Greetings on this beautiful spring day in sunny Florida. We are delighted to send you this spring issue of Rapport, featuring our students. Our students—present, past, and future—represent the spirit of the Department of Communication. We are proud of all of you. *(more on p.8)*

**Settling in with the Chair**

Carolyn Ellis, Professor and Chair

The graduate program continues to flourish. Applications to the MA and PhD programs are up, and six students are on track to complete their Master's or PhDs this semester. Our graduate students participated heavily in professional meetings and they garnered numerous honors at NCA last November.

As new faculty join the department, the graduate curriculum also continues to develop. In 2014 we are offering several new courses, including "Performance Theory" taught by Chris McRae, "Studies in Communication and Culture" by Aisha Durham, and "Communicating Identity" by Keith Berry. There is still much to do to sustain our growth and achievements but I am confident that the incoming graduate director, Ambar Basu, will lead our program to even greater heights.
GCA Update

The Graduate Communication Association (GCA) has been in full swing to continue to enhance our fantastic departmental community. We kicked off the year with our orientation events, enjoyed a nice afternoon picnicking at Riverfront Park, and had our annual Halloween and Holiday Parties.

We’ve also had a workshop for the practice of conference presentations and are planning on beginning a series this spring on "Life After a Ph.D."

Also upcoming is our annual Communication Day, where we plan to host our Bulls Speakout and the Performance Showcase. Following these events will be our Comm Prom, where we will be dressing to fit this year’s theme: "Black & White." We’re looking forward to the rest of Spring semester and are excited to share the productive work we’ve done and the fun we’ve had so far this year!

Meet a Few of Our Current Students

Matching intellectual curiosity with a strong commitment to doing the hard work that can make a difference in people’s lives is one way to describe the approach Tasha Rennels is taking in her pursuit of a PhD at USF.

Tasha’s academic interests emphasize critical and cultural studies to explore how media portrayals of poor and working class people compare with realities of their lives. Not content to examine the subject from a distance, she takes every opportunity to dedicate her time and energy to learning through service to others. That includes selection to serve as the faculty advisor for Bull Service Break trips to Washington, D.C. and New York City where she and undergraduate students learned about issues of poverty and homelessness through engagement in several service projects. Tasha also works with organizations addressing homeless issues in the Tampa Bay area.

“Serving the communities I study is vital for it is one thing to read about the injustices they encounter, but quite another to see them unfold before my very eyes,” she said. “What makes this engagement particularly vital is that it also shows me what can be done via scholarship and service to change the cultural climate in order to improve the lives of those who are disenfranchised. It is here where my passion lies.”

Carolyn Ellis, department chair and one of Tasha’s advisors, expresses appreciation for how the PhD candidate carries the department’s teachings and values beyond the campus.

“Tasha is a fantastic and generous departmental citizen and a natural socio-emotional leader,” she said. “As well, she is an activist scholar who works collaboratively with those in her studies, hoping that her work will be read in the
community and contribute to making the world better for those who have not been as privileged as those of us in the academy.”

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The communicative aspects of digital gaming, especially in terms of accessibility, is an area that second-year Masters student Kyle Romano finds worthy of exploration. “It’s near and dear to my heart because I grew up playing video games because I could play with my friends without having to adapt the rules,” he said. “I would dominate in that area.”

Adaptation is an ongoing consideration for Kyle, as he goes about his business without arms and legs due to an infection he contracted as an infant. Technology similar to what has allowed him to play video games also comes in handy when he drives his van, but advances in technology for the general gaming public present new problems, as interfaces become smaller and more sensitive in their response to a user’s touch.

Analyzing able-bodied assumptions through communication and critical disability theories provides Kyle with the intellectual tools to pursue his goal of promoting greater accessibility for gaming consumers.

His Advisor, Ambar Basu, is anticipating substantial results from Kyle’s academic work. “Kyle’s research should be a great contribution to understanding the relationships between communication, disability and gaming.”

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The theme of this year’s Communication Day is "Black and White," but first-year doctoral candidate Charles Jones is dedicating his academic work toward distinguishing shades of gray, particularly when it comes to examining communication in organizations and larger contexts like social movements.

One of the tools he uses to connect the dots between organizational and societal relationships comes from the popular Star Trek television franchise.

"The Borg have a moral philosophy as significant as the protagonist, which in Star Trek is the Federation," he said. "Even evil abides by a moral philosophy."

Charles details some of his ideas in his publication, "The Borg: Fan Pariah or Cultural Pillar," where he writes, "Such dissatisfaction with the Federation by Borg fans may mirror the frustration of many U.S. citizens with the seeming paralysis and pettiness of representative government."

While popular culture provides intriguing examples for Charles to consider, his ultimate purpose is grounded in using critical analysis to explore real-life issues such
as the working world of part-time instructional staff and the organizational constraints they face. "There are many narratives to be told," he said.

Dr. Jane Jorgenson is Charles’ advisor and she sums up Charles’ work this way: "He’s interested in the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in groups and how that plays out in diverse contexts,” she said.

You can learn more about our current students by visiting their web pages on the USF Communication website.

### Student News 2014

**David Purnell** is the most recent PhD to receive his degree from Communication at USF. He received his diploma during USF's Fall 2013 graduation ceremony.

David's dissertation is titled, *Community on the Menu: Seven Courses to Cultivate Familial Bonds, Exchange Social Capital, and Nourish Community*. His work reflects an appreciation for the unifying nature of food and the importance of promoting a sense of community, as well as a lot of hard work.

"You keep seeing the light at what you think is the end of the tunnel, but it was just a mirror reflecting the light so you could see around the bend and get a glimpse of what was coming next," he said.

David was hooded by department chair, Dr. Carolyn Ellis, who expressed pride at David's achievement. "David is a committed teacher and scholar who gives back to the community in all kinds of wonderful ways. I am delighted to have him in our community and to have had the honor of hooding him at graduation."

An important member of the department's family, David is a visiting assistant professor, teaching Public Speaking, Popular Forms of Public Communication and Communicating Illness, Grief, and Loss.
Tasha Rennels was selected to serve as the faculty advisor for a Bull Service Break trip to New York City, an alternative Spring Break dedicated to women’s issues. During this trip she, along with nine undergraduate students from USF, worked with Win, an organization that seeks to transform the lives of local homeless women and their children by providing the resources they need to regain their independence.

Shelby D. Forbes was our first PhD defense for 2014. Her dissertation is titled, Organizing Disability: Producing Knowledge in a University Accommodations Office.

Aphrodite Kocieda's new web series, "Tales from the Kraka Tower," is the subject of an article in Slate magazine.

The online publication's article, "Awkward Black Girl Meets Academia in a Hilarious New Web Series," highlights Aphrodite's no-holds-barred examination of race, gender and class issues within institutions deemed to be free of them.

In Kraka Tower's case, it is the Diversity department of a university, where Aphrodite's character is a new arrival and the revelations about culture and humanity begin with her very first elevator ride.

Jennifer Whalen was appointed to the position of Marketing Coordinator for the Florida Communication Association for the 2014 Conference held in Orlando, Florida. She also has accepted the position of Convention Planner for the 2015 Convention.

Nancie Hudson's autoethnography, "When Family Narratives Conflict: An Autoethnography of My Mother's Secrets," has been accepted for publication by the Journal of Family Communication. Nancie is a second-year doctoral student in USF's Department of Communication, and this will be her first published journal article. Congratulations, Nancie!

Carolyn Day received the first-place paper award at the USF Sociology Identities and Inequalities Conference.

Lindy Davidson received the 2013-2014 Graduate Research Assistantship from the Center for Hospice, Palliative Care & End-of-Life Studies at USF. Her research project is titled "Spiritual Frameworks in Pediatric Palliative Care: Understanding Parental Decision-making." Lindy is a second-year Ph.D. student studying Health Communication.
Over spring break Alyse Keller served as the faculty advisor for a Bull Service Break trip to Hammond, LA, with 10 undergraduate students. The trip was dedicated to issues of public health and disability awareness. They volunteered at the Special Olympics headquarters in Louisiana, worked closely with local Special Olympics athletes, facilitated games, and participated in disability awareness events.


Nathan Hodges has a forthcoming article, The American Dental Dream, in Health Communication.

Undergraduate and graduate students performed for the public as part of their work in Serap Erincin's and Chris McRae's classes.

The first event, "Outcomes," showcased undergraduate and graduate student performance work from the performance classes and workshops that took place during the Fall 2013 semester.

The second event featured final performances from our Postdoctoral Scholar Serap Erincin's undergraduate class, Performing Stories of Self.
Alumni Lecture – Our Students Return!!

Lisa M. Tillmann gave the fourth annual Communication Alumni lecture on February 5th in our performance studio. Her presentation included a screening of her collaborative film *Off the Menu: Challenging the Politics and Economics of Body and Food*. Lisa graduated from our program with her Ph. D. in 1998. She is currently Professor of Critical Media and Cultural Studies at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. She teaches courses in introductory and advanced research methods; media and cultural studies; gender and sexualities; and body and food.

She is author of the book *Between Gay and Straight: Understanding Friendship across Sexual Orientation*, and co-creator of two documentary films, *Off the Menu: Challenging the Politics and Economics of Body and Food* and *Remembering a Cool September*.

USF Communication Graduates Making News

We’re always glad to learn of former students who are making an impact upon graduation. A couple of our recent undergraduates are indeed making a difference in their chosen fields.

Luis Batista, a 2011 USF graduate in Communication, is enhancing digital communication with an app he created. Read all about it by clicking here. Shelly Dulman, a 2013 Communication graduate, was accepted into The Internship Experience component of the spring 2014 Creative Minds in Cannes Film Festival Program. You can read about her work by clicking here.

New Faces

Makebba Spears (or Mikki, to friends and colleagues) is the newest member of the USF Communication team, joining as our Graduate Academic Program Specialist. She previously worked in the Department of Religious Studies at USF and for the state of Indiana in her home town of Indianapolis.

She has two sons, enjoys watching the latest movies and tasting new foods. Most of all, she says, “I like being able to help other people.” Welcome aboard, Mikki!
...with the Chair (from page 1)

We are busy getting ready for our annual Communication Day Celebration. This year the theme will be “Black and White” and our speaker will be Dr. Kent Ono, University of Utah, who will be speaking on the topic, “Amusing Ourselves to Freedom: Rhetoric, Immigration, and Dark Tourism.” If you are in the area, please join us for the day’s events. See details on page 9.

If you wish to contribute to help defray the cost of our students attending the banquet or help us with our other activities, go to our homepage at communication.usf.edu and click on the “Make a Gift” button on the left side. There you will find a number of department funds. The Communication Research Fund supports student and faculty research, including student travel to academic conferences, equipment needed for research projects, and expenses connected with bringing in visiting scholars (such as the annual alumni lecturer). The Allen Grazier Fund contributes each year to the expenses connected with bringing in a lecturer for Communication Day. The Arthur Bochner Ph. D. Student Award Fund and James Popovich Endowed Scholar funds provide annual awards to outstanding students, and the Communication Operating Fund is a general department fund from which we pay for the Communication banquet and student travel, among other expenses. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

If you have news to share or any questions or concerns, email Brad Stager at bstager@usf.edu and he will be happy to help you out. Please also come and visit us in Tampa! We’d love to see you.
The 2014 Communication Day is almost here!

**Comm Day - Friday, April 11, 2014**

8:30a - 9:00a Breakfast (CIS 3020)
9:00a - 10:00a Bulls Speak-Out
   *(Sponsored by Pearson)*
   & Lambda Pi Eta Induction (CIS 3020)
10:30a - 11:30a Performance Showcase
   *(CIS 3020)*
11:30a - 12:45p Lunch (CIS 3064)

1:00p - 2:15p Grazier Lecture (CWY 109)
   Dr. Kent Ono, University of Utah, *Amusing Ourselves to Freedom: Rhetoric, Immigration, and Dark Tourism*

2:30p - 3:30p Round Table Discussion (CIS 3020)
   with Dr. Kent Ono

6:30p - 10:00p Evening Celebration
   ISA building, 7th floor
   *For faculty, graduate students, and invited guests*