Communication Studies Department to See New Chair

By Amanda Galster

After a successful twelve years, Dr. Mark Barner is finally passing the torch. This fall, he will officially step down from Chair of the Communication Studies Department and welcome Dr. Brian Murphy as his successor.

Since Barner has been chair, many improvements have been made in the department. The biggest challenge has been keeping up with changing technologies. When he first started, the department was still using VHS and relied on chemical based photography. Barner made an effort to research new technology and get the money to buy it.

Further developing the department’s internship program became another concern. Students were less aware of the opportunities because of little promotion. “A lot more students are doing internships now that a better system has been established,” Barner said.

The biggest change was revising the curriculum. “One of the hardest parts is not only keeping up with technology but the field itself,” Barner said.

Today Niagara University is proud of its unique Communication Studies program in Social Justice, although Barner refuses to take all the credit. Through this transformation, he’s had a lot of help from colleagues, including Murphy.

Having worked closely next to Murphy for all these years, Barner says he’s sure Murphy will “do a very good job.” He also wishes him luck.

As for Murphy, he’s looking forward to the new challenge. The next few years will be treated as a period of learning on the job. However, Murphy says most of the big decisions and plans are worked on together with all of the professors.

“Last year we decided on some new course changes. I hope to be able to manage that new structure smoothly.”

Although Murphy is excited to take over as chairperson, his new commitment means making some sacrifices. “NU is all about our students,” he continued. “We professors live for our teaching and our interaction with students. Being chair means less time for that. I will miss the time with students, although I look forward to meeting and greeting incoming students which is the role of the chair.”

As Murphy accepts his new challenges, he thanks his colleague and successor for all he’s done for the department. “Dr. Barner has had a long and successful run as department chair. He has overseen a huge transformation as we made the adjustments that made our program a unique degree in communicating for social justice. So, mainly, I just hope to be able to follow in his footsteps.”
The Ridge Report is a student-produced telecast that provides campus news by students and for students. The program endeavors to cover Niagara University topics and happenings that are of interest to students, including previews and reviews of concerts, theatre performances and sporting events as well as service learning and fundraising opportunities.

Be sure to check out the latest version of The Ridge Report, online at http://www.niagara.edu/the-ridge-report/

Be sure to check out pages 6 and 7 for pictures from this year’s Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society induction ceremony. At right: Friends and newly inducted Lambda Pi Eta members Lauren Palmieri (left) and Olivia Bitetti chat after the honor society ceremony.

For more information about NU’s Communication Studies Department, visit our Facebook group [Niagara University Department of Communication Studies] for event announcements and updates on our active students!

The CMS Review welcomes students to submit story ideas or nominations for highlighted faculty and students for upcoming issues!

To submit a story idea or nomination
Email Dr. Kalen Churcher
at kchurcher@niagara.edu
Goodbye, Niagara U; Hello Syracuse University

By Tiffany Hyman

Senior Lela Mayfield is truly a special person inside and out. She has utilized her time well at Niagara University by achieving academic excellence, joining various clubs, working as a Resident’s Assistance in Seton Hall, and making many new friends.

Perhaps surprising to some, the Lancaster native said when she first started at NU, it was difficult to make the transition from high school to college.

“At first, I had a hard time being on my own,” Mayfield said. “It was the real thing and it was hard because the atmosphere did not seem studious, so it was a bit difficult adjusting.”

However, this feeling did not last long. Through patience, self-sufficiency and hard work, Mayfield learned who she really is—a very independent individual who will succeed after life at NU.

Mayfield, who graduates this month, is heading to Syracuse University to begin her master’s degree in media management.

“Lela is going to do wonderfully at Syracuse,” said Kalen Churcher, assistant professor of Communication Studies. “She is such a wonderful student and an all-around good person; I know she will succeed.”

Mayfield always knew she wanted to become a Communication Studies major. She had always been a very talented writer in high school and wanted to further her skills.

“I always loved writing,” Mayfield said. “I started off in journalism and I love the media and politics, so I decided I wanted to be a White House correspondent.”

Obviously, becoming a correspondent for the White House requires a great deal of experience. To expand her horizons, Mayfield declared a minor in Spanish. She explained studying a foreign language would help her branch out into media in different countries, such as Bolivia and Argentina.

“I took Spanish all four years in high school,” she explained. “I also took AP Spanish and I just loved the culture and the language, so I thought it was a wise decision to carry on with it.”

In addition declaring a major and minor, Mayfield is also very involved on campus. She is the Business Editor for the Niagara Index, NU’s school newspaper; a tutor; an RA; and in the Communications and Foreign Language Honor Societies.

Eventually, Mayfield wants to work for a television station, hoping to one day manage her own.

“I want to eventually get my own programming station and make it appropriate for families so everyone can sit down and find it educational. Wholesome TV seems to be lacking in today’s society,” she said.

While crediting her mother for encouraging her to go to graduate school, she also recognizes her Communication Studies professors for the decision.

“I appreciate the professors because of their honesty. They held nothing back and told you what the industry is really like. It seemed disheartening at first, but I’m glad they laid it on thick. They taught me how to bring my work up to par and how it can be incorporated into life.”

Being accepted with a full scholarship to Syracuse, which has one of the top Communications Master’s programs in the country, is a great way to get into the industry.

Celebrities who have studied in the Communications Master’s Program at Syracuse include Contessa Brewer, journalist for MSNBC; Ryan Burr, sportscaster for ESPN; Bob Costas, sportscaster for NBC and HBO Sports; and Marissa Bailey, news anchor for WGRZ, Channel 2 news station.

Mayfield was honored to learn the good news.

(Mayfield continued on page 11)
Seven Niagara University Communication Studies students recently presented original research at Rochester Institute of Technology’s Conference for Undergraduate Research in Communication, with two students taking home “top poster” honors.

Seniors Rianne Farrugia and Kara Oliver won awards for their research on racial diversity in Broadway shows and perceptions of beauty among Black women, respectively.

Seniors Kristin Sito and Geoff Redick also presented research, in addition to Junior Anna Hoffmann and Sophomore Amanda Galster.

“The students did an exceptional job at the RIT conference,” said Kalen Churcher, assistant professor of Communication Studies. “Our graduating seniors proved they have made the most out of their NU education.

“Likewise, Anna and Amanda also should be very proud of the outstanding work they completed so early in their NU careers.”

Mark Barner, chair of the Communication Studies Department, said the RIT conference is a great experience for students, particularly those interested in continuing on to graduate school.

“I’m always impressed by the level of work produced by the students,” Barner said. “They represented our department well.”
Balancing Athletics and Academics is a Sport of Its Own

By Robert J. Crates

“I can’t really do anything; I have to finish this paper,” an over-worked student utters.

With just school work, it seems hard enough for a student to balance classes, work, school work and social activity. For some, the difficult balance between the four becomes a battle, but for others, the balance must be learned quickly.

Imagine being a Division I athlete. Not only do they have the normal academic pressures, but they have the added forces of workouts, practices and games.

Free time within a day becomes more and more restricted. Such is the case for three athletes who are also Communication Studies majors.

For Erin Baker, a senior on the soccer team, the balance between academics and her sport has become easier throughout the years.

Asked how well she balances school and sports Baker said, “Pretty well I guess. On road trips we had a lot of time on the bus and in the hotel, so it was easy to get most of my work done.

“It took me about a year to figure out how to do it; freshman year was pretty rough, but once I got into a routine it made balancing everything pretty easy.”

Sam Goodwin, a junior and member of the hockey team, also has had to learn the delicate balance between academics and sports. In order to make his day run smoothly, he has developed a system that he goes by daily.

“Almost every day, I make a small checklist of things that I need to get done that day,” he explained. “This is a habit that has been very helpful for me with a busy schedule.”

Goodwin does admit that academics and sports can be overwhelming or difficult at times. However, he believes that the less free time he has actually motivates him to finish his work.

“This may be hard for some to understand, sometimes having less free time in a day actually helps me to get more done.

“If I know that I have a paper to write and I only have from 7-9 free that day, I will make sure that I get it done at that exact time.”

Kari Honomichl, a sophomore volleyball player, is in the same boat as the other two. For her, the balance can become harsh, especially during the season when volleyball has games every weekend. Her main struggle comes from having the energy to wake up during the day.

“It can also get hard getting up early every day and having a few hours of practice, then having to go to classes and do work, when coaches just kicked our butts,” she said. “I can get so tired.”

Despite the struggles the three face, they all still have hopes and ambitions they want to attain with their Communications Studies degree.

(Athletes continued on page 10)
Top: Lambda Pi Eta President Kristen McAuley and Brian Murphy, honor society adviser, prepare before the start of the ceremony. Lambda Pi Eta is a national honor society that recognizes excellence in communications. Next: Senior Olivia Bitetti jokes with her mom following the Lambda Pi Eta induction ceremony that honors the top students in Communication Studies. Right: Brian Murphy, associate professor of Communication Studies and honor society adviser, welcomes friends, relatives and students to the Lambda Pi Eta honor society induction ceremony. Below: New inductees to Niagara University’s Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society are, from left, Olivia Bitetti, Lauren Palmieri, Amy Young and Tiffany Hyman. Absent from photo are Lauren Merrick, Eleni Vlahos and Emily Kaufman.
Top: Senior Geoff Redick and Junior Anna Hoffmann, present Tiffany Hyman with her Lambda Pi Eta cord, pin and certificate. Hyman is a junior honors student in the Communication Studies Department. Next: Past Lambda Pi Eta inductees who coordinated the recent honor society ceremony are, from left, Kristen McAuley, Geoff Redick, Anna Hoffmann and Lela Mayfield. Right: Tiffany Hyman, a junior Communication Studies major and honors student, poses with her mother and sister. Below: From left, Anna Hoffmann, Kristen McAuley, Lela Mayfield and Geoff Redick coordinate the speaking parts of the Lambda Pi Eta honor society inductions.

2011 Lambda Pi Eta inductees
In January, Tiffany Hyman, a North Tonawanda native and Niagara University junior Communication Studies major applied for the New York Press Association (NYPAP) scholarship.
In March, she was chosen to receive the stipend.
After interning last summer at Niagara Frontier Publications on Grand Island, Hyman, who is also minoring in hospitality, is thrilled to return there this summer.
“I’m very grateful for the opportunity to work with NFP again. It is such an honor to work beside all of the talented writers there,” Hyman said of the staff at Niagara Frontier Publications.
The NYPAP Foundation funds paid summer internships for college students who excel in journalism, have experience in the field and enjoy writing for print. The $2,500 award is given to students as an eight-week, paid summer internship opportunity at a local community newspaper.
Hyman credits her professors with encouraging her to gain real-world experience through internships.
“Professors push internships for a reason,” Hyman said.
Joshua Maloni, a Communication Studies professor and writer for NFP, said interns gain valuable experience working at NFP.
“Interns at Niagara Frontier Publications learn first-hand what it takes to make it as a reporter or editor in print journalism,” Maloni said. “It’s an experience that demands a lot of time, effort and enthusiasm.
“It’s certainly not for everyone - though all are welcome to apply. We only take students who are serious about pursuing a communications-based career.”
Hyman had the chance to create original pieces for print through interviewing subjects. Perhaps one of her most exciting accomplishments during her time at NFP was her appearance on Lori and Friends, a local cooking show on Channel 20. This summer, Hyman hopes to improve her skills by becoming a more applied writer, gaining more experience with photography and further developing her communication skills.
“This year I hope to become a more hands-on reporter,” she explained. “It’s a great way to get familiar with the field.”
Maloni said Niagara Frontier Publications is also excited to have Hyman back on staff.

Earlier this spring, Tiffany Hyman, a North Tonawanda native and Communication Studies major, was awarded a New York Press Association scholarship.

“We couldn’t be happier to have Tiffany back with us this summer,” he said. “She did an outstanding job with our company last year. She's shown tremendous growth as a journalist over the course of the semester, and will no doubt add to our complete community coverage and ever-growing website.”

For more information, visit http://wnia.niagara.edu or call 286-7315.
**Right:** Senior Ashley Shufelt displays the results of her capstone senior seminar project during Niagara University's Undergraduate Research Conference.

**Left:** Senior Olivia Bitetti (left) and Emily Brillanti, also a senior, looks at some of the other research posters at Niagara University’s Undergraduate Research Conference.

**Right:** Senior Sarah Kim poses next to her research poster on plastic surgery and its impact on young women.
Senior CMS Students Earn Department Awards

The Communication Studies Department presented four senior CMS majors with awards during the Arts & Sciences Day of Recognition. Academic Excellence Awards went to Lela Mayfield, Kristen McAuley, Geoff Redick and Kristin Sito. Redick also received the department’s Excellence in the Profession Award for his outstanding work in radio, TV and journalism. From left, are Brian Murphy, association professor of Communication Studies; Kalen Churcher, assistant professor of Communication studies; Mayfield; Redick; and McAuley. Not present: Kristin Sito.

(Athletes continued from page 5)

Baker has a strong interest in photography and wants to become a photographer. However, first she is starting her master's in the fall of 2011. “I am getting my master's in English and Communications, so it would be cool to be able to write and incorporate my photographs into my writing,” she said.

Goodwin is unsure of most of what he wants to do. However, he knows he wants to continue playing hockey as long as he can. After that, he wants to incorporate his two majors: Communication Studies and French, with his minor, International Business.

Honomichl became a Communication Studies major because it piqued two of her interests: media and writing. She is still unsure as to what she wants to do after college, however.

The three are definite prime examples in balancing the pressures of academics, along with their sport. They represent a number of student-athletes who are working toward a degree in Communication Studies.

Although they say it is difficult at first to juggle the two roles they must play, Goodwin, Honomichl and Baker seem to have figured it out.

The CMS department is looking for a new intern to become the editor of the CMS Review! The internship counts for three credits and lasts from Fall 2011 to Spring 2012.

As the editor, you are responsible for brainstorming and editing stories, writing articles and/or providing photographs, and most importantly, laying out the newsletter.

The editor is also responsible for creating the Media Awareness Week program.

For more information, contact Dr. Kalen Churcher at kchurcher@niagara.edu

Congratulations to the Class of 2011!
From Campus to Cable: Advice on What to Do Next?

By Stacey Czerinski

Editor’s Note: This semester, Stacey Czerwinski, a sophomore Communication Studies major, became an intern with the Niagara Falls City School District and took on a major project: creating a television show. NU Now can be seen on Time Warner Cable Channel 21 or online at www.nfschools.com. Below, Czerwinski offers some practical advice for students wondering, “What Next?”

Most would agree college is a time for self growth. All of the academic and social rigors that are thrown in our paths during this chaotic time are meant to better us; prepare us for what comes next in life.

However, simply getting passing grades is not enough to solidify post-graduate success. A competitive job market is one of the many concerns that undergraduates today face. So the big question many of us have is, what can we do to ensure a successful future in our highly overburdened society?

The answer? Be proactive.
Take future success into your own hands. Search for internships everywhere. Employers look for potential employees to already have job related experience in their fields of certification.
Not only does an internship look good on paper, but it also helps to give you a taste of the field you’re looking into, without indefinitely committing you to anything.
Always keep your eyes and ears open. Use networking to your advantage.
If you meet a professional in a career position that interests you, ask them if they’re accepting applications for interns. At the very least, you’ll be able to speak with them about what actions you can take to give you the competitive edge necessary for thriving in that job market.
Networking in conjunction with my persistent attitude got me ahead of the game. As a sophomore, I am now an intern with the Public Relations Department of the Niagara Falls City School District. With this opportunity, I am afforded the chance to write and publish press releases and articles, cover district events, and even produce and host my own television show, NU Now, on cable access channel 21.
Though this internship alone, I network and connect with both local and nonlocal members of the media and create contacts that potentially have the ability to aid me in my search for a career in communications. Not to mention, the hands on experience looks fantastic on a resume.
It’s never too late to plan ahead.
By staying proactive on campus and doing what interests you now, your future is yours for the taking.

On the Web...

For more information about local internships, go to www.niagara.edu/jobs. Type “communications” into the career field bar.

Check out www.niagara.edu/communication-internships-co-ops/ for more information about CMS internships!

(Mayfield continued from page 3)

“It was amazing being accepted. I was so happy and honored,” she said. “At the time I don’t know if I necessarily saw it, but now I feel like it is such a great opportunity to go because Syracuse has such a great reputation and graduates have done so much.”
Of course, being accepted to grad school did not come easy. She had to work extremely hard day in, day out and had the motivation and drive to do so.
“You have to work hard to attain the American dream and you need to have passion,” she said.
Mayfield’s adviser agrees that her student has that passion.
“Lela is an incredibly determined and motivated young woman,” Churcher said. “I, for one, am going to miss the enthusiasm she brings to everything she does.
“But, I’m also thrilled that she’s going to be working toward her dreams.”
Spotlight on Nanette Harmon

By Anna Hoffmann

Anyone who has taken an American Sign Language (ASL) class with Nanette Harmon knows she is “Big D Deaf.” An advocate for sign language as well as the local and global Deaf community, Harmon strives to educate students about deafness and Deaf culture. Her passion for building a bridge between deaf and hearing people shines in the classroom, and her candor allows for an open and honest discussion about the realities of discrimination and difficulties that deaf people face.

“Big D Deaf” is different from “little d deaf.” The little “d” is used when describing the medical condition or the physical hearing difference. The big “D” is capitalized at all times and refers to Deaf culture, the Deaf community, and the Deaf lifestyle.

Harmon is a lifelong member of the Deaf community. She was diagnosed in the third grade with a degenerative disease that slowly destroyed her ability to hear sound. She grew up with the ability to speak and communicate orally, but now she relies heavily on hearing aids to amplify the little hearing she has left. Harmon relies on visual cues, context, lip movements, and facial expressions to fill in the blanks, much like many deaf and hard-of-hearing people do.

Because of her late-deafened status, she offers special insight and a bridge between worlds that often remain separate.

In the classroom, Harmon is candid about her condition and experiences working with the Deaf community.

“I won’t stop until everyone in the world knows something about deafness,” she said. “It has become my life’s ministry.”

Harmon describes the centrality of American Sign Language to Deaf culture and how deaf people have created a different but still fully functional normality. She also opens the Deaf world to hearing students by inviting them to Deaf social events and by inviting members of the Deaf community to visit her classes.

Harmon believes ASL classes are applicable to all students, and that there are many things to learn in an ASL classroom.

“The biggest mistake students make when they sign up to take an ASL class is the assumption that they will be spending the semester learning how to move their hands in the air,” she said. “That’s not what happens here. Students taking ASL learn about a people and a culture, not just a language.”

Many Communication Studies students choose to take ASL courses to fill advised elective spots on their curriculum cards. Communications Studies students arguably stand to gain the most from ASL courses, from gaining the ability to communicate in an entirely new language, to gaining the ability to communicate with guests or coworkers that might have hearing differences.

“I love having Communications students in my classroom,” Harmon said. “They are already learning how a message can get misunderstood or misinterpreted as it gets transferred from one person to another, and they are learning how to communicate clearly and effectively. ASL fits in perfectly with that.”

Heather Backlas, who has taken several ASL courses, says, “It depends on what field you go into, but if you’re a journalist you might have to interview a deaf person, or if you’re in business you might have a deaf client. I think it’s a useful skill to have in general.”

Rianne Farrugia has also taken ASL. “As a CMS major it’s important to be diverse with the field,” she explained. “It’s important to be able to communicate with every person no matter if it’s with the spoken word or with your hands. I find the language fascinating and passionate and hope to pair my career with it as well.”