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Spring Issue 2019

From the chair of the chair:

Dear Eastern Community, as one more semester—and one more year—comes to an end, the Communication Department is pleased to share with you some of the splendid happenings that recently made a mark on our faculty and students. There are many, but I shall highlight two of them.

First, is that our commitment to academic excellence bore fruit again when our revised and enhanced academic concentrations were officially approved by the curriculum Committee. So, starting in the Fall 2019, Advertising, Leadership Communication, Media Production, Media Writing and Journalism, and Public Relations concentrations, will continue to take our students on a path that leads to academic and professional success.

Second, as a department—students, staff, and faculty—we are sincerely grateful for having moved into our wonderful newly-renovated facilities. It has made a significant difference to us all! Our daily activities teaching, advising, work and play have taken a swift upward turn.

Again, our immense gratitude to all who made it possible.

Have a great summer!

Jaime Gomez



Photo taken by Eastern Student, Brian McKenna

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The Communication Department Newsletter

Professor Spotlight: Dr. Toles-Patkin

By: Joyce Figueroa

Rick Astley's Never Gonna Give You Up was the number one song on the charts. The Simpsons had just launched its first season. And back then, the entire Communication Department shared a single office. The year was 1987 when Dr. Terri Toles-Patkin came to Eastern Connecticut University. She has made her mark in the department. She teaches several Communication courses, and this fall she will be offering: Communication Law and Ethics, Organizational Communication, and Advanced Interpersonal Communication.

Dr. Toles-Patkin is a dedicated professor and believes that "education should be a conversation, not a data dump. Real life often challenges theoretical assertions, and rightly so." She centers her teaching on helping students gain the critical thinking and communication skills that they need and can apply to real world situations. When asked what she hopes her students take away from her courses she joked, "Their backpacks, water bottles, and that handout about the assignment due on Monday." It's this balance of playfulness and seriousness that makes Toles-Patkin stand out to her students. She added, "Seriously, though, my hope is that students leave my classes with more questions than they had when they started. I'm never happier than when a former (or current) student contacts me to let me know that they found a real-world example of an idea we discussed in class."

Dr. Toles-Patkin takes an interest in scholarship associated with her field. She regularly attends the National Communication Association and Popular Culture Association conferences because, "I really enjoy hearing what kinds of research my colleagues at other universities are working on," she said. Toles-Patkin was also one of the first of Eastern's faculty to bring students to the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) as well as mentor students for the CREATE conference. "Research is not just for students with the goal of attending graduate school," she stated. "The process of designing and completing a research project offers students a set of liberal arts experiences (practically applied) that set them up for success in many careers." She values learning and acquiring methodologies, skills, and ideas that she then applies to help her students be successful while at Eastern and beyond.

Dr. Toles-Patkin's area of research is centered around games over the centuries and how games and culture were linked. Toles-Patkin has several published works under her belt, among them, several academic articles and she has recently finished writing a book titled: Gameland:

Identity and Inters ,ectionality in Classic Board Games.

She talks about her work stating, "Almost every household in America has a shelf or closet stacked with board games, and games are one of the ways that society talks to itself and works out its values. Baby Boomers and Millennials played the same board games as children – Candy Land, Clue, Monopoly – but the new editions reflect the colossal social change that occurred during those years. There's more diversity and more gender equity now, but many stereotypes still remain."

Toles-Patkin has most recently been awarded several fellowships. The first, to study board games at the Ray & Pat Browne Popular Culture Library at Bowling Green Ohio State University. The second, to study games at the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York. She expressed her excitement over the experience of continuing her research stating, "Both places have large collections of games – some going back centuries – and the opportunity to work side-by-side with experts in the field was invaluable."



Dr. Toles-Patkin

Professor Spotlight: Dr. Ayeni

By: Ashley Cubberly

The Communication Department is filled with fantastic professors. Each one is willing to meet with students whenever possible to make sure they succeed academically. While any professor can teach a subject, it takes a different kind of person to incorporate what is learned in the classroom and apply it to the real world. Dr. Olugbenga Ayeni is one of these individuals. In his office, he does hours of research, looking for contests and internships off campus that he can recommend to his students. He has been at Eastern since 2002, and the dedication he has to his job as a professor is easily recognizable.

Dr. Ayeni's classes are mainly focused on Public Relations. While he also teaches Advertising courses and even organizational management at the graduate level, he makes it a point to incorporate research into all his classes. He does this because "you cannot design an effective marketing communications campaign for a client without solid research," which falls into his idea of reinforcing the practice of collecting information about businesses or audiences one is attempting to appeal towards. His emphasis on the importance of research has paid off. His students have won awards, such as placing in the Top 10 in the National Effie Collegiate Advertising competition, as well as placing First and Third in the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of CT underage drinking campaign. Having his students go on to not only participate but also win awards demonstrates that he is teaching them to think outside-the-box and design creative solutions to challenges they may face. He is extremely impressed with the accomplishments he sees from his students, both in and out of the classroom.

Dr. Ayeni himself has much to be proud of in his own research. Prior to focusing on teaching, he worked in journalism as a political and news correspondent for an international magazine. Furthermore, he had the opportunity to write about the late Nelson Mandela, specifically about his visit to Nigeria after his release from prison in South Africa. Having the chance to write about such a well-known historical figure only comes once in a lifetime for many journalists, especially

Dr. Ayeni is working on writing a book, titled *Crisis Communication in the Age of Terrorism*, which looks at the role of communication in times of global crises. Dr. Ayeni has also attended conferences, such as the Athens Institute of Education & Research Conference in Athens, Greece in 2018, as well as the Popular Culture Association this year. Dr. Ayeni is talented at balancing the dueling and difficult roles of researcher and professor, as well as being a mentor to his students.

Dr. Ayeni goes to great lengths to guide his students in the right direction. Of course, he wants his students to do well in school, but he also wants them to succeed in life. He takes the extra time to make sure his students are prepared for the real world and what is to follow their undergraduate careers. He gives his students the knowledge, skills, and motivation they may need to excel in the Communication major, no matter where they end up going down the line. He may be known as a professor, but he is truly a teacher.



Dr. Ayeni

Student Achievement: Elena Ruiz

By: Ashley Cubberly

There is a plethora of ways to get involved around Eastern's campus. Joining clubs, sports teams, community service, or student jobs, the possibilities are endless. With all these options, students may take on more than one and challenge themselves to be well-rounded, organized, and aware of their time management. Communication senior Elena Ruiz has been part of the radio practicum as well as working on a production of racial topics and immigration issues on Eastern's campus. Currently, she is a social media intern in the Center for Internships and Career Development.

Ruiz received some advice from Professor Mendoza in the Political Sciences department to be more involved outside of Eastern's campus, which has led her to be a member of the CSU Board of Regents. She described this organization as "the mother of the university system" managing the budgets, as well as advocates for the school college system at the legislative building. Now, Ruiz is the Vice Chair of the Student Advisory Committee and has a voting position for the Board of Regents, where she gets to provide her opinions on public policies or campus safety.

She recently obtained her position because of her active role in the Student Government Association. According to Ruiz, the Board of Regents reached out to the state colleges, where she went to the meeting and was elected for her position. One of the biggest challenges she faced during this process was learning the language of how budgeting works and the financial aspects of funding related to universities. Throughout this process, she has stepped out of her comfort zone by repetitively talking to legislators and feels more comfortable each time she does so.

Ruiz's background as a Communications major aided her throughout the entire process and continues to help her to this day. She says that "as a Communications major, you have to be well-rounded, so you have to be able to speak in front of an audience and understand the ways people communicate." She mentioned that her Interpersonal Communication class provided her with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed on the Board of Regents as well as with her E-board position on SGA. She finds it rewarding to know that her voice is heard, as she may be contacted by radio stations or legislators to discuss her ideas. She sees her contributions as successful, especially because she goes to Hartford once a week to meet with legislators to talk about topics such as college tuition, and she advocates for students through her active participation. Through this organization and her work around government offices, Ruiz has learned that everything is interconnected, and it all impacts us as students. Her experiences can apply to other students, as she encourages getting involved through clubs or internships that can add to your resume to demonstrate that you have the knowledge related to your field of study. If we can learn anything from Ruiz, it is to stand up for your beliefs, and we can learn a lot more than just facts in the classroom.



Elena Ruiz

PRSSA Attends National Assembly

By: Ryan Tarko

Eastern Connecticut State University's chapter of Public Relations Student Society of America sent five members to the PRSSA National Assembly, held in Portland, Oregon, this year from April 4th to the 7th. The conference opened our eyes on how other schools manage their PRSSA chapters and what we can do to strengthen ours. We attended leadership and collaborative seminars focusing on club leadership and public relations initiatives. We also had the opportunity to listen to the experiences of guest speakers who are renowned in the public relations field. Edelman, one of the largest PR firms worldwide, sponsored the national assembly and featured keynote speaker Trisch Smith, Edelman's Global Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

We gained valuable knowledge from the many educational sessions we attended. We were able to learn how to improve on and refine our writing and leadership skills and were able to gain a general understanding on what the public relations field is all about on a day to day basis. We were also able to learn about modern advancements to the field, which is beneficial to the club as we now are able to keep up with skills that we would need if our members go on to careers in communication fields.

Getting the opportunity to travel to Portland, Oregon to attend the PRSSA National Assembly was an instrumental experience. We had the opportunity to learn from professionals in the field and gain and refine skills that we can implement into our own chapter to help us learn the skills needed to be successful in public relations careers. Not only that but being in Portland, Oregon and seeing an up and coming city that is much different than those on the east coast, we observed many cultural differences and took away a lot of memorable experiences that opened our eyes to how another part of our country lives. The extensive prior work that we put in to attend the assembly paid off with a new understanding of public relations, PRSSA, and a new found love for Portland, Oregon.



Members of ECSU's PRSSA attending at the PRSSA National Assembly

Public Relations Student Society of America: Professionals in Training

By: Joyce Figueroa



The Public Relations Student Society of America is one of the clubs under the Communication program that is offered at Eastern Connecticut State University. PRSSA is made up of more than 10,000 students and advisers in more than 300 chapters throughout the United States, Argentina, Colombia, and Peru. PRSSA has a history of support from their parent organization, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Students interested in pursuing a career in communication should join the club as the chapter here at Eastern offers professional development and networking opportunities to its members through conference attendance and club events.

Joining PRSSA can connect students to a network of professionals and allows them to build relationships that could turn into mentor-ships and other professional opportunities. Ryan Tarko, the current secretary for PRSSA, provided information about the club and some of the benefits students gain when they join Eastern's chapter. He mentioned that the biggest benefit for members is how Eastern provides access for student membership to the organization. "To be a part of PRSSA you have to pay \$50 dollars a year, which could be a deterrent to many college students. Eastern eliminates this by paying for PRSSA member dues, which provides access to membership benefits and professional experiences for students," Tarko states. He stressed the value of becoming a PRSSA member because the organization provides skills and experiences that help students develop a career in public relations. Students who wish to become members of the parent organization, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), need at least two years of field experience. Joining the Eastern chapter of PRSSA gives students field experience which can then help them become PRSA members. That's a goal for Tarko.

"By the time I graduate I'll have four years of PRSSA on my portfolio which means I have enough experience to gain access to PRSA," he added.

Other benefits that students gain when joining the Eastern chapter of PRSSA is the professional experiences and knowledge gained through conferences and club events. The club takes members to at least one conference per year. Members can travel to either the PRSSA Regional Conference in Boston, which the club attended last year; or the PRSSA National Assembly in Portland, which the club attended during the current spring semester. These conferences bring together professionals from the field so that students can learn from, build relationships with, and network with future colleagues.

Members who attend these conferences hand out resumes to companies that allow them to get a head start in gaining field experience as an undergraduate. Members who attend the conferences are not the only ones to benefit from them; those who attend are able to integrate knowledge and skills learned into the club so that all students benefit and learn skills that they could apply for future careers.

One event offered the club organizes is a public relation 'mixer,' which is in the planning stages to become an upcoming annual event. The mixer would bring together communication professionals and students, providing students with the opportunity to talk to and network in a casual setting with people in various communication fields over food and drinks. Any student at Eastern interested in pursuing a career within communications should participate on this event and get involved in the club. Currently, the club meets every Wednesday in Communication building room 108 from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. and is interested in expanding and gaining more members. They encourage students in the communication program to join as there are many opportunities to learn and gain valuable experiences that will prepare them for future careers in the field.

A ReVamped Communication Building

By Ashley Cubberly

Eastern Connecticut State University has undergone some changes over the past couple years. One building after another, our campus is looking more contemporary than ever with its renovations of The Fine Arts Instructional Center, Science Building, and now the Communication building. The newly renovated building re-opened in the fall of 2018 and is in full use by students and faculty.

Students may find an interest in the new building due to its modern design and improvement to technology meant to promote student learning. Aesthetically, the new building exchanged brick and cement for numerous glass walls which creates an inviting, open atmosphere that allows for natural light to motivate students. With yellow couches, blue classrooms and faculty offices, and green hallways, the environment draws everyone inside, and separates this building from the others around Eastern's campus.

The renovations do not end with the building itself. Students in Communication studies have the opportunity to work with and learn in classrooms with state-of-the-art equipment. The upgrades include brand new equipment for production, radio, and sound, allowing students to learn about the rapid changes in media, television, and broadcasting. Students also get access to three brand new computer labs.

Students and faculty alike have expressed their appreciation to their newly renovated work space. Professor Beltran, an Adjunct faculty member of the Communication Department, claims that "it is a beautiful and wonderful building that is well designed. It has really picked up moral to have a beautiful work space." It speaks volumes about the renovations knowing that the professors themselves can see the changes in student engagement and participation. The welcoming setting allows students to share their ideas with their fellow classmates and keep them intrigued in class discussions or other related activities.

Sophomore Jackson Delaney states "the Communication Building is a great addition to Eastern's campus that provides students with a great new learning environment and more modern and updated classrooms." There are a few classrooms that specifically stand out in terms of providing students with unique learning environments. On the first floor, classrooms such as the one in room 107 resemble lecture halls, with elevated rows of desks instead of auditorium chairs. This new room still holds true to small classroom sizes, but provides students with an ample work space.

Another room which stands out is on the second floor, just around the corner from the department office. This classroom has all glass windows and the desks are in the shape of a square, providing a seminar room. This new setup allows students to engage with one another using direct face-to-face interactions, rather than needing to turn around in a desk to look at other classmates in other rooms. These changes not only strengthen the desire to learn, but also to be in the building as much as possible.

It is noticeable that the improved Communications building has produced a plethora of positive outcomes. These alterations directly influence every individual who walks through the doors, regardless of their major. It is a vibrant space that influences productivity, whether they are going to class or studying in the lounge area.



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The Celebration of Excellence – New honorees in a new space

By: Amanda Irwin

The Celebration of Excellence – the Communication Department’s annual honoring of great student work and induction of new members to Lambda Pi Eta, the National Communication Association – was reborn this spring in the new Fine Arts Instructional Center’s Concert Hall. Close to 200 faculty, family, friends and honorees attended the ceremony on April 25.

After a brief welcome from Dr. Jaime Gomez, the department’s chair, Professor John Zatowski, known in the department as “J.Z.,” gave the awards for the radio station WECS to Kate Barry, Meghan Brooks, Manar Enany and Robert Lockaby. Each student spoke briefly about the music they featured on their shows as well as the mission behind their programming.

Dr. Jehoon Jeon gave awards for Excellence in Research to Kate Cobb, Ryan Neubert and Angelique Greenberg. He said sometimes students take Communications courses hoping they’ve escaped statistics or math, but then they take his courses and are shocked to find they are wrong. But these students, Dr. Jeon said, rose to the task of completing excellent research projects that impressed him.

Dr. Andrew Utterback gave the awards for Excellence in Television and work with the ETV channel to Paige Matheson, Zoe Czerenda, April Doolan and Alex Gabriele. He said he would greatly miss his students, whose broadcasts had risen to highly technical and creative levels.

Professor Martin Seymour gave awards for another highly technical craft of Photography and Publication Design to Kevin Carpenter, Erin Winsor, Logan Hinton, Isaac Archambault, Joshua Allard and Stephanie Frommelt. For each student, Mr. Seymour highlighted the

communication career areas each one sought to pursue after graduation.

For Excellence in Journalism, Dr. Edmond Chibeau highlighted reporters and editors who shined in The Campus Lantern, Eastern Connecticut State University’s student newspaper. He lauded the work of Elena Sorrentino, Vincent Knox, Rebekah Brancato, Fiorella Beccaglia, Robin Blassberg, Marquist Parker and Jennifer Zuniga.

But there was more. Dr. Chibeau stayed on stage to award the honorees for Excellence in New Media Studies – Joshua Allard, Daniel Petronis and Alexandra Ofiara.

For Excellence in Public Relations and PRSSA, Dr. Olugbenga Ayeni, presented awards to Marissa Simonetti, Melissa Henowitz, Jessica Henowitz, Ryan Tarko, Emily Graham and Olivia Godin. Dr. Ayeni also highlighted the fact that Ryan Tarko would be the first male president of PRSSA in the school when he takes over the role next year.



In Honor of Dr. Hale's Retirement

By: Dr. Terri Toles-Patkin

John Hale came to Eastern in January of 1983 after ten years working for NBC having acted as associate producer for SNL, Network News, numerous documentaries in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Omen and Africa among others.

During the 1980's, while full time at Eastern, he received a Ph.D. from UConn. In the 1990's he was elected Chair of the department, a position he held off and on for over 10 years until he announced his intention of retirement.

During his earlier years at Eastern, Hale taught almost every course offered in the program. Over time, he came to specialize in teaching courses in Interpersonal Communication and Public Speaking. He also developed a first-year seminar relating to his long-time interest in blues music.

In addition to his participation in multiple grants for developing curriculum in Communication, he has served on several University committees that have been instrumental in advancing Eastern. Hale developed several courses for the Communication department which ultimately led to its becoming a Major. In his almost 37 years at Eastern, Dr. Hale saw many changes in the media environment, and he continually worked to keep the Communication Department up-to-date and on the leading edge.

“Dr. Hale has been an important part of the Communication Department for many years,” said Dr. Toles-Patkin. “He has helped the department grow from a small, brand new major to the large and diverse one it is today.”

At the Celebration of Excellence, the Communication Department presented Dr. Hale with an award honoring his years of service to the department. It read “To Dr. John J. Hale, with gratitude for your collegiality and leadership over the years.”

It is evident that Dr. Hale has left his mark during his time at Eastern. His dedication to the program and to the department are clear in his accomplishments and contributions. He leaves behind a legacy that will be remembered by all; he will be missed.



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