



COMMUniqué

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A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION IN CHABSS AT CSUSM

IN THIS ISSUE

Notes from the Chair

By: Dr. Michelle A. Holling

Ah, spring (break) is here. As we embark on spring break, my co-editor and I publish the first spring issue of *COMMUniqué* that provides a snapshot of the vibrancy in the Department of Communication. In addition to the stories in this issue, check out the department website

www.csusm.edu/communication that reflects regular updates to announcements, calendar events, and content pages.

This issue of *COMMUniqué* contains a few stories, each of which highlight accomplishments by students and faculty. Co-Editor Danielle Biss interviewed six students who won the Art With Impact Award for their short-film *"Mental Health Does Not Define Me."* Details of their important short film and their work to produce it is a compelling and inspiring story. Many congratulations to the students!

A second story details faculty activity at the recent Western States Communication Association (WSCA) convention in Salt Lake City. What stands

out in that story are the significant contributions faculty make as scholars and as leaders in the field of communication to the study of whiteness, border and LatinX rhetorics, intercultural communication, and as mentors to student-scholars, both graduate and undergraduate. A highlight in the WSCA story is the keynote speaker, Janaya Khan of Black Lives Matter Network. Their speech worked with and against the conference theme as well as enlightened audience members with comments that urged them to "make a commitment today not to be out-organized by white supremacy" or "protest is our barometer and it should be." Read similar statements and faculty impressions of Khan's address in the story. Related to WSCA is the Undergraduate Scholars Research Conference at which four students representing the Department presented their scholarship. Evident in that story is the range of scholarship they presented, its timeliness and relevance to social topics such as whiteness and beauty, inclusion, ability, and acceptance of diversity.

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The final story is an interview between Biss and Dr. Castañeda Rossmann about her research in Mexico and her endeavor to conceptualize inseguridad [insecurity] as Mexican citizens experience it. Then, based on fieldwork on Mexico's pacific coast, Dr. Rossmann addresses the matter of ecotourism and endangered sea turtles. This final story provides much for readers to contemplate. Throughout this issue, readers will also find information about upcoming events and additional highlights. Until the next issue . . .

COMM 310 Students Win Award: Leaving a Legacy in their Art *With Impact*

By: Danielle Biss

Fall 2016 was an impactful semester for Roberto Morelia, Megan Escobar, Helena Gulbrandsen, Luis Alfredo Castañeda Saavedra, Casey Staples, and Cameron Johnson. While in COMM 310, Group Interaction and Problem Solving, taught by Dr. Catherine Matsumoto, the students developed a film that highlighted the importance of mental health entitled “Mental Health Does Not Define Me.” Dr. Matsumoto developed an assignment to address when students confront challenging situations, they do so in ways that consider different perspectives; as well, she desired to challenge her students to address a social issue creatively and to work with on-campus partners.

The six students from COMM 310 chose to work with the H.O.P.E. and Wellness Center. They initially met with Cheryl Berry, Mental Health Educator, to discuss ways they could be of service. They gave her their contact information, and did not anticipate hearing back. Berry connected them with Olivia DePaul, third year Psychology major at CSUSM, and the idea

to create a video to erase the stigma associated with mental health. DePaul has spoken about her experiences with mental health issues through a variety of platforms, including campus events and the Community Alliance for Healthy Minds (CAHM) forum. DePaul is also a founding member of Voices of Hope, a student organization that promotes conversations about mental health in an effort to break down the stigma. As well, DePaul is the former Vice President of Active Minds, interned at the Student Health and Counseling Services, and currently works in a socio-cognitive development research lab on campus. Considering all of her experience and willingness to share it with others, COMM 310 students chose to interview and tell



From left to right: Luis Alfredo Castañeda Saavedra, Casey Staples, Helene Gulbrandsen, Dr. Catherine Matsumoto, Olivia DePaul, Cameron Johnson, and Roberto Morelia

her story. In doing so, they would create a public service announcement about mental health challenges students face. The interview between DePaul and the COMM 310 students became a five-minute presentation titled “Mental Health Does Not Define Me.” Through the film, the six COMM 310 students convey a message that mental health struggles are quite common among college students and resources exist on campus. The objective of the short film was to intervene in the stigma associated with mental illness.

“Mental Health Does Not Define Me” conveys part of DePaul’s story following

her transfer to CSUSM. DePaul emphasized that students facing depression, anxiety, and other mental health struggles are not alone. The emotions DePaul felt got to a point where she could not handle them, which left her with no other choice than to reach out for help. As conveyed in the short film, DePaul sought support from the H.O.P.E. and Wellness Center and was connected with a specialist for her depression and anxiety. At first, the diagnosis was extremely upsetting for her, realizing that depression is not something that can immediately go away with the help of prescriptions and rest. Depression is a mental illness that people deal with their entire lives, which was unsettling for DePaul. The five minute video is only a small part of DePaul’s story, but relays the importance of reaching out for help.

Depression is a struggle that millions of students across the nation face every day. Research conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness shows that on college campuses “one in four students have a diagnosable illness. 40% do not seek help. 80% feel so overwhelmed by their responsibilities, and 50% have been so anxious they struggled in school” (Mental Health by the Numbers). In the film “Mental Health Does Not Define Me,” DePaul discusses seeing a counselor and explains how it was similar to talking to a neutral third party. The counselors never judge and encourage their patients to better themselves. DePaul also encouraged other students to write journals. By writing down their thoughts and anxiety, as they begin to overcome some of their struggles, they can see how far they have come.

Initially, the students--Morelia, Escobar, Gulbrandsen, Saavedra, Staples, and Johnson--did not think their project would be as impactful as it turned out to be. “Mental Health Does Not Define Me” became a bigger project than simply earning a grade. Students knew by telling her story, it could impact other students

Congratulations to the following undergraduates who have been admitted to continue their education at the graduate level:

Brandon Beach

*M.A. of Communication
at San Diego State University*

Isabelle Corneliussen

*M.A. of Communication at
The New School, School of
Media Studies, in New York City*

who have struggles similar to DePaul. Toward the end of the semester, they decided to submit their video to the *Art with Impact* contest. Within a few weeks following their submission, they received news that their short film had won, and were ecstatic. For their accomplishment, they received a \$1,000 cash prize, which they donated to Voices of Hope. In addition, "Mental Health Does Not Define Me" will be added to *Art With Impact's* diverse OLIVE film collection. This collection is used in education outreach programs, like the ones in GEL 101 for incoming freshmen, leaving a legacy of the COMM 310 students.

Stories like the six students from COMM 310 winning the *Art With Impact* Award are what make being a communication major so meaningful. The project by

Roberto Morelia, Megan Escobar, Helena Gulbrandsen, Luis Alfredo Castañeda Saavedra, Casey Staples, and Cameron Johnson not only fulfilled a course requirement, it told a meaningful story that leaves an impact on future students. Dr. Matsumoto is "so proud that these students invested so much effort into their group project. They really did such a great job identifying a need, working with a campus community partner and managing every aspect of the project. More importantly, I think it is awesome that they entered their video in the competition. I believe this will be a wonderful accomplishment they will all be able to highlight when they are applying or interviewing for employment when they graduate." Dr. Matsumoto is eager to see future presentations in her courses, especially to see more students

leave an impact, like Roberto Morelia, Megan Escobar, Helena Gulbrandsen, Luis Alfredo Castañeda Saavedra, Casey Staples, and Cameron Johnson.

The short film can be accessed on the *Art With Impact* website: <https://www.artwithimpact.org/film/mental-health-does-not-define-me/>

Congratulations to Brenda Barniga for being chosen to represent CSUSM as the Congressional Intern on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. Fall 2017!

WSCA: Centralizing Marginality, Marginalizing the Center

By: Danielle Biss

The Western States Communication Association (WSCA) held its 88th Annual Convention on February 18-21, 2017, in Salt Lake City, UT. This year's conference theme was Centralizing Marginality, Marginalizing the Center developed by Dr. Michelle Holling. WSCA is a not-for-profit educational association of scholars, teachers, and students of communication with approximately 1,000 members from around the globe. This year's conference brought different marginalized groups, ideas, and positionalities to the center of conversation(s). Varying from whiteness, undocumented

immigrants, media representations, even ChicanX and LatinX, the WSCA Convention was a counterdiscursive

collaboration, particularly considering today's political and social climate. Dr. Pindi felt that conference panels addressed "issues surrounding marginalized voices related to people of color, queer bodies, and more." Often times, conferences discuss privileged voices and bodies, yet this conference sought to de-center them. Dr. De La Garza felt that this was a unique conference, in particular how scholars frequently do not give much attention to objects of study that typically go unnoticed like survivors of violence, missing migrants, discourse about people who have low economic or political power. This year's conference included Dr. Holling as President-Elect; department faculty and students presenting their scholarship; Janaya Khan, International Ambassador of Black Lives Matter Network in Canada, as the keynote speaker; and faculty obtaining new positions within WSCA.

As President-Elect, Dr. Holling was responsible for planning the 2017 WSCA Convention. Around November, 2014, she was elected as First Vice-President of WSCA and assumed the role in February, 2015; each year thereafter elected

officials ascend to subsequent positions. As President-Elect, she knew she would have to plan a conference. Influences on the theme she developed include her and others' scholarship that centralizes marginalized voices such as Chican@s and Latin@s; her teaching interests, which focuses on marginalized populations; her own politics, service commitments around diversity, and commitment to intersectional issues. Considering these influences, she arrived at "*Centralizing Marginality, Marginalizing the Center.*"

Complementing the theme was a logo to which Alexandra Jackson Nevis assisted Dr. Holling to create. Developing the theme was meaningful to Dr. Holling, and "very nerve wracking in lots of ways, but also fun." She noted, "at national and regional conferences, sometimes it is hard to connect with a theme." However, this conference was not one of those circumstances. Ultimately, Dr. Holling was very pleased with the kinds of scholarship that members proposed and had accepted for presentation. Members' submission played a role in bringing to life, engaging, connecting to, and advocating the theme. Dr. Holling has



been going to conferences long enough to know that this often times is not the case.

Dr. Dreama Moon co-facilitated a pre-conference workshop entitled "Teaching Whiteness in the Communication Classroom: Deconstructing the Center, Moving to the Margins." The ultimate goal of the workshop was to offer strategically theoretical and experimental approaches to aid in discussing challenges when teaching about whiteness. Dr. Moon is the first person in the field of communication to teach a standalone undergraduate class on whiteness. Given our current political climate, push back to issues of social justice and equality, Dr. Moon felt that "[the conference] was an important moment to help people become more comfortable to discuss whiteness, white privilege, and essentially dig deeper into a more broad conversation." Dr. Moon believes that there needs to be more conversations like these. At the same time, Dr. Moon was disappointed that attendees at the pre-conference workshop would not be teaching a standalone course on whiteness. Workshop attendees planned to integrate whiteness into courses they teach such as public speaking, intercultural communication, and interpersonal communication. Dr. Moon is currently working on a book project entitled *Intersectionalizing Whiteness*, and discussed integrating her book into the classroom. Dr. Moon teaches a variety of classes at CSUSM, including COMM 454, Communicating Whiteness, where

she believes that her relationship with students is a dialectical relationship. That said, "[she] is constantly learning about whiteness from her students, more than anything else." Dr. Moon will teach COMM 454 in fall 2017 and eagerly awaits continued learning about whiteness with her students.



Panelists on "By Any Means," left to right: Dr. Antonio De La Garza, Dr. Matt Richards, Dr. Brian Cozen & Dr. Penchan Phoborisut

Dr. Antonio De La Garza was another faculty member who attended WSCA. He chaired a panel entitled "By Any Means Necessary: Centralizing the Rhetoricity of Violence."

Dr. De La Garza's panel explored the idea that "acts of violence can indeed be very rhetorical, and the violence often times communicates something beyond the violent act itself; it communicates particular values, positions, and [can be] used to send a message the same way words can be used to say a message." In Dr. De La Garza's argument, rhetoric and violence encompass a dialectical relationship relative to the borderlands. He comments how, "right now along the U.S. and Mexican border people find an average of 250 dead bodies" who died

during their attempt to cross. Dr. De La Garza's research centralizes the voices of deceased individuals and the

ways they speak to us. When teaching his classes, Dr. De La Garza tries to keep in mind that at CSUSM, students and faculty alike, all live in the social and legal borderlands. Dr. De La Garza takes "what [he] knows about what it means to live in the borderlands, and makes it a part of every class." Essentially, he "tries to provide space for not just his Latino students, but rather all of us as a product of the borderland culture." Dr. De La Garza's panel was similar to the conference theme regarding finding, developing, and presenting the voices of people who have been marginalized.

Another marginalized group brought to the center of the conversation was Chicana/os and Latina/os through Dr. Michelle Holling's panel entitled "Centralizing ChicanX and LatinX Rhetorics: A Roundtable Discussion about the Future of a Growing Subfield." Her panel consisted of seven Chicana and Latina scholars from the field, varying from some who are new to the area of Chican@-Latin@ communication and others with 20+ years of experience. The panel was distinctive as it was a roundtable discussion, compared to a panel of scholars who deliver individual presentations of their scholarship. Dr. Holling believes the panel made the point that "Chican@s and Latin@s are not one monolithic group, [and] not one singular and unified voice. There is difference, disagreement in opinions, perspectives, and that is what makes it valuable in Chican@ and Latin@ communication." Dr. Holling agrees and disagrees with various presentations in the roundtable discussion, which she says is okay. Collectively, the different opinions and beliefs surrounding Chicana@ rhetoric influence one another and future scholarship. At the beginning of her career, Dr. Holling "could name the Chican@ and Latin@ scholars on [one] hand." Since then, the subfield in the discipline has grown, and the fact that she was able to have a panel of all Latina scholars is indicative of the kind of



Whiteness Precon, left to right: Godfried Asante, Dr. Dawn Marie McIntosh & Dr. Dreama Moon



ChicanX-LatinX panelists, left to right:
(Back row) Dr. Lisa Flores, Dr. Michelle Holling, Dr. Karma Chávez, Dr. Stacey Sowards, Rebecca Avalos;
(Front row) Dr. Bernadette Calafell & Dr. Claudia Anguiano

progress made. Dr. Holling “has been on similar panels [at the national level] where people approach the topic, but [contained] mixed presenters; men, women, from different ethnic backgrounds.” Panels of all Chicanas and Latinas do not happen all the time, which made Dr. Holling’s panel memorable.

The keynote speaker of this year’s conference was Janaya Khan. Khan is an International Ambassador for the #BlackLivesMatter Network, whose social location is as a Black, queer, gender-nonconforming activist. Khan’s presentation utilized “the transformational capacity of language, metaphor, and democratic discourse as a tool for change” (convention program). Khan related the BLM

Janaya Khan



movement as marginalized and centered in their conversation through parrhesial rhetoric. Dr. De La Garza was inspired by their use of parrhesia, commenting how the way they spoke was “an aggressive and vocal commitment to the truth.” Concluding the presentation, Dr. De La Garza appreciated seeing a person engage in parrhesia, speak out loud, and challenge power. Khan’s most meaningful messages to Dr. Kendra Rivera were how

“discomfort is good. Being uncomfortable is part of learning.” As Khan started their presentation, they said that what they would talk about would make many in the audience uncomfortable, and Dr.’s Rivera, Moon, and Pindi agreed with her statement. For Dr. Moon, she was “in love.” Dr. Moon appreciated Khan’s presentation and particularly their commitment to BLM. Khan argued “expect to be betrayed” and Dr. Moon wants readers to keep in mind that people will make mistakes and are imperfect. Dr. Moon believes, “our country is one filled with plenty of ‘ism’s’, such as sexism, homophobia, and racism. In order for change, people need to educate one another, in order to keep on moving.” For Dr. Holling, securing Khan to deliver the keynote address was exceptionally meaningful and a major highlight. Hosting Khan and centralizing BLM was something to which Dr. Holling was committed and knew that there had not been a speaker like Khan in many years. She commented that “having Janaya present was important socially and also to the discipline” because of the opportunity to centralize difference(s) and voices often marginalized.

At the end of the conference, a few faculty members stepped in to different roles within WSCA. For instance, Dr. Pindi was elected as Vice Chair-Elect of the Intercultural Communication Interest Group. Dr. Pindi is excited about her new position and looks forward to taking on

the position within WSCA. After moving from the Midwest back to California, Dr. Pindi is happy to have found her niche. As well, Dr. Holling moves from President-Elect to President of the WSCA. The conference is now over but, the theme of *centralizing marginality, marginalizing the center* is one that Dr. Holling wants to continue discussing during her tenure as President. Dr. Holling hopes the conference was influential to members’ scholarship allowing them to advocate for centering marginality, and bring to light different social groups, identities, and other aspects through communication. She “recognizes how the theme can only go so far, but [is] still an opportunity to engage.” As a leader, when stepping into new positions, she tries to assess different ways to “strengthen, improve, and address absences or gaps.” Dr. Holling did that as President of ORWAC (the Organization for Research on Women and Communication, a national feminist organization), and the changes she made there give her experience to serve WSCA. As President, she sees her position as an opportunity to implement her message about *centralizing marginality, marginalizing the center* long after she is gone.

Did You Know?...

The Media and Communication Days are coming! Both the workshop and presentation discuss advocating for bullying in the workplace, how to seek civility, and how to transform from bystander to upstander!

The Workshop will be held **April 19, 2017, from 12:00pm – 1:00pm** in Kellogg Library Reading Room (KEL 5400); the presentation will be held **April 19, 2017, from 4:30pm – 6:00pm** in Kellogg Library Reading Room (KEL 5400).

CSUSM COMM Students Represent at USRC

By: Danielle Biss

The Western States Communication Association held its 14th annual Undergraduate Scholars Research Conference (USRC) on February 18, 2017 in Salt Lake City, Utah. This conference gives undergraduate students a unique and competitive opportunity to submit and present their original research to other academic scholars in a friendly and supportive environment. Multiple students from different courses in the Department of Communication submitted their original research to the conference, six of whom had their work accepted to the USRC. There were 91 students from the western region who submitted from which 36 accepted the opportunity to present their research at the USRC. The students accepted were Danielle Biss (myself), Katy Eldridge, Brandon Beach, Brenda Barniga, Kaylie Sadlon, and Rebecca Nieto. Out of these six, four students made the trek to Salt Lake City with guidance from Dr. Dreama Moon, Dr. Antonio De La Garza and Professor AJ Nevis.

I presented my original research, *"Finding Dory: Challenging Counter-Hegemonic Representations of Disability,"* conducted in COMM 402, Approaches to Rhetorical Criticism, with guidance from Dr. Antonio De La Garza and Professor AJ Nevis. At first, I did not consider my writing to be at

the level of a regional academic conference; yet, with constant reassurance and encouragement, I decided to analyze children's media to better understand how representations of lack of ability affect children's identity, associated stereotypes and misconceptions, and ultimately how they are influential to society. When influential films inaccurately represent people with disabilities, misunderstandings about their social identities and stereotypes are constructed, maintained, and reinforced. The importance of my research is that from a young age, children view media content that influences perceptions of self and others with differences in ability, and ultimately society. The most rewarding part of presenting my scholarship on disability was giving my presentation in front of other academic student-scholars like myself, graduate program faculty, and my mentors. Most importantly, I proved to myself what hard work could accomplish. Presenting at the USRC has further encouraged me to pursue a Masters of Arts in Communication with a focus on media representations and rhetoric. For other students looking to submit conferences such as USRC, NCA [National Communication Association], or conferences on campus at CSUSM, do it! The hard work that students put in now during their undergraduate work may seem tedious, but late nights and early mornings only will pay off if the effort is made, and the end result is worth every lost hour of sleep.

"Freak Show and the Need for Inclusion in American Society" was the title of a second student Brandon Beach, who presented his original research from COMM 402, Approaches to Rhetorical Criticism taught by Alexandra Jackson Nevis. Mentoring him was Jackson



From left to right: Brenda Barniga & Dr. Dreama Moon

Nevis to help him condense a lengthy research paper to a ten-minute presentation. In his paper, he argues that "society as a whole contains all kinds of people with difference, and that every American has the need for inclusion." As he journeyed to Salt Lake City, he "hoped to gain a memorable experience where [he] could showcase [his] original research to those who attended and engage in a meaningful conversation as to where [his] work may go post presentation and all the lives it may touch with the right support." Initially, the conference was inspiring to Brandon because it allowed him to see what is required to be successful graduate student. He said, "being around so many [academics] with a passion in communication is a very unique opportunity. If anything, the most rewarding was being able to see how eager [he is] to go to graduate school." For other student-scholars in the Communication Department, who may be contemplating submitting their research



From left to right: Brandon Beach, Katy Eldridge, Danielle Biss & Brenda Barniga

Anticipated Courses for Summer 2017

First Summer Session:

COMM 330 & 435

Second Summer Session:

COMM 440 & 470

MASS 365



From left to right: Dr. Michelle Holling, Dr. Gloria Pindi, Katy Eldridge, Brenda Barniga, Brandon Beach, Danielle Biss & Dr. Antonio De La Garza

to conferences, Brandon said, “why not? You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain by submitting. If you get accepted, the department supports you the entire process.” He is eager to see where his future research may take him as he enters the graduate program at San Diego State University next fall.

Continuing the trend of student scholarship coming from COMM 402 is Katy Eldridge. She presented her original research entitled “The Harry Potter Novels as a Tool for Increasing Acceptance of Diversity.” Dr. Antonio De La Garza mentored her through the preparation process to present at an academic conference. She argues that by analyzing “different elements of the novel, such as characters, metaphors, etc., readers can reaffirm their own identity. Through analyzing the Harry Potter articles through a feminist and narrative lens, a reaffirmation of identity could be used to increase the acceptance of diversity.” At first, Katy was also hesitant to submit her research to USRC, but encouraged by Dr. De La Garza and her peers to submit. Before making the journey to Salt Lake City, she “hoped to gain public speaking experience and

feedback on [her] paper. Also, [she thought the opportunity was] a good chance to learn about graduate school and to meet faculty from other institutions.” A scholar in the audience of her presentation commented to Katy that she should pursue a career in writing narratives after graduating. Prior to the USRC, Katy was planning to pursue a career in therapy. Luckily for Katy, within the field of Communication, there is a subfield known as narrative therapy. The most rewarding part of the USRC for Katy was connecting with a narrative therapist from CSULA. Katy reflected that she “came out of this [USRC] experience not only [with] a new direction in life, but with resources for how to get there.” When presenting, Katy also wants undergraduates to remember, “[they] are the expert on [their] research, as long as [they’re] confident talking about [their] findings, [they] will do just fine [presenting].”

The final student who traveled to Salt Lake City was Brenda Barniga. She presented her original research entitled “America the Beautiful: Examining America's Racially Inclined Notion of Beauty” written while in COMM 430, Power, Discourse and Identity, taught by Dr. Dreama Moon. Dr. Moon, along with lecturer Alexandra Jackson Nevis, guided her through the preparation process. Brenda believes her research matters because “it exposes a system in our

society that [individuals] might have otherwise overlooked.” Brenda analyzed the Miss Teen USA Beauty pageant and her research demonstrates how the pageant “upholds a white racial preference of beauty that stems from ideologies such as whiteness, white supremacy, economic, and political inequities for women of color.” Before traveling to the USRC, she hoped “to gain more confidence in [her] scholarship when presenting [her] work.” Delivering her scholarship inspired her to “continue researching and developing [her] work in hopes of one day having this piece published.” For other student-scholars in the Communication Department who contemplate submitting their research to conferences, Brenda recommends that they “trust their work, take pride in their research, and take the opportunity to submit their work into conferences.” Brenda submitted her scholarship the evening of the deadline after connecting with Dr. Dreama Moon about the opportunity of USRC. Brenda was a bit skeptical to submit with such short notice and did “not expect to receive the chance to present [her] work; however, [she] did, and the opportunities that followed opened up doors that would have been otherwise closed.”

Department faculty who attended the USRC to support Brandon, Katy, Brenda, and myself present included Dr.’s Holling, Rivera, Pindi, and De La Garza, all of whom were proud and impressed. Dr. De La Garza believes that “research done at [the undergraduate] level and taking the research through the presentation stage is a huge start toward graduate school.” He said, “watching [the undergraduates] develop [their] voices and present for the first time is not an easy task.” He understood how it can be intimidating to see mentors and academics in the crowd. He is eager to see and hopes that future students present their research at conferences such as the USRC. He enjoyed mentoring students in the department for the conference and

Are you interested in submitting your scholarship to USRC 2018?

Submissions are being accepted now until December 1, 2017. Please email documents to Donna Gotch following the submission guidelines on the USRC Section on the WSCA Website, the link is as follows:

<http://www.westcomm.org/?page=USRC>

watching them ask questions, and engaging with one another and other academics from diverse institutions. Dr. Rivera was equally as impressed by the undergraduates presentations. She said, “students were smart, articulate, and very professional in their presentations. And, the sophistication of the papers challenged stereotypes about what kinds of research undergraduates can do. I was very proud that our students represented CSUSM so well, and was excited to tell everyone that ‘those are OUR students!’” Dr. Pindi believes that the “undergraduate presentations were well executed and topics discussed were relevant to the conference theme,

Centralizing Marginality, Marginalizing the Center.” The conference presented a wonderful opportunity for undergraduates to engage with other academics, and Dr. Pindi thinks “it was a moment to emerge the undergraduates in the discipline dealing with different audience members, being able to socialize and open [undergraduates’] mind to the field.”

Finally, Dr. Dreama Moon was also impressed with how “professional our undergraduates students were and all of the positive comments [she] received not just about the subject matter [of their presentations], but [rather] about the way they comported themselves.” She noted, “there is no job that you will ever have, where you do not have to produce information that people can feel confident in. That said, you need to know how to go about gathering information, assess its validity, and presenting arguments in persuasive ways supported by evidence. What job would you ever have where you don’t do those things? And if you have those skills, you will quickly be in lead positions in companies and organizations.” For her, experiencing the USRC and WSCA with undergraduates was “great for the department reputation. When we have students who are articulate, professional, and smart it reflects well on the department and people will want to come here.”

To view a history of Undergraduates’ Research Presentations, visit

<http://www.csusm.edu/communication/Undergraduate%20Scholars%20Research/History%20of%20Undergraduates%20Scholarship.html>

For tips on how to prepare for an academic presentation, visit

http://www.csusm.edu/communication/Undergraduate%20Scholars%20Research/preparing_presentation.html

If accepted to an undergraduate conference, funding support is available, visit

<http://www.csusm.edu/communication/Undergraduate%20Scholars%20Research/Support%20for%20Undergraduate%20Research.html>

Oral Communication Tips for Majors

By: Danielle Biss

I had the opportunity to interview Lecturer Terri Metzger about the importance of GEO and its practicality for students in their undergraduate studies, usefulness to speaking opportunities and post-graduation. Metzger has taught at CSUSM the past 19 years and coordinates the oral communication program. She teaches GEO 102, Oral Communication and BIOL 461, Scientific Communication in Biotechnology; and has taught COMM 200, Argumentation and Dialogue; and COMM 390, Research Methods and Design. In what follows, Metzger offers public speaking tips to student majors.

Q1: Why is GEO intended for undergraduate students?

Metzger: When students are finished with GEO, they have a clear understanding of what is needed when given speaking opportunities in future classes, work, or in their personal lives. GEO gives students opportunities to develop personal strategies for speeches.

Students should know what it takes to execute a speech, how to develop their confidence, and their own voice. The hardest part about giving speeches is recognizing the time limit and being able to identify what needs to be said for a particular audience to understand. When given a limited time frame, being able to identify the key information in those parameters is important. Keeping in mind the level of vocabulary, the kind of examples, and even incorporating questions to the speech are keys to success.

Q2: How is GEO a stepping stone for upper division COMM & MASS classes?

Metzger: In COMM/MASS classes, when students have the opportunity to give a presentation, they need to remember to develop the presentation with the same meticulous care that goes into researching content itself. Careful consideration, clarifying information that is necessary in a speaking opportunity, keeping intentionality in mind and pride in their work is important.

Q3: How does GEO prepare COMM & MASS majors for the “real world?”

Metzger: When in the real world after graduation, students will have to translate what they have learned in this undergraduate studies know to a given audience. Giving it their all and remember to see the opportunity as a privilege. The time students have with other faculty, future bosses, and authority figures alike is precious and being able to articulate information well is a great start to success.

Q4: Any tips to offer students who have long been out of GEO &/or graduated?

Metzger: Any time students have a speaking opportunity, they should develop their speech with same care and preparation an “A” speech would have received back in GEO. Developing habits to be meticulous in crafting speeches now will pay off in the long run. Also, remembering treating a speaking opportunity as a privilege and keeping that mindset is what makes a difference.

Violence in Mexico and its Post-Presidential Election Implications

By: Danielle Biss

When Dr. Liliana Castañeda Rossmann went on sabbatical last academic year, little did she know she would be learning about Mexico’s drug cartels’ dirty tricks and a potential solution to the survival of an endangered species. She aimed to complete two small projects at the beginning of her sabbatical, yet later realized that one of them took her in a different direction; thus, she decided instead to expand the second part of her project into a book-length manuscript. She studied and wrote about the situations of violence that people in certain parts of Mexico encounter everyday due to drug traffic. In her manuscript, she makes the argument that Mexico and the United States share a border, and because of the great income differentials, social problems such as drug, gun and human trafficking, as well as wild-life poaching occur. For readers unfamiliar with the

meaning of a sabbatical, Dr. Rossmann explained it as “a time granted to a faculty member to focus on their research, taking a break from teaching and service.” At CSUSM, the tenure-track faculty – and now full-time lecturers also – have the contractual right to apply for a sabbatical every seven years of service. Sabbaticals can be a semester-long, or a year-long project, depending on the faculty’s proposed project.

The original idea for her research project came in 2008, when Dr. Rossmann talked with her family about the situation of insecurity they faced in Tampico, Mexico. Once on sabbatical, she conducted ethnographic interviews to use in her manuscript in the form of personal testimonies. She was mostly concerned with how individuals in her hometown conceptualize situations of insecurity, or *la inseguridad*, that they experience or witness every day. Dr. Rossmann’s research participants discussed drug cartel murders, gun violence, the illicit market for human organs, and even negligence toward

protecting endangered turtle eggs. Dr. Rossmann explained, “these stories are no urban legends. This is the reality of many Mexicans, who constantly live in fear of their own *inseguridad*.” The stories, testimonies, and narratives Dr. Rossmann heard are representative of what many people of Mexico endure on a daily basis.

In her manuscript, Dr. Rossmann used the communication perspective to understand how people conceptualize insecurity and how they act upon the world based on notions of insecurity. While a vocal minority in the U.S. has

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expressed support for building a wall along the border to keep drugs and people who are undocumented from entering the U.S., Dr. Rossmann does not agree that building a wall is that simple. She expressed, “there is a high demand in the United States for illegal substances; the highest in the world by far. Of course they have to come from somewhere else. Mexico exports drugs to pretty much all over the world, but the United States consumes almost 60 percent of all illegal drugs world-wide.” If the wall is built, Dr. Rossmann wishes it could keep guns from entering Mexico illegally. Most people in the U.S. do not talk about these side effects due to the problematic nature of discourse around guns, and their availability in the United States, which consequently spill into Mexico that then serve to arm the drug cartels. What is missing from the conversation is the role the United States plays in drug wars in Mexico. Through her manuscript, Dr. Rossmann aims to expand our understanding of the border and what happens on either side. Various chapters in her manuscript address *El Chapo*,— the drug lord infamous for his jailbreaks now in U.S. custody—gun violence, ecotourism, personal testimonies and implications about the political climate in today’s society.

In the final chapter of her manuscript, Dr. Rossmann turns her attention to the achievements and challenges faced by the ecotourism industry and the promise it holds for staving off drug

cartel violence. She conducted fieldwork in the idyllic town of El Mazunte, Oaxaca, on Mexico’s Pacific coast. It is a “sleepy little town with a hippie vibe” and a lot of natural resources. Although ecotourism brings much needed revenue to the local economy, it also could serve to reduce the exploitation of marine wildlife, in particular endangered sea turtles. In late fall, the sea turtles come to the shore and lay their eggs. Unfortunately, many people and predators steal and eat the eggs.

Dating back to the Pre-Columbian era, indigenous peoples have consumed the turtles that inhabit the coast of Oaxaca and their eggs. In those times, people would trade the turtle shells and eggs with their inland neighbors for other goods. But, in the last fifty years or so, the turtle eggs have become commodified and, as people find it profitable to sell them, humans become a major threat to the survival of the turtles. Ecotourism employs local people to care about the turtles because they are considered a resource – tourists come to view the turtles lay their eggs and then a few months later, to watch the hatchlings make it out to sea before birds and dogs eat them. Yet, there are still people who poach the turtle eggs by killing the turtles when they come to shore, leaving the turtle carcasses on the beach as a grim reminder of the economic hardships caused by drug trafficking. In some regions of Mexico, the drug cartels provide the only profitable occupation; in the coastal towns, illegal poachers either supply the cartels with eggs to sell or earn enough money to support themselves without having to join the cartels. She adds, “by providing a communication perspective on the cultural practices of the locals who serve as ecotourism guides and their transformed understanding of the turtles as a precious resource that needs to be protected, not exploited, I

hope to expand our understanding of the impact of drug cartels not just on people’s lives but also on the environment.”

Back from her sabbatical, she hopes her experiences this past year will be reflected in courses she is teaching. For instance, in light of her research on a controversial subject, she hopes that by telling some of her stories to students in her COMM 390 section, the idea of serendipitous research will become more meaningful for students’ scholarship. Also, in courses she currently teaches, the notion of a global thinking perspective surfaces. She hopes her manuscript will allow the opportunity for her readers to “think about how we live in a world with one another, nations or individuals in conflict.”

Through her research, her end goal is to provide intellectual tools to “mediate the conversation about differences and similarities between the United States and Mexico as inter(in)dependent parties, and how we perceive each other as facing scarce resources and mutual interference in seeking incompatible goals.” She is still in the process of writing her manuscript, for which she plans on seeking an academic press publisher in the near future. Once published, Dr. Rossmann hopes her readers will have a better understanding of the implications of gun violence, drug and human trafficking, and ecotourism, and how the two countries where she holds citizenship have been inextricably linked along a 2,000-mile border for several centuries, and even more so now since the last presidential election and beyond.

Until the next issue...

If you are interested in contributing stories to the newsletter, contact Dr. Holling at mholling@csusm.edu