Madison Day events encourage engagement
Town Meeting and Debate showcases the importance of open discussion

“...James Madison University did itself proud by featuring and honoring the process of debate as an important part of citizenship,” said Dr. John Campbell, Senior Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Communication at the University of Memphis and author specializing in the rhetoric of science.

The fourth Annual James Madison Commemorative Debate and Citizen Forum (the Madison Cup) took place Wed. March 15, 2006. Twenty schools from around the country gathered to debate this year’s debate topic: Resolved: That the theory of Intelligent Design (in both its historical and its contemporary versions) has a proper role in America’s High School biology courses.

Prior to the debate, the Center for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue hosted “Evolution, Intelligent Design and Public Education,” a town hall meeting, introducing the debate topic and encouraging open discussion in the community context. As part of the school of Communications Studies at JMU, the center promotes public engagement in potentially controversial issues.

Dr. Pete Bsumek, Co-Director of the Center for Constructive Advocacy, and Director of Debate emphasized the importance of the center in facilitating the study of communication. “The discipline of Communication Studies, we believe is not just a scholarly endeavor, the studies of the traditions of scholarship are things that are meant to be practiced,” said Bsumek. “The study of communication lives in the practice.”

Campbell, speaker at the town hall meeting, introduced the notion of teaching not only evolution but also science as an argument. Bsumek said Dr. Campbell was a unique choice for this particular topic because Campbell could bring the two sides of this debate together for constructive dialogue.

At the center of Campbell’s message he expressed his opinion of the importance of teaching science as a history of great controversies over great scientific

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Dear Alumni, Students, Faculty, Staff, and Friends of SCOM,

As the end of spring semester draws near, it is appropriate to reflect upon successes of the past year. This newsletter does that by focusing on faculty research, the Madison Cup Debate Tournament/Town Meeting, and the Professional-In-Residence program.

In addition, I am pleased to announce several recruitment achievements. Starting fall semester 2006, the following individuals will be joining SCOM as full-time faculty in continuing appointments:
- Dr. Mike Davis, Debate Director/Assistant Professor
- Ms. Laura Keimig, Assistant Director, Individual Events/Lecturer
- Ms. Jenda Krauklis, Lecturer
- Mr. Mike Gulotta, Lecturer
- Mr. Kreg Owens, Lecturer
- Mr. Thad Herron, Lecturer
- Dr. Terri Wray, Lecturer
- Mr. Clayton Johnson, Lecturer
- Mr. Michael Parsons, Lecturer

Finally, Commencement is scheduled for Saturday, May 6, 2006. I hope you will join us at 11:00 a.m. at Hillside to honor this year’s Communication graduates.

Eva M. McMahan
School Director

Workshops a great addition to SCOM
Professional In Resident guides students in search of internships and summer jobs

A workshop created to help students in their quest for jobs and careers will hold its final session on April 17, 2006 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. in Taylor Hall room 400.

School of Communication Studies Professional in Residence Molly O’Brien will conclude her workshop series entitled Start Building Your Career. This final session of her workshop will focus on performance evaluations and networking. Admittance to the workshop is free and is open to the public.

“I’m hoping to answer lots of questions and be helpful according to what students’ needs and interests are,” said O’Brien. “I think any student contemplating a career in public relations or a related field—politics, or health communications would benefit from the sessions.”

The first session in the series, Starting Your Career, focused on finding an internship or first job. Featuring interview tips from the employer’s side of the desk, O’Brien included interview do’s and don’ts, as well as key interview follow up questions and cover letter and resume tips. Session two, Who’s the Boss? was created to provide students insight on forming relationships at work and on making and living with tough decisions. O’Brien said she hoped these workshops would provide her audience insight on the workplace from her level of expertise.

Brian Goodman, School of Communication Studies major, with a concentration in Political Communication said although he felt the first session was public relations oriented he was able to utilize many of the ideas as a political communications concentration.

“She gave us the advice to ask a question at the end of the interview,” said Goodman. “I’d heard lots of tips and never heard to ask for tips.” Implementing this in an interview Goodman landed himself an internship with CBS News Online.

O’Brien graduated from the University of Iowa with a masters in journalism and mass communications and worked in agency public relations for more than 20 years. O’Brien took her current position at JMU in September.

After having worked one-on-one with students while completing her masters O’Brien said she is glad to be able to have this opportunity to help students once again. “Academic settings are appealing and familiar to me, so it was natural that I was drawn to this residency opportunity,” said O’Brien.

Aside from her group workshops O’Brien works one-on-one with students to provide tips from resume building to interviewing.

Catherine Holmberg, School of Communication Studies major, with a concentration in public relations attended the one-on-one meetings. “Her feedback was the perfect balance of compliments and constructive criticism and I appreciated how patient she was while I drilled her with question after question,” said Holmberg. “Ms. O’Brien is eager to help and willing to devote as much time as it takes.”

The last week for one-on-one sessions is April 17, 2006 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

“Ms. O’Brien is eager to help and willing to devote as much time as it takes.”
- Catherine Holmberg
Interested in research concerning the public relations discipline, Associate Professor Dr. John Stone’s research begins with the fundamentals in speech communication. Among Stone’s latest research is that on core communication topics such as credibility—Stone examines the effect of the “no comment” remark in press conferences. In particular Stone examines the question of “If I answer questions for the media do I increase source credibility.” His research thus far indicates that there is little doubt that the credibility goes down when the spokesperson answers questions. Stone will present this paper at a conference this Spring.

Among his latest endeavors Stone presented a paper on crisis and risk management in Katrina at the International Public Relations Conference in Miami. His paper outlines a plan of how to rebuild New Orleans, which he has been working on with three communication studies students. This plan emphasizes the need for a federally moderated project. In the long run Stone will send this plan to the mayor of New Orleans, a city planner in Philadelphia already working on a plan to rebuild New Orleans and Donald Trump, proposing that the three serve on an advisory board for the rebuilding of the city.

At the root of much of Stone’s other research is the intention to “help students learn,” he said. Stone recently finished writing a book entitled “Public Relations Management: From Philosophy to Practice.” Set to be published Aug. 1, 2006, Stone said he hopes this book will help public relations students be better prepared for when they graduate. The book outlines what a public relations manager does from internal communication, to external communication, to budgeting, to special events, to crisis communication.

“It’s important to learn about theory—but it’s important to learn about pragmatics,” said Stone. This book introduces the practical world to the students in hopes that right out of undergraduate school students can set up a public relations program. “What I would like to see our young people do is go out of here and say ‘I can do that’—run a campaign, a special event, to crisis communication,” said Stone.

Furthermore, in fall 2005 Stone presented a paper at the National Conference for an Academic Integrative Approach to Learning and Cross Disciplinary Studies that focused on the important role that acknowledging students’ diversity plays, in helping students learn. However, the diversity Stone distinguishes here is not that of skin color, or gender, but a person’s “internal diversity.”

“No two people are alike,” said Stone. “That’s the diversity to which we should parley our instruction.” Stone emphasized the idea that because no two people are alike, tailoring a concept to reach each individual is an important key to helping each individual learn.

Future research Stone wishes to pursue include writing a textbook on the fundamentals of speech communication and research on interpersonal communication. From helping students learn, to helping rebuild a city, Stone has much research underway and even more that he has yet to begin.

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**Students spend the day in D.C.**

Externships help students on their journey for a job

Venturing into the “real-world,” 13 members of the JMU chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators shadowed communications professionals in Washington D.C. to gain insight in their intended career field.

On Wed. March 22, members of the JMU chapter of IABC took part in an externship project organized by the student-run organization. The externship provided opportunities for students to experience a day in the life of a communications professional. IABC President Regan Hiatt helped plan the day by contacting the DC/Baltimore professional chapter of IABC, and their president Daria Steigman. “Daria recruited members of IABC located in the DC area who wouldn’t mind showing some college students around for the day,” said Hiatt.

Emily Hicks, School of Communication Studies major with a concentration in public relations spent the day with the Communication Director of Public Affairs at the Environmental Protection Agency. Hicks had the opportunity to observe the director edit a strategic communication for the company as well as sit in on a telecom meeting with people from all over the country. “I liked how the externship showed me a professional’s entire day,” said Hicks. “This experience showed me how much variety is involved as a typical PR representative.”

While the externship served as an opportunity for students to see what one’s future career may entail, it also created a chance for students to network. Meaghan Dost, School of Communication Studies major with a concentration in public relations spent her externship with Planned Television Arts, a division of Ruder Finn Public Relations. “This externship gave me good insight to a potential career by giving me a variety of contacts and useful information in the area where I want to start my career,” said Dost. “It’s a great way to meet professionals in your field and network efficiently!”

Kristin Coutu, School of Communications Studies major with a concentration in public relations externed with the Director of the Internal Communications Department at The Government Printing Office. While Coutu gained perspective on this career, she emphasized the importance of any externship. “I feel all externships are important because they can give students insight in a world that we are about to join,” said Coutu.
Assistant Professor Dr. Dorothy Della Noce, concentrates her research on dispute resolution. She is most interested in how goals and communication practices connect in the practice of mediation, particularly in transformative mediation.

“The most interesting insight from my research is that, how you evaluate mediator practice competency depends on what form of mediation the mediator is using,” she said. “What is good practice for one group of mediators is bad for another. It is only once you link goals and practices that you can construct valid tests of practice competency.”

Another research project Della Noce is pursuing is an analysis of power dynamics in mediation from a communication perspective. According to Della Noce there is surprisingly little research on how power is constructed by the mediator and those involved in the mediation session. “Power is an interesting phenomena that we don’t really talk about in mediation from a communication perspective,” she said. To understand this phenomenon she is looking at how power is constructed within the session both between the parties and through the mediator’s discourse, particularly the use of questions. She also seeks to identify how mediators recognize and address power moves by each party in the session.

While Della Noce pursues many research interests on her own, she is also currently working on the Handbook of Transformative Practice: Relational Approaches to Conflict Intervention with Dr. Joseph Folger from Temple University. This will be the first mediation handbook for transformative mediation practitioners. The book will explore the theory and practice of conflict transformation in a variety of conflict settings.

Additionally, Della Noce enjoys working on independent research studies with students. One current project that a senior student is pursuing through an independent study focuses on the question of “how do we do anger?” Building on the belief that anger serves some function in conflict, the student is analyzing what anger “looks like” in interaction, how it can be recognized, and what functions it serves. Della Noce foresees a joint publication emerging from this project, as she combines the student’s research with her own research.

Della Noce employs a qualitative discourse analysis approach in most of her research. Recently, she has worked to develop an advanced qualitative communication research class at JMU (SCOM 385). “Qualitative research has become an important part of the conflict field,” she said. “Courts, the workplace, and other institutions are reaching more and more for the kinds of insights on conflict and its resolution that only come from qualitative work. It will prepare our students well for the workplace and for graduate school.”

Constantly tucking away notes for future research (on the yellow Post-It notes that dot her computer screen), Della Noce has a multitude of ideas for her next research endeavors. Among these is the long-term goal to determine what role plays accomplish in mediator training. She hopes to answer the question, “What is being communicated about the nature of conflict when we hand someone a role play scenario in mediation training?” As Della Noce said, “Everywhere I turn I see questions.”

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questions. Doing this would “better prepare today’s high school students for their roles as tomorrow’s citizens in a highly scientific and technological democracy,” said Campbell.

Furthermore, Campbell stated in his speech, “A science curriculum based on argument would be a constructive approach of teaching our best science.” After Campbell’s speech the audience was invited to participate in round table conversations.

Campbell, an advocate of constructive culture engagement, stated his admiration for the center.

“The Center for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue is really important in that the relationship that it fosters between the faculty and the community could be a model for the nation,” said Campbell. “JMU is heading in the right direction.”

Along with the town hall meeting, the Madison Cup encouraged the idea of public involvement. “What the James Madison Cup showed is how the culture of intercollegiate debate really serves to help understand the nature of argument and engagement,” said Campbell. “The culture debate fosters was very well represented at the Madison Cup.”

Twenty teams engaged in the topic through a series of preliminary debates and six made it to the final round of the Madison Cup. Impressed with the quality of all the debates Campbell believes that it is important to build an atmosphere where productive thinking could be possible and this debate does just that. “I was very impressed how the activity of intercollegiate debate raises the bar on this debate,” said Campbell.

University of Richmond, University of Notre Dame, Yale University, Claremont Colleges, Liberty and College of William and Mary competed in the final round. The winners of this year’s Madison Cup were Adam Chilton and Rory Gillis from Yale University.

Teams from the following schools participated in the 2006 Madison Cup

- Cornell University
- Yale University
- Pepperdine University
- University of Notre Dame
- George Mason University
- College of William and Mary
- Brown University
- University of Pittsburgh
- Wake Forest University
- University of Virginia
- University of South Florida
- West Virginia University
- Mary Washington University
- Towson University
- University of Richmond
- University of Maryland
- Claremont Colleges
- Liberty University
- Baptist Bible College
- James Madison University
Constantly engulfed in a variety of research projects, Dr. Melissa Aleman, associate professor in the School of Communication Studies, is currently researching later-life romances. Beginning in graduate school, Aleman’s research interest in the field of gender analysis has since developed into a passion for analyzing communication in aging. “I knew I was interested in questions of how gender was constructed,” said Aleman. “In the retirement community I was studying, gender was constructed through codes of romantic relationships and we do gender as we age.”

In an effort to understand romantic relationships in later life Aleman is looking at images of youthful biases as presented in contexts such as TV portrayals, comparing long-term marriage, as well as looking at how people are engaging in virtual spaces for dating. Originally begun in her dissertation project and refined through working with students, her research in this field has culminated into the prospect of publishing a book. Working on writing a book that discusses the later-life romantic relationships is just one of the many research endeavors Aleman is pursuing.

Among many research projects, Dr. Melissa Aleman is working with her husband Dr. Carlos Aleman, an associate professor in the School of Communication Studies, to compare generational beliefs about romance. This research works to uncover the similarities and differences between generations and compare themes of context in regard to romantic relationships.

In conjunction with Larry Erbert, associate professor of communication at the University of Texas El Paso, Aleman is currently looking at grandparents as caregivers through the concept of “re-parenting." This concept can be defined as a grandparent taking on the role of the parent. Through a series of 45 interviews, Aleman and Erbert have looked at how the grandparent feels connected by being the parent of the parent, and how the label itself of “grandparent" is a mechanism for creating connections. Additionally, Aleman and Erbert are looking at the concept of unpaid childcare, such as that done by grandparents. This research analyzes the “psychological communicative labor that goes unacknowledged,” said Aleman.

In regard to future research, Aleman would like to link theories in her research to the health context through dialectical theory. She would like to link relational communication to the health context. “I plan on linking my understanding of the nature of romantic relationships to health,” she said. By working in conjunction with her partner and his research with prostate cancer patients, she would like to look at how people make health decisions with others. She expressed the importance of this research by stating, “Spousal partners have a huge impact on their partners and [prostate cancer] is one of those health care issues so intricately related to a romantic relationship.”

Working hard to “tease out” the life span conditions in later life, Aleman’s progress has fostered the creation of more research projects since she began these research endeavors. While her research concerning later-life romances has spawned more research in that field, she plans to further her research by applying her theories in another context—health.

Congratulations JMU Debate
05-06 JMU Debate team results

(Sept. 23-25)
The Connelly-Garvey Debates at Kings College
JV Octa-finalist: Mary Mosley and Evan Levy

(Oct. 7-9)
Liberty University Invitational
Varsity Quarter-finalist: Alexis Gonzales-Black and Corey Yarbrough
Varsity 5th Speaker: Corey Yarbrough
Varsity 2nd Speaker: Alexis Gonzales-Black

(Oct. 14-17)
Jay Weinberg Debate Tournament at the University of Richmond
JV Quarter-finalist: Stephanie Feulner and Chris Gray
JV 9th Speaker: Mary Mosley

(Nov. 4-6)
Catholic University Invitational
Novice Octa-finalist: Sean Lowry and Tiffany Pryce
Novice 9th Speaker: Sean Lowry

(Jan. 20-22)
The Patriot Classic at George Mason University
Varsity Quarter-finalist: Alexis Gonzales-Black and Corey Yarbrough
Varsity 1st Speaker: Alexis Gonzales-Black
Novice Quarter-finalist: Sean Lowry and Thomas Webb
Novice 1st Speaker: Sean Lowry

(Jan. 27-29)
The U. S. Naval Academy Debate Tournament
Varsity Octa-finalist: Alexis Gonzales-Black and Corey Yarbrough
Novice Quarter-finalist: Sean Lowry and Tiffany Pryce
Novice 10th Speaker: Sean Lowry

District VII tournament
District VII champion: Alexis Gonzales-Black and Corey Yarbrough

Novice Nationals at West Virginia University
Octa-finalist: Tiffany Pryce and Sean Lowry

Juniors Alexis Gonzales-Black and Corey Yarbrough advanced to the Varsity Nationals. Congratulations!
April 10-14: Student Employee Appreciation Week

April 12-14: The 28th Annual Communication Evaluation Conference: Community, Identity & Place; coordinated by Dr. Melissa Aleman

April 17: Professional In Residence Workshop “Making the Grade: Performance Evaluations & Networking” 5:30 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. in Taylor 400

April 22: International Association of Business Communicators and The Association of Women In Communications semi-formal at Hams restaurant

April 22: Fall 2006 open registration begins

May 1-5: Final examinations

May 6: JMU Commencement at 8:30 a.m. at Bridgeforth Stadium

May 6: College of Arts and Letters graduation ceremony at 11:00 a.m. at Hillside

LPH inaugural kickball game 04.07.06

score: faculty 17, students 8

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