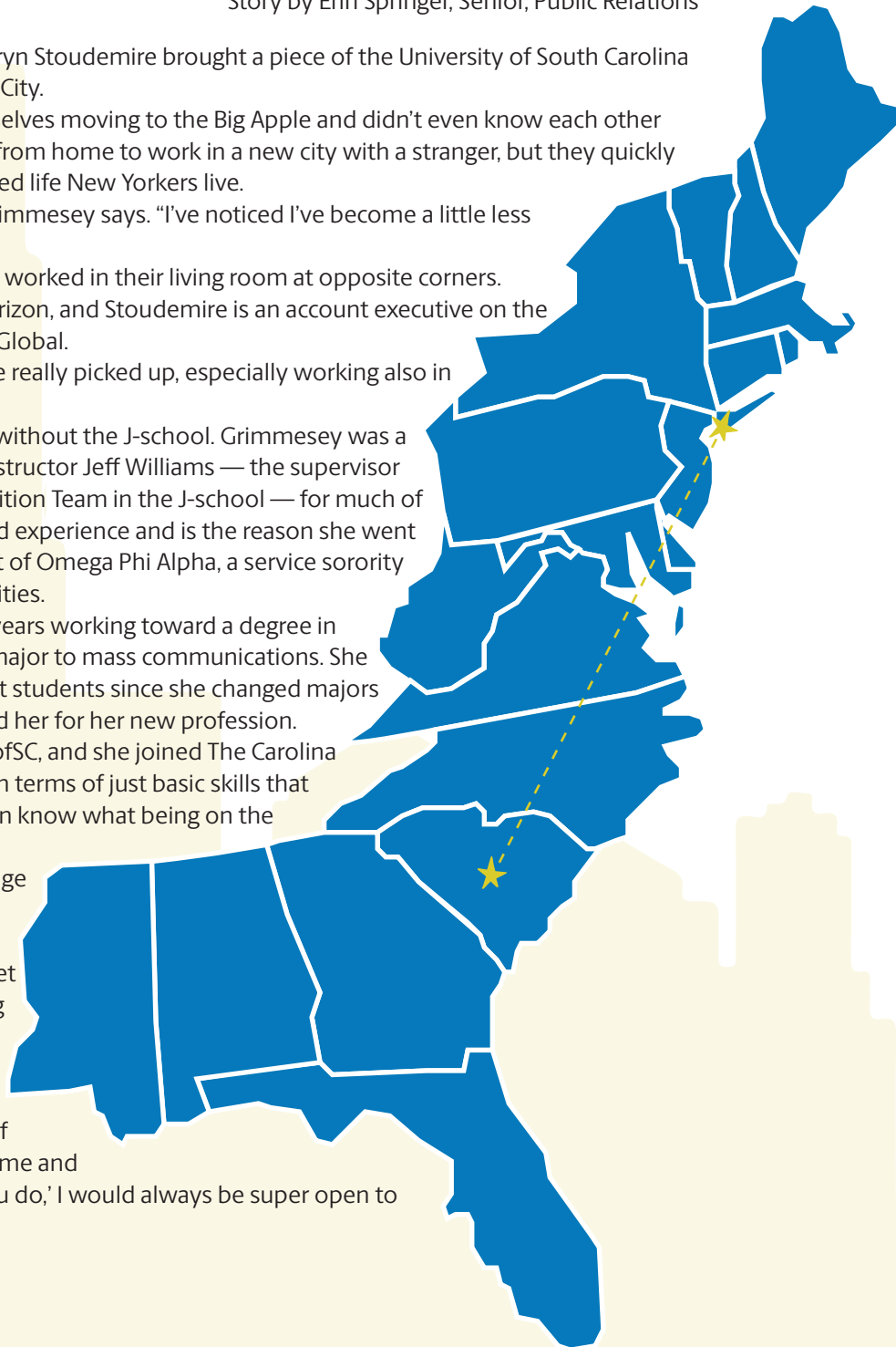
"Most jobs kind of slowed down, but mine really picked up, especially working also in the health care space," Stoudemire said.

They would not be where they are today without the J-school. Grimmesey was a visual communications major and credits instructor Jeff Williams — the supervisor of the National Student Advertising Competition Team in the J-school — for much of her success. The Ad Team gave her real-world experience and is the reason she went into the advertising sector. She was also part of Omega Phi Alpha, a service sorority that provided her with leadership opportunities.

Stoudemire completed three out of four years working toward a degree in broadcast journalism before switching her major to mass communications. She had a different college experience than most students since she changed majors with one year left, but the J-school equipped her for her new profession. Stoudemire participated in CreateAthon@UofSC, and she joined The Carolina Agency her senior year which "helped a lot in terms of just basic skills that I didn't learn elsewhere, because I didn't even know what being on the account side meant."

Grimmesey and Stoudemire took advantage of what the J-school had to offer, and their hard work paid off. They have made a home out of New York City and enjoy having a quiet place to retire after a long day in the bustling city. They also enjoy all the food in the city, especially Chinese food and boba.

The two have learned that being a Gamecock lasts longer than the four years of college. "If anyone from USC reached out to me and was like, 'I would love to talk about what you do,' I would always be super open to talking to them," Grimmesey says.





# Reaching more patients in need

Story by Emily Britman, Junior, Public Relations

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to never hear your loved one speak a full sentence again? Unfortunately, that was the case for 1971 SJMC alumnus Murray Howard after his father was diagnosed with aphasia following a stroke. The experience eventually inspired Howard to reach out to The Carolina Agency at the SJMC with an idea to help people like his father get treatment.

Aphasia is a condition that impairs communication after events such as strokes or head injuries. It affects each person differently, and the symptoms can range from mild to severe. Howard's father learned to dress himself again, eat at the table and even do math, but his speech never fully recovered.

Decades later, Howard and his brother didn't think about aphasia much until they read an article in one of the university's alumni magazines about Dr. Julius Fridriksson's research at the University of South Carolina's Aphasia Lab, where MRI and behavioral testing is used to learn more about aphasia recovery and treatment.

"Wow, there's somebody actually working on this," he said. "About this time, we had established scholarships at the CIC and business school, and one of our tours to the CIC included The Carolina Agency. I got to thinking about the Aphasia Lab and said, well, maybe The Carolina Agency could work with the Aphasia Lab because they were in need of materials and publicity."

TCA is a student-run public relations agency that serves clients across the Southeast. In the fall 2020 semester, TCA created a strategic communications plan to help the lab do more community outreach, better reach their audience and raise awareness of the events they offer.

"The Carolina Agency has just been fabulous about building up our community outreach support and getting the word out," said Lynsey Keator, a doctoral student who conducts research in the lab. "There are very few resources available to this population, so getting resources out that are accessible to people who have a language disorder has been



really important, and it's making professionals like speech language pathologists and neurologists knowledgeable that we exist and that we're here."

Throughout the spring semester, TCA continued to work with the lab to create graphics, social media content calendars and testimonial videos for people involved in the research at the lab. The main goal has been clear throughout the whole process — to build community outreach.

"The Carolina Agency has helped us really build up our social media platforms to help us promote our upcoming aphasia community event," Keator said. "And they've really just brought to light some important things that we hadn't even considered when distributing our media."



## CAN TCA HELP YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Email [tcauofsc@gmail.com](mailto:tcauofsc@gmail.com) to learn more about partnership opportunities.

# PUBLIC RELATIONS TO POLITICS

Story by Sydney Campbell, Junior, Public Relations



When she graduated in December 2019, public relations major Claire Robinson jumped into the political big leagues — and The Carolina Agency played a part in helping her get there. As an undergraduate student, Robinson was heavily involved with TCA — the J-school’s student-run public relations firm. She served as director her senior year, assigning students to various clients and managing the agency-wide leadership initiative.

During this time, she also discovered her love of politics as a State House page. She worked as a communications intern for a gubernatorial candidate and worked with a city council race to get municipal experience.

Fast forward to 2019: Robinson was offered the job of director of campaigns for a startup consultant firm. After graduating, she began to work with 14 clients, guiding them with the perfect strategy for each race.

In 2020, she decided to embark on a new venture and joined the South Carolina Republican Party as communications director. No day is the same when working for a political party.

Depending on the election cycle, Robinson begins her mornings listening to her chairman’s radio interviews followed by reading the news. Emails are checked, news releases are drafted and stories are pitched.

“One of my favorite memories, when I realized ‘wow, I am actually doing this on my own,’ was when some not-so-great news came out about a political candidate, and I had to take initiative to put a story together,” Robinson said.

Taking on such a rigorous job early in her career,



*Robinson and State Chairman Drew McKissick participate in a Zoom interview with Fox News.*

Robinson owes a lot of it to the J-school and her time at The Carolina Agency. Part of her job is helping the state executive committee with media training. “Everything I taught them was straight out of my notes from school,” she says.

Two of the biggest things Robinson took from her time at The Carolina Agency are confidence and learning to deal with the press. “Graduating early and getting such an important position so soon after is intimidating,” she says. “But now I know the process and what to do in certain situations, and I wouldn’t if I didn’t attend the J-school.”





# Teachers OF THE YEAR

Story By Abigail Martin, Senior, Public Relations

The image of the school librarian checking out books and shushing patrons is a thing of the past. That's because the role of the modern librarian has evolved. Teacher of the Year recipients Erin Long and Shelley Ward are prime examples of librarians who exercise their education in many more ways than logging book checkouts.

Long graduated from the iSchool in 2019 with a master's degree in library and information science. "I like working with kids," she says. "I really wanted to make sure that kids knew how to read information, not just read literature." Her MLIS degree fills in the

gaps of what she didn't learn from her undergraduate experience. "Research was a big deal — quality research, looking at multiple sources," she says. "I think that was my biggest takeaway from school." She even learned how to code websites.

A library media specialist at Wade Hampton High School, Long received the Greenville County School District Teacher of the Year award in 2020. Working with high school students has given her the opportunity to advise them on college decisions — filling out applications, creating a budget, determining whether a school is a good fit for their career goals



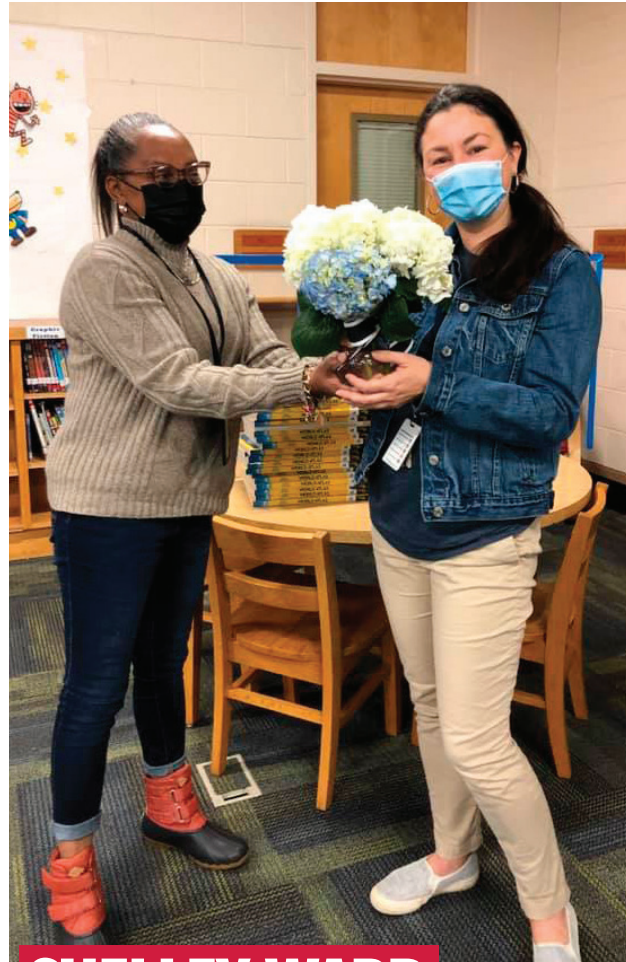
## **ERIN LONG**

### *2020 Greenville County School District Teacher of the Year award*

and even applying for financial aid — in addition to her daily schedule. “Nobody did that for me,” she says. “I had no clue, and I just feel like kids need to know.”

And COVID-19 has added even more duties to her plate. “We’ve created videos to go online, and we’re constantly on the phone with kids walking them through how to do things,” she says. “I believed in way more technology-based learning this year than ever before.”

Ward earned her MLIS in the iSchool’s Charleston County cohort. She is now a librarian at Belle Hall Elementary in Charleston. “One of the biggest things that I’ve been doing recently is helping them access



## **SHELLEY WARD**

### *2020-21 Belle Hall Elementary Teacher of the Year*

digital databases so they can conduct research,” she says. “And they have audiobooks and eBooks, so I’ve been helping them learn how to access that, too.”

Ward’s calling has always been teaching. “Reading should be a pleasurable activity,” she says. “I just want to hook them and get them started.”

Whether it’s getting elementary school kids to love reading or helping high school students plan for college, there are many layers to being a librarian. “People need to realize it’s not just about books any longer,” Long says. “My library is noisy. It’s not this boring career — my job is exciting and fun, and I think it can be anything you want it to be.”



# A leg UP



**EMILY CHAVEZ**

Story by Contessa Davis, Senior, Public Relations

The SJMC works to ensure students graduate with the skills needed to stand out in the job market. For first-generation college graduate Emily Chavez, '19, being one of the first of three University of South Carolina students to earn the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations has given her resume an invaluable edge.

After graduating a semester early, Chavez wanted to do something productive with her time. Public relations sequence head Kelly Davis encouraged her to take the CPPR exam to demonstrate to employers her understanding of the field's 13 KSAs — knowledge, skills and abilities.

The CPPR is the result of five years of research and development by public relations subject matter experts. It's unique in that it requires applicants to be within six months of graduation — before or after — from an accredited college or university. Applicants must also have a degree in public relations or a related field and be members of the Public Relations Student Society of America.

"It's not all black and white," Chavez said. "You have to apply these concepts and theories to conceptual situations. I felt like I knew how to handle that because of the program at UofSC."

The encouragement she received from J-school faculty to take the exam has given her the leg up needed to secure the position of assistant account executive at Finn Partners — one of the fastest growing, independent global marketing communications firms in the world.

"The amount of job interviews I had within the past year is ridiculous," Chavez said. "Seventy-five percent of employers brought up the exam without me even having to."

Shelby Hurt, '19, also passed the CPPR exam. Hurt is continuing her studies in the Master of Mass Communication program at the J-school and is director of the student-led firm The Carolina Agency.

"I felt like someone took my entire degree and condensed it into a test," Hurt said. "Being able to



**SHELBY HURT**



**SAMANTHA CUSTER**

show that I have taken the extra step to demonstrate that I have these core competencies is going to make me stand out to future employers.”

Samantha Custer, '20, was the third student to pass the exam. She had the experience of studying for and taking it during the height of COVID-19.

“The J-school was a great preparation for this course,” Custer said. “In school, I felt like I was so concerned with writing press releases, keeping up with the newest trends in AP style and making sure my writing ability was the best because that’s where I felt most of the pressure lied. This course was a great reminder that everything else we learned in the J-school is equally as important.”

According to these alumnae, the study-course developed by faculty members of the PRSA Educators Academy and produced by the Public Relations Society of America is very flexible if the applicant puts forth the effort.

“I think we would all be super familiar with the

format by now after going to Zoom University the past semester,” Hurt said. “It ran just like a Zoom PowerPoint lecture, and I benefited from stopping and rewinding whenever something did not click.”

When it comes to the content of the study course, Chavez was strong in certain areas and weak in others. “I think everyone knows where their weaknesses are and for me it’s business literacy,” she said. “I was only getting one or two answers wrong on the quizzes because this is what we were taught. All it took was studying a little extra to get it at the top of our brain instead of the back.”

The Universal Accreditation Board has an aggressive marketing campaign with employers of new public relations graduates to make them aware of the CPPR and what it means in their hiring decisions. By including the CPPR on their resumes, these successful students have an opportunity to explain the certificate to a potential employer and set themselves apart from others.



# Bridging the gap between students and real-world opportunities

Story by Matt Edwards, Senior, Public Relations



Pandemic or no pandemic, job searching can seem like a tall order.

Visual communications instructor Jason Porter acknowledges students can be anxious and second-guess their abilities when the time comes for them to enter the real world.

“I think when students look at careers post-graduation, there is sort of an ivory tower look to it,” he says. “They may think, ‘Oh, I can’t get that job. I’m not qualified. I’m not good enough.’”

But Porter also knows his students are incredibly talented and deserving of the dream jobs they’ve worked hard to prepare for. That’s why he makes careers more accessible to them by welcoming guest speakers into his classroom.

When the COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to in-person classes in spring 2020, Porter launched his “Let’s Get a Job” podcast as a way to continue sharing guest speakers with students.

In each episode, he interviews guests who work in creative media fields such as augmented reality, visual journalism, graphic design for athletic apparel, animation design and wedding photography.

“The guests are all based on the jobs students want, and I try to stick to it as close as possible,” he says. “If a student says, ‘I’m interested in moving to Nashville, and I’m really interested in art direction,’ I want to specifically try to find an art director in Nashville who’s doing the type of work they want.”

Porter strives to capture the guests’ perspectives on how his JOUR 560: Capstone Portfolio Development students can get

started in the industry and what it will take for them to achieve continued success in their careers.

One of his favorite aspects of hosting is the interview process, which he excitedly says has allowed him to talk to some of his own design “heroes.”

“Last semester I talked to a design duo whose names are Adi Goodrich and Sean Pecknold, and I am very much obsessed — I have a professional crush on Adi’s work,” Porter says. “So, the idea that a student was interested in the type of work they were doing, I was like, ‘This is amazing.’ I could not only answer questions for the students but also get to meet some of my design inspirations.”

Although Porter teaches fewer than 20 students in his Capstone Portfolio Development course, each episode of his podcast gets listeners from all over the country.

One of those listeners is Kayla Reese, a December 2020 graduate and Fremont, Nebraska, native who has landed a job as an associate graphic designer with Gallup Inc.

After transferring to South Carolina from the University of South Dakota, Reese found her niche in the SJMC’s visual communications sequence and ultimately had Porter for two out of four classes in her final semester.

Porter strives to inspire students like Reese however he can and help open doors for them — even if they don’t know those doors exist.

After Reese listened to the episode featuring TV and film graphic designer Megan Greydanus, she reached out to Greydanus to learn more about her career — a niche field within graphic design the

podcast introduced Reese to.

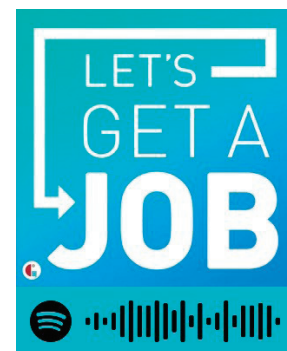
“I still listen to the podcast and I’ll continue listening because I have learned so much about different kinds of jobs,” Reese says. “I’ve always been super interested in the film industry, so I reached out to her to ask her how she got into the field.”

Although Reese took a lot away from Porter’s classes — namely his augmented reality and portfolio development classes — his impact on her extends beyond her time at the SJMC.

“Even if I am not trying to go into a field that one of the guests on the podcast are in, I am still really interested in listening to it because it inspires me and motivates me to continue pursuing what I want to do,” Reese says.

Naturally, Porter finds pleasure in knowing his podcast allows him to play a role in the professional development of students like Reese.

“I’ve had multiple students tell me that there is a career path that they had not considered based on somebody who was interviewed and that they were going to reach out to that person,” Porter says. “Then the guests will reach out to me to tell me a student reached out. It’s amazing. We’re connecting the circle of careers here, and I get really excited about that.”



Listen to the podcast on Spotify!



# A CHARACTER LIKE THEMSELVES

Story by Kassidy Wright, Senior, Visual Communications

**School media specialist Alexis Cannon Hale (2010 MLIS) was disappointed when she found out about the underrepresentation of limb loss in children's literature. Her discovery inspired her to write "It's Me, Zoey!" starring her daughter as the main character.**

**Published in 2020, the brightly illustrated picture book celebrates the differences that make people unique. Hale shares more about the book — and its namesake.**

## **Can you start by telling me about you and Zoey?**

Zoey just turned 8, but she was born very early; she was what's called a micro preemie. She was 12 weeks early and she weighed a pound and 13 ounces at birth. Her first outfit was an American Girl Miniature doll outfit — that's how small she was. She was in the hospital for three months after she was born. Zoey had amniotic band syndrome. Basically, a ligament that got removed from the womb and wrapped its

way around her fingers on her left hand and her wrist on her right hand. And as she grew, it didn't, but she came out as a fighter. She's defied all odds from the very beginning. Zoey is on the spectrum as a sensory seeker, which is something that most people don't know about. I didn't know about it until she was diagnosed with it, but sensory seekers are adrenaline junkies in their youngest form. She doesn't process pain the same way other people do.

## **What was it like when Zoey first started school?**

She started school when she was 2 years old and she's grown up in the same school. We were one of the few military families that didn't move because of her medical conditions. The kids at school were scared like they thought it was missing. They thought she was hurting. They thought that she couldn't do anything. They were uneasy. They weren't scared of her as much as they were scared of what was happening to her.

### When she gets a reaction like that, how does she respond?

She doesn't know any different and she doesn't let it bother her. It is very normal for her and for people to ask questions. We've always been very open. Don't stand there and be scared or think we're a sideshow at the circus. Ask us questions and realize that she is one of the most amazing people you'll ever meet. Because she is — she climbs the rock walls, she opens the milk containers at school, she writes with a pen and pencil. She does all the things that you would normally think of.

### What motivated you to write the book?

Zoey had an amazing kindergarten teacher, and when it became an issue where the kids were nervous and didn't know how to act appropriately, her teacher said, "I can't find any books." The ones I looked at weren't what we were looking for.

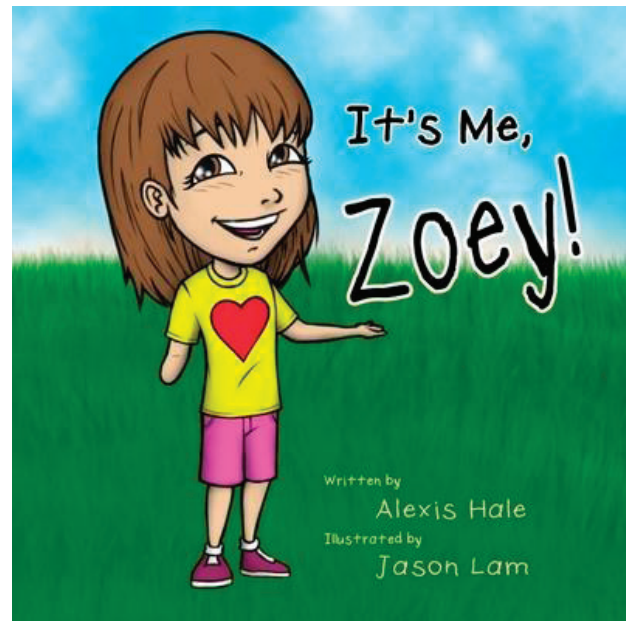
I did find *Different Is Awesome*, which is an amazing book. That was my favorite. But at that point I was like, "You know what, there are no characters like my baby." There are no amputee characters in movies, books or shows. She didn't have characters that looked like her, and that wasn't OK.

### What are your hopes for the book's influence on children?

Normalization of limb differences is one of the big things for me. Even if it's a cartoon picture book, they need representation. And they need other kids to see it too, so that it's not like "Where's your hand? What is the matter with her?"

### Did anyone from the CIC influence you to tell Zoey's story?

In the School of Library and Information Science, there was Pat Feehan, and she was the children's literature teacher. She was so animated and enthusiastic. You could tell she loved stories, and she loved all of them. She was one of those that really gave me the enthusiasm to do it. She had so much joy for children's books. She was what I wanted to be — what I wanted to show. And my parents are both UofSC alumni. My dad was like, "You need to write it, you need to. It needs to be told. You will never back



down from saying something, but there's a mom out there who doesn't know how to say anything. You need to talk for them."

### Is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to talk about?

My friend came over during COVID actually and illustrated it, and every picture in the book is an actual picture of Zoey's activities. To the point of spinning, twirling and playing soccer. Then on the back, every one of these people is in her life including the other two amputee characters. Kim Stumbo, the author of *The Adventures of The One Arm Wondermom*, is featured in the book. Zoey likes to call them the ampu-twins. The font is my handwriting. It only mentions her hand once, then everything else is just pure empowerment for children.

### It seems like it's very personalized.

It really is, but it's universal. I actually got Zoey's input — she helped me with it. This was her story. Everything I make from the books goes directly toward making more books for children with limb differences, because I will be making a series called *The Adventures of Boom and Zoom* about things she can do that people don't expect her to be able to do. I did it so that my child and children like her have a character who looks like them. I want to make it a normal thing, something that's not shocking. It's my job as her mom, and I'll continue to do it.



# EIGHT CIC FACULTY MEMBERS RETIRE IN 2020

*In December, eight longtime CIC employees retired: Jill Chappell-Fail, Ernest Wiggins, Madonna Stoehr, Cecile Holmes, Debi Wallace, Lisa Sisk, Karen Mallia and Carol Pardun. We caught up with a few of them to look back on their careers and find out what's next.*

Story by Riley Jankowski, Senior, Public Relations



## JILL CHAPPELL-FAIL

*Senior Information Resource Consultant*

### **Favorite Memory**

“There are so many great memories, it’s hard to decide. One particularly sweet moment: I participated in graduation for my MLIS degree in December 1999. After shaking hands with Dean Fred Roper and President John Palms, I stepped off the stage at the Carolina Coliseum, dizzy and overwhelmed by the crowd. My eyes fell on the SLIS faculty dressed in their regalia and cheering for me at the tops of their lungs. Bolstered by their smiles and spirit, I got back to my seat without tripping over my gown and heels. Never before had I ever felt so proud to be a Carolinian.”

### **Future Life Plans**

“Pre-COVID, I’d always envisioned spending retirement as one of the little old ladies on the tour bus. Reality check, post-COVID, I plan to work on my dwelling, travel when allowed, attend as many concerts and festivals as possible and enjoy the family and friends I have left.”

## KAREN MALLIA

*Professor*

### **Favorite Memory**

“I truly cannot say I have one singular favorite memory within my time here at the University of South Carolina. There are so many memories that stand out that I cannot just pick one defining memory because there are a lot of different memories for different reasons and I cherish that.”

### **Future Life Plans:**

“I want to continue exploring and to shift into a lower gear because I’ve spent the last 40 years of my life going full tilt. I am looking forward to having a little bit more opportunity to follow serendipity somewhere.”



Left to right: Cocky with Jill Chappell-Fail; Chappell-Fail and her father at graduation; Lisa Sisk and Karen Mallia at the Super Ad Poll.



## LISA SISK

Senior Instructor

### Favorite Memory

"When I announced my diagnosis of primary progressive aphasia was the most important memory. The outpouring of support was very humbling. My colleagues outdid themselves with offers of help and assistance."

### Future Life Plans

"I am teaching as an adjunct this fall semester. I hope to continue teaching as long as I can."

## DEBI WALLACE

Student Services Administrative Assistant

### Favorite Memory

"I just enjoyed working with the students — they were my everything. I loved being the first face they saw and saying 'Sweetheart, how can I help you?' My theory always was if you cannot be helpful to students, then you don't need to work at Carolina. I wanted to be students' home away from home and a place of safe haven."

### Future Life Plans

"Learning to enjoy life again without my students."



## ERNEST WIGGINS

Associate Professor

### Favorite Memory

"I've been here for nearly 30 years, so I have lots of great memories. One that comes to mind is the time at the end of a semester that I wasn't entirely pleased with. Some semesters are like that. You never fully get into the groove. It was the last lecture in the Honors section of the Survey of Mass Comm course, I believe. I remember working particularly hard on that lecture. It's just as important to end the semester on the right note as it is to begin it properly. I don't recall what I said — the specifics are lost to me — but when I looked up from my notes at the end, the class started clapping. It was a little surreal. Who does that? That hadn't happened before and it hasn't happened since. To this day, I haven't a clue why they did it but I was really touched."

### Future Life Plans

"I have several projects I'm working on for my own edification — writing some creative pieces, developing my photographic skills (I'm not good, but I enjoy it), traveling the state to visit towns that are close to disappearing and recording what I find, reading much more for pleasure than for work. I'm an old-school reporter. So many things interest me. I won't have any trouble keeping busy."



Left to right: Mallia with Cocky; Debi Wallace at Halloween; Ernie Wiggins at a J-school event.



# THE MANY WAYS TO GIVE

Philanthropy has a tremendous impact on University of South Carolina students, faculty and staff. The generosity of our donors improves the lives of many, and for that, we are extremely thankful. To ensure that future generations can continue receiving the benefits of philanthropy, we offer the following ways to provide support. We would love to hear from you and begin a conversation about what may interest you or answer your questions.

## CASH

New gifts may be given to the university at any time. Honorary and/or memorial gifts may be directed to a new or existing fund to increase the principal. Gifts may also be made directly to the annual spendable amount to increase the benefit for any given year(s).



*"I felt like I owed a huge debt of gratitude to the college and former Dean Al Scroggins. Both had been so instrumental in my career development. The college was in the middle of a large renovation project to get the building ready, and I felt cash was the best way to help."*

- Diane Creel, '70, '74

## MATCHING GIFT

Many companies have matching-gift programs that increase the overall impact of your personal gift. For more information, please visit [sc.edu/matchinggifts](http://sc.edu/matchinggifts).



*"I really appreciate that my employer, Dominion Energy, matches my annual gift to the University. It's like having a partner in education who helps me double my investment. It adds up over the years and has the potential to make a real impact and hopefully help a student in need."*

- Therese Griffin, '82

## CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY

Part gift and part annuity, the charitable gift annuity is a contract between the UofSC Educational Foundation and the donor, by which the foundation promises to pay a fixed annuity to the donor or donor/spouse for life in exchange for cash or appreciated property. The minimum amount to create a gift annuity is \$50,000. Payout rates are capped at 7 percent.

## REAL ESTATE AND PERSONAL PROPERTY

Gifts of appreciated real estate and property, such as antiques, collections, art and books used for our educational mission, also carry the beneficial tax treatment.

**WANT TO JOIN THE DEAN'S CIRCLE SOCIETY?**

Learn more and see members at [bit.ly/cic-deans-circle](http://bit.ly/cic-deans-circle)



## BEQUEST

One of the most common types of planned gifts is a bequest, which can reduce taxes in large estates. For more modest estates, a bequest gives you the flexibility of keeping your assets during your life while also determining how they will be used upon your death.

## CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST

For larger life-income gifts, this trust permits a donor to make a gift of appreciated assets, avoid all capital gains taxes that would come with a sale and receive a payment stream for life.

## RETIREMENT PLAN

Because of favorable tax treatment, the retirement plan has become a popular savings tool. It is also the most efficient way of making a gift at death. Just request a change-of-beneficiary form from your plan administrator.

## IRA ROLLOVER GIFT

If you are 70 1/2 or older, consider making a gift of up to \$100,000 from your IRA. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.

## GIFT PLANNING



We can maximize your gift by guiding it to the areas where it can do the most good, for the university and for you. You may qualify for tax savings or even get a monthly payment in return.

*“Planned giving was the perfect way for me to leave a gift to the school that has given me so much more over the years than I can ever repay. I had two reasons for my planned gift: One was that I wanted to provide some assistance to future school administrators by providing some unencumbered funds that can be used for anything deemed necessary.*

*The second — and most important to me personally — was my desire to honor my former assistant dean, Gayle Douglas Johnson. For 17 years, she and I worked side by side as one. I can't tell you how incredibly important she was to the success of anything achieved by the school. I saw this as a way to recognize and honor her. She and I had budget responsibility, and unencumbered funds would have been an incredible help!*

*Whatever your reasons for making a gift to the school, you can design your gift in the manner you wish it to be received and for the uses you specify. There is no right or wrong way to make a planned gift — only your way.”*

*- Fred Roper, former iSchool dean*

# Higher. Farther. Greater.

## HIGHER

Scholarships and fellowships open doors for students seeking an education. Resources that provide tools, teaching, tutoring and training empower our students to achieve their academic, research and personal goals.

## FARTHER

International studies take our students beyond the classroom and magnifies the impact of their education. About 30 percent of undergraduate students enhance their learning experience by studying abroad. Financial support from donors makes it possible.

## GREATER

Endowed funds allow the university to attract the best and brightest professors and researchers, who bring excellence into our classrooms and labs and raise our profile as a top-tier institution.

**For more information  
please contact  
Elaine Arnold, Senior  
Director of Development  
at 803-777-6898 or  
earnold@sc.edu**

**[bit.ly/cic-giving](http://bit.ly/cic-giving)**

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# ALUMNI Notes

## 1970s

**Walt Sprouse, BA, 1973**, recently donated more than 10,000 feet of 16mm movie film to the Moving Image Research Collections of University Libraries. The film features rare sound movies from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The MIRC is in the process of digitizing each frame to preserve the collection and make certain the images are available for multimedia students in the future.



**Dwayne Sutton, BA, 1986**, along with his daughter Lauren, a 2021 CIC graduate, launched Black Alumni Report. The website highlights the significant achievements of Black alumni from any school, undergraduate and graduate, in the United States. It is published by Parrish Street Press, a digital media company, for which he is the C.E.O.

## 1980s

**Jeff Charney, BA, 1981**, was named 2021 Brand CMO of the Year by Ad Age. Charney is chief marketing officer for Progressive.

**Win McNamee, BA, 1985**, received the White House Correspondents' Association's 2021 Award for Excellence in Presidential News Coverage by Visual Journalists. McNamee is chief photographer for Getty Images.

**Lee Satterfield, BA, 1989**, has been nominated by President Biden to serve as assistant secretary for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Satterfield is president and chief operating officer of Meridian International, a nonprofit diplomacy center.

## 1990s

**Lorene Kennard, MLIS, 1999**, is producing and hosting The Librarian Linkover podcast. Kennard's guests highlight the array of skills that librarians use in leadership roles in libraries as well as how they use their degrees to work in other industries.

**Kimberly Buckner Land, BA, 1998**, was the recipient of the Faculty Excellence in Service Award in May. Land teaches marketing at UofSC Upstate. The award recognizes the faculty member who has demonstrated consistent excellence in service to their profession, the university and the community over the past five years.

**Hobson Powell, BA, 1998**, joined LinkedIn in Omaha in 2020 as senior director of global customer operations.

**Beth Thomason, APR, BA, 1991**, has joined FUEL in Greenville as public relations director. In this role, Thomason will oversee all public relations, including campaign strategy, media relations, issues management and media training, for the agency and its clients.

## 2000s

**Jackie Alexander, BA, 2009**, has been named president-elect of the College Media Association. Alexander is director of Student Media at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

**Sara Anders, BA, 2003**, has joined Flock and Rally in Columbia as director of advertising. Anders previously worked as vice president, director of channel strategy at Chernoff Newman.



**Brooks Hearn, BA, 2007**, is the marketing and investor relations manager for Dorchester County Economic Development. In September 2020, she

was named among the Best and Brightest 35 and Under by Charleston Business Magazine.

**Jay Pou, BA, 2005**, and **Margaret Katherine Magner, MLIS, 2013**, recently got engaged at the fountain in front of Thomas Cooper Library, where they met when they were co-workers. Pou is the director of student services for the history department at the university, and Magner is a public services librarian at South Carolina State Library.



**Cedric Scott, BA, 2000**, has been appointed director of corporate partnerships and member services at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History in Detroit, Michigan. The Wright has the world's largest permanent collection of African-American culture and is one of the world's largest museums dedicated to African-American history. Scott previously served as director of media and communications for Triumph Church.



**2010s**

**Jonathan Battaglia, BA, 2012**, has been named communications director of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, a labor union representing more than 600,000 workers in the airline, defense, aerospace, manufacturing and other industries across North America.

**Megan Parrott Evans, BA, 2018**, is in her second semester of the MLIS program at the iSchool and is a marketing coordinator at Midlands Technical College. She married 2017 College of Engineering and Computing alumnus Kendall Evans on Jan. 31. The two now reside in Chapin.



**Chardonnay Ismail, BA, 2016**, has been promoted to communications manager at the University of South Carolina Alumni Association. Ismail previously served as social media specialist.

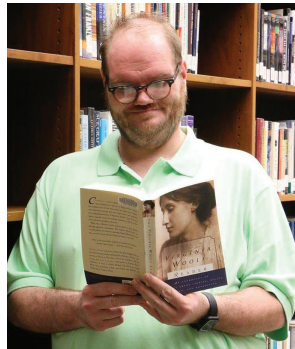
**Hannah Stuart Lathan, BA, 2012**, earned a Master of Public Health with a specialization in Maternal, Child, Reproductive, and Sexual Health from the City University of New York Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. She graduated summa cum laude, was named the 2021 Valedictorian and received the Dean's Academic Achievement Award at commencement. She now works as a program manager for CUNY SPH's vaccine literacy initiative, Convince USA.

**Ashley McGee, BA, 2010**, has joined the Post & Courier in Charleston as niche managing editor.



**Stephanie Durso Mullin, BA, 2012**, is creative director at Townsquare Media in Charlotte. Her co-authored thriller, *The Family Tree*, publishes in June. She and her co-author received a two-book publishing deal from the award-winning thriller imprint

Avon Books with HarperCollinsUK off of a Twitter pitch contest during the pandemic, and their books will be published both in the United Kingdom and the United States. The *Family Tree* will also be published in Holland.



**Ron Stafford, MLIS, 2017**, serves on PASCAL's SLP steering committee as the two-year public and independent representative. He is also an at-large member of the Metrolina Library Association Board of Directors.

**Anna Westbury, BA, 2012**, has been promoted to director of communications in the University of South Carolina College of Education. She previously served as coordinator of special events and alumni relations.

**2020s**

**Jane Borrelli, BA, 2020**, has launched a small business, Shop Jane's Picks, an online boutique.

**Lauren Coffman, BA, 2020**, was hired as a graduate public relations intern at FleishmanHillard, one of the best public relations agencies in the country. After three months, she was promoted to assistant account executive on the Gatorade PR team, where she helps coordinate earned media efforts surrounding premier athletes and events in the sports industry.



**Jack Landess, BA, 2020**, has joined Digital Remedy's New Orleans office as a full-time account manager. Landess will work across multiple accounts as both a media strategist and a client liaison, helping brands implement data-driven digital marketing campaigns using Digital Remedy's proprietary software.



**STAY CONNECTED!**

Submit your alumni notes online at [bit.ly/cic-alumni-update](https://bit.ly/cic-alumni-update)

A graphic celebrating a 50th anniversary. The number '50' is written in a large, stylized, serif font, with the '5' having a decorative flourish. Below it, the word 'YEARS' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. The entire text is contained within a white square with a dark red border. This square is centered on a dark red background that features a radial pattern of thin white lines emanating from the square's corners, creating a sunburst effect.

**50  
YEARS**

**SAVE THE DATE | APRIL 30, 2022**

In 2022, the School of Information Science will mark 50 years since the graduation of its first class. Mark your calendar for our celebration, and be on the lookout for other anniversary news and events.



**School of Information Science**  
College of Information and Communications