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| Diederich College of Communication | 2021 | No. 09 |

THE FIERCE URGENCY OF **NOW**



Leading the charge, alumnae experts in diversity and inclusion
strive for a better future for all.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR
TRANSPARENCY WHEN
CRISES ARISE. P. 5

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON
SILVER LININGS IN A YEAR OF
UNCERTAINTIES. P. 16

ALUMNA IS FIRST BLACK WOMAN
TO LEAD AS BRIGADIER GENERAL
IN THE MARINE CORPS. P. 21

Marquette University

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Comm is published for alumni, colleagues and friends of the college. We'd love to hear your feedback and story ideas for future issues. Email sarah.koziol@marquette.edu.

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letter

from the dean



DEAR DIEDERICH COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

While listening to a podcast* recently, I learned of a genre of filmmaking called slow television. Slow television started with a televised documentary of a seven-hour train journey through Norway. Rather than an edited, shorter story that is high on plot and character development, slow television encourages us to pause or slow our pace. The

podcast hosts' commentary as they watched the train's journey revealed that whether it is the grays that blend as the engine passes an industrial complex or the opening of space as the train moves into the countryside, stories are discovered when we slow down and take in our surroundings.

This idea of slow television and the stories that exist but may be missed seems particularly salient as I share this issue of *Comm* magazine with you. This issue comes as we continue to emerge from a global pandemic that has forced us to pause and consider the aspects of our lives that have always been there. During the pandemic, we were challenged to turn our attention to what mattered most to us as a college of communication at a Catholic, Jesuit university. As we paused, we renewed our commitment to create a more just and inclusive world. In this issue, you will read about Diederich alumnae who within their organizations turn their lenses toward what it takes to make impactful change that results in equity. You also will read about our students and how they adapted to the changing world, allowing themselves

to see what mattered most in their journeys so that they could continue to hone their storytelling crafts — in the arts, in journalism and in marketing. I invite you, too, to join us in this spirit of slowing down, with our "Ignatian Moment" below, a new feature that encourages all of us to pause for an Ignatian-inspired reflection on our own unique stories.

For me, slow television is a reminder to slow down and see what is beautiful and meaningful in each small moment. These are lessons we will continue to embrace in the Diederich College. Ignatian spirituality encourages us to make meaning out of our experiences and find ways to share these meanings within our homes, our organizations, our neighborhoods and our shared world. Even as we shifted gears through this pandemic, there were stories to be told. And as this past year has made clear, our world needs skilled communicators who can draw our attention to the world that surrounds us and help us create meaning.

*"The Great Narrative Escape," *Invisibilia* podcast, NPR

All my best,

Dr. Sarah Bonewits Feldner
Dean
Diederich College of Communication



IGNATIAN MOMENT



News Communities Can Use

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service earns important funding to strengthen its mission of community reporting.

On a typical day, the home page of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service features a wide range of content that impacts its readers: a story about advocates working to lessen the racial and ethnic disparities in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign; a guide to avoiding stimulus check scams; an article about a literacy group working to help students with creativity-based education. These and other stories together seek to accomplish three objectives, says the news service’s editor and project director, Ron Smith — celebrate ordinary people doing extraordinary things, provide educational resources on topics ranging from food pantries to evictions, and illuminate by operating as a reporting watchdog.

The 10-year-old nonprofit newsroom, housed in the Diederich College of Communication, gives its more than 7,300 subscribers a complete portrait of their community and fills the information void for those who live in the underserved neighborhoods of Milwaukee’s central city.

“I’d rather get the call I got today that we gave resources on evictions to someone who needed them than receive awards,” Smith says. Nonetheless, the service has received several awards, deservedly, including both a regional Edward R. Murrow Award in 2017 and a Gold Award from the Milwaukee Press Club in 2018. NNS also took first place in the 2020 LION Awards for its series on the Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake youth prisons.

Telling important stories remains part of the NNS mission going forward, and four new grants are



Photo by Adam Ryan Morris

New and continuing funding support for NNS is allowing the nonprofit housed in the Diederich College to invest in more talent to tell stories that would otherwise not be told, according to Ron Smith, NNS editor and project director.

helping it do just that. With \$234,000 from the Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge, the news service launched the News414 project, a text-based messaging service that enables people to get high-quality, fact-checked information on housing, evictions and other related issues. The project, one of only 34 in North America to receive funding, operates in collaboration with Madison’s Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism and Detroit’s Outlier Media.

The Zilber Family Foundation renewed its commitment to NNS with a four-year \$250,000 grant to fund its professional staff of six reporters and editors. In addition to student interns and community volunteers, NNS employs two full-time reporters — both Diederich College 2020 graduates — through Report for America, a program that positions journalists in communities in need of issues-based reporting. “This is something we’d never been able to do before,” Smith says, adding that the investment in talent has “given us the bandwidth to tell stories that would otherwise not be told.”

More recently, the American Journalism Project provided a three-year \$1.4 million grant to NNS and Wisconsin Watch to help both newsrooms expand their capacity to better serve Wisconsin’s media ecosystem. Borealis Philanthropy also awarded a \$100,000 Racial Equity in Journalism Fund grant to bolster NNS’ business strategy and capacity.

— Ann Christenson, CJPA ‘91



Under Pressure

Diederich College faculty’s study finds mothers are judging themselves more harshly during the pandemic.

Systematically documenting how today’s mothers have handled a health crisis unlike any in their lifetimes can shed light on issues of concern to broader society, says Dr. Karen Slattery, professor emerita of journalism and media studies. She is one of three Diederich communication scholars who have teamed up to explore the untenable dilemmas the coronavirus pandemic has created for mothers and how moms have leveraged communication to foster resilience.

“We haven’t been in this situation before, where all of our social institutions, both formal and informal, have just closed up and gone away for a while,” Slattery says. “Mothers are such an important group in our culture, and understanding how they respond to a crisis, I think, is always important.”

Dr. Daradirek “Gee” Ekachai, associate professor of strategic communication, Dr. Lynn Turner, professor of communication studies with expertise in family communication, and Slattery have interviewed a diverse sample of mothers since August 2020. This spring, they presented findings from 24 of the interviews at a communication association panel on working mothers.

One research question focused on mothers’ self-comparisons to their own parenting ideals. Before the pandemic, moms gave themselves an average rating of 7.5 out of 10. Despite juggling increased demands and facing new stressors as work/life boundaries disappeared and carefully honed routines unraveled in the face of COVID-19 lockdowns, moms judge themselves even more harshly, at an average of 6.6.

Another research question was on the widely studied trait of resilience and the communication behaviors that mothers employed to foster it for themselves and their families. Strategies included reframing situations in a positive light, setting up constructive rituals and routines, and activating communication networks of friends and family. Additionally, “There were things moms said that

had not been in the resilience literature before,” Turner notes, citing self-care and self-talk with mantras like “I’m doing the best I can.”

Talking with the mothers virtually enabled all three researchers to hear responses without overwhelming their participants; one interviewer conducted each interview while others remained muted with cameras off. Turner credits Ekachai with the idea and says it worked to the study’s advantage. Slattery explains, “We all heard responses directly, but may have thought about them in different ways. We could also text each other — ‘Ask this. Follow up with that.’ It was a really good way to do it.”

With a grant from the Diederich College, the three colleagues are adding more interviews. They plan to chronicle their findings in a book that will also explore antidotes to our culture’s unattainable expectations for mothers, rendered more painfully clear by the pandemic. Despite demonstrating individual resilience, women struggling to balance a job and parenting “are set up to chase failure,” Turner says. “We have to think bigger about what to do as a society that claims to value both work and family.” — Paula Wheeler





Renewed Investment

With an additional gift from its founding donors, the O'Brien program carries on its support of critically needed reporting.

Since its inception, the distinguished O'Brien Fellowship in Public Service Journalism has provided 30 professional journalists the opportunity to tell important community-affecting stories, covering such timely issues as the struggle for equality for Black Americans, the ripple effect of Milwaukee's backlog of unsolved homicide cases, and the damage to the Great Lakes caused by invasive species.

With a recent \$5 million gift from the Frechette Family Foundation, the program received a critical boost to continue its delivery of impactful journalism and student journalist internships. The new commitment builds on an \$8.3 million gift that Peter and Patricia Frechette made to the Diederich College in 2013, which launched the O'Brien Fellowship program, named for Patricia's parents, Marquette alumni couple Perry, Jour '36, and Alicia, Arts '35, O'Brien.

"Our parents were very involved in the launch of the O'Brien Fellowship, and it was one of the greatest joys of their lives," says Kathy Frechette-Tenhula, president of the Frechette Family Foundation*. "Over the past four years, we've been fortunate to meet with fellows and listen to student interns and witness the powerful impact of the program. It is both exciting and inspirational to carry our parents' legacy forward."

Matched with student interns, each O'Brien Fellow spends nine months researching, reporting and writing stories with the potential to change policies and improve lives, according to Dave Umhoefer, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and former O'Brien Fellow who is now director of the program.

"With this generous support, the college can grow the O'Brien Fellowship and provide more of our students the unique opportunity to work alongside an even broader group of professional journalists as they report on the stories that make a difference," says Dean Sarah Feldner.



Voices Carry

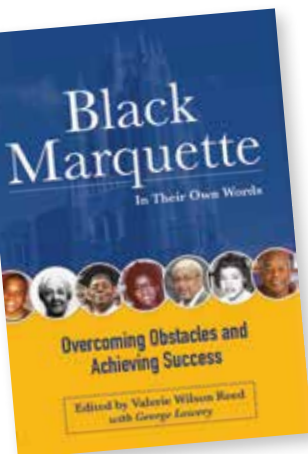
Essay compilation shares the achievements and challenges of Marquette's Black alumni.

Black Marquette—In Their Own Words: Overcoming Obstacles and Achieving Success is a collection of more than 60 essays written by Black Marquette alumni regarding their unique university experiences that span nearly a century of Marquette's history. Editor Valerie Wilson Reed, Sp '79, calls the book a "labor of love" and says it's a compilation that celebrates Marquette pride.

"For many of our Black alumni, their successes have gone unnoticed and overlooked. Their accomplishments, often hidden in the shadows, can now be celebrated in the light by all Marquette alumni," Wilson Reed* says. "Though the book highlights the lives, struggles and successes of Black students over the years, it is a reminder to all students that you can overcome any obstacles and achieve success."

The book's proceeds go toward the Ralph H. Metcalfe, Sr., Scholarship fund, which supports Black students who demonstrate financial need and Marquette values.

*President's Society member



To purchase a book, email rachelle.shurn@marquette.edu.



Removing the Veil

In the social media age, professors uncover the need for organizations to be transparent when crises arise.

In 2016, a video posted to YouTube showed a routine test of a SpaceX rocket at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. A few seconds into the clip, smoke begins snaking out from the side of the rocket. A minute passes, then boom: An explosion erupts and a mushroom of flames erupts from the structure. Fire engulfs the rocket and the launchpad below.

The stunning footage ran on news broadcasts around the world, and the public immediately started asking: What went wrong?

SpaceX and its CEO Elon Musk quickly took to Twitter to share frequent updates on the investigation into the fire. The company's use of social media during the crisis was unorthodox in the aerospace industry, and Dr. Eric Waters, assistant professor of communication studies,

and Dr. Scott D'Urso, chair and associate professor of communication studies, took notice.

"They made a variety of statements and updates through social media that Scott and I noticed were different," Waters says. "They were unusual." By engaging with the public on Twitter, SpaceX was uniquely open and transparent about the explosion.

"People would actually tweet at SpaceX or Elon Musk, and they would get responses," Waters says. "They were really being open and unfiltered; they weren't trying to hide things behind the veil."

The SpaceX response inspired Waters and D'Urso to write the paper "Space is Hard: A Case Study on Using Social Media for Selective Investigative Disclosure as a Crisis Communication Strategy to Achieve Technical Transparency," which earned top paper from the Association for Business Communication panel at the National Communication Association's annual convention. The paper was recently published in an edition of the *International Journal of Business Communication*.

"Space is Hard" shares updated best practices on handling crises within high reliability organizations, or HROs, such as passenger airlines, nuclear power plants and space flight manufacturing operations. Waters and D'Urso expand on the principles of situational crisis communication theory — a guiding framework for crisis communication — by extending the theory's application to social media.

Their research contains a valuable and surprising lesson for HRO communication professionals, Waters says: "Reputation is not as important in this case as showing integrity."

During a crisis, HROs should prioritize technical transparency by sharing updates on investigations, Waters says. This approach helps organizations "preserve the public trust through openness and a candid, unfiltered description of how the organization is managing the crisis," Waters says. "Honesty is always the best policy."

For academics, the research brings situational crisis communication theory into the modern era by offering guidelines on social media as a crisis communication tool.

"Being able to offer a substantial extension to this theory is the jewel for our colleagues," Waters says. — **Lauren Sieben**



Safety First

New Diederich College-developed curriculum prepares journalists for increasing dangers in reporting.

Protecting aspiring journalists at Marquette and around the world took on new relevance for the Diederich College of Communication after freelance journalist and Marquette alumnus James Foley, Arts '96, was captured and killed by the Islamic State group in 2014.



The Diederich College partnered with the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation to develop a journalist safety curriculum for students. Journalist James Foley is pictured here in Libya during the Arab Spring in 2011.

In fall 2019, in partnership with the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, the college launched the James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules, a series of resources intended to help undergraduate journalists assess, prepare for and react appropriately to dangerous situations they may face on the job. The 14 modules address aspects of physical safety, such as interviewing hostile sources and covering foreign conflict, as well as emotional and mental well-being.

“We want our student journalists to be proactive in thinking about their own safety and the safety of those they’re working with and to be empowered to act, should they need to,” says Dr. Ana Garner, chair and professor of journalism and media studies.

Each module consists of suggested reading and discussion questions on a different safety topic. Instructors can choose which module fits best with their course and incorporate it into existing course work for one or more class periods as needed. All required journalism courses and the student media program now incorporate at least one of the modules.

Tom Durkin, Arts '96, Grad '07, education program director for the Foley Foundation, collaborated with Marquette journalism faculty to brainstorm, identify topics and develop the materials. “We kept saying, ‘Part of being a journalist is being safe,’” Durkin says.

As Foley’s close friend, Durkin has a personal connection to the initiative. “Just knowing that Jim’s name is attached to it is amazing. I feel honored to be part of it,” he adds.

Durkin and Marquette faculty continually reassess the curriculum and add new modules as needed. In spring 2020, they developed modules on working safely during a pandemic and covering riots and protests. Upcoming additions will cover the safety of photojournalists and what to do if you are taken captive, using strategies and techniques from a once-captive American.

At least 14 other schools across the country are using the Foley curriculum, and its reach will soon extend overseas. The modules were recently translated into Arabic, and Spanish and French translations are in the works.

“This will make student journalists more aware of the variety of challenges that they will face in the field,” Garner says. “Hopefully, it will help our journalists have safe and successful careers.” — **Claire Nowak, Comm '16**



For Better Outcomes

New minor focuses on how communication affects health and wellness.

This fall, the Diederich College is launching a health communication minor. Housed in the Communication Studies Department, the 18-credit curriculum is designed to help students understand how the health industry operates and how multiple processes of communication are critical to improving the emotional, mental and physical health of our society.

“There is increasing attention being paid to the role of communication as being intertwined with issues of health and healing,” says Dr. Jaime Robb, assistant professor of communication studies. “By attending to the overlaps

between health, culture, media, persuasion, public policy and technology, students in this minor will use a critical lens to make note of what influences our cultural understandings of health and wellness.”

Upon completion of the minor, students will understand how communication contributes to disease prevention and control, as well as how to identify and analyze communication strategies that are most effective for health and wellness promotion, according to Robb. Students can apply these skills toward future careers in the health professions.

The new minor offers Diederich College students another opportunity to add depth to their program of study.



Faculty Additions

The Diederich College welcomed four new faculty members in the last two years. Here’s a summary of the expertise they bring to the classrooms.



Dr. Ayleen Cabas-Mijares, assistant professor of journalism and media studies, earned her doctorate from the University of Missouri–Columbia. Her research interests include social movements and media activism; transnational feminisms and media; and Latinx studies. She is also the faculty fellow for Marquette’s Institute for Women’s Leadership.



Dr. Jaime Robb, assistant professor of communication studies, earned his doctorate from the University of South Florida. His teaching and research interests are concentrated in health communication, with a specific focus on how marginalized populations negotiate health care given their limited access to it.



Dinesh Sabu, assistant professor of digital media and performing arts, is an award-winning documentary filmmaker who earned his master’s degree in documentary film and video from Stanford University. His research interests include exploring the South Asian diasporic experience, decoloniality, mental illness, trauma and memory.



Dr. Zhiming “Larry” Xu, assistant professor of strategic communication, earned his doctorate from the University of Southern California. His research interests include new media and communication technology; strategic communication in business and nonprofits; social media; and computational social science. Xu is also an affiliated faculty member of the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute.



Unfolding Conversations

A Q&A with Dean Sarah Feldner

You’ve been a Diederich College faculty member for nearly 20 years, with administrative roles as associate dean for graduate studies and the Marquette Core Curriculum director preceding your current deanship. How has this prior experience shaped your vision for the college?

In my previous roles, I had the challenge and opportunity to revise curriculum and build new programs, work where I learned to find a balance between drawing from organizational history and embracing institutional innovation. You want to preserve your core values and traditions while being open to adopting new practices that look toward the future. I find this is a useful lens for thinking about how we adapt to change as a college.

Being named dean in a year unlike any other at Marquette (pandemic, racial justice protests, economic pressures on higher education), what have been your priorities, and did you find any surprising opportunities amid this year’s challenges?

Communication for me is about true connection. This year we focused on creating opportunities for students, faculty and alumni to stay connected. With so many world-tilting events this past year, it became easy for us to be “logged on” to the same meeting without being present. In response, we worked to create meaningful space for

conversation, but equally important, we made it a habit to provide time for quiet when we gathered as a community.

This year, we got better at bringing students and alumni together using technology. We had alums share how they navigated previous economic downturns; how they are responding to equity and inclusion work in their industries; and how communication professions are adapting to remote work. We learned quickly that you do not need a great deal of fanfare; we kept the connections simple and let conversations unfold. These conversations have been magical — representing where we have been and where we are going as a college.

Moving forward from the challenges of 2020, what do you perceive are the Diederich College’s strengths on which to build momentum?

The structure of our college is our greatest advantage. We are able to leverage relationships between our academic areas of strategic communication, journalism, digital media, communication studies and the performing arts because we are a college, not separate, unconnected departments of communication operating independently. For example, we are considering synergies between theatre and acting for film; we are thinking about how data informs all of our majors; and we are developing curriculum that supports using data to offer communication insights across professions.

How does the Diederich College best support its students?

Our faculty have always taken a hands-on approach to course work. No matter the subject, students are talking about current issues and how communication helps create change for the greater good. But beyond that, Diederich students benefit from what I call the curriculum on the side. Whether it is student media, the Diederich Experiences, our new Diederich Drop-ins — which all looked a bit different this past year — we are always looking to connect students with the professions, and we do so with an eye toward how they will engage in the world after Marquette. It is not simply a question of can you perform at a job or develop a skill. It’s engaging in the “doing” of the work that pushes our students to consider how they will lead in their professions that is equally important. In creating immersive experiences, students get a front row seat to the outcomes of their choices and develop the ability to use their communication knowledge and skills to support communities and BeThe Difference.



Game On

Students gain experience with cutting-edge 3D technology in new grant-supported course.

When Epic Games launched its \$100 million MegaGrants initiative to support game developers, students and educators innovating with its 3D-creation platform Unreal Engine, Wakerly Media Lab Director James Brust thought it was an excellent opportunity to go a step further with the technology that is changing many of the industries Diederich College students are preparing to enter.

“I was excited to learn we were funded by Epic Games. I’ve already completed the first phase of our project with colleagues — developing the curriculum for Real-time Virtual Production, a digital media class available fall 2022,” he says.

When the college’s production facilities were renovated in 2018, it included a green-screen studio addition designed around Ross Voyager virtual set technology, which creates photorealistic environments that are rendered in real time and replace the green screen on live camera. At the core of that real-time rendering is the Unreal Engine platform.

The new course covers the fundamentals of working with 3D objects and environments with hands-on projects, progresses into real-time production techniques, interactivity, and prototyping in virtual reality, and ultimately students produce an environment to be used in the Ross Voyager system.

“High-end studios like ILM are moving beyond green-screen studios for productions like *The Mandalorian* to facilities that display these environments in real time on set,” Brust says. “This emerging production technique is predicted to become an industry standard by 2026 and relies on the same Unreal Engine technology and content-creation workflow.”

Brust also notes that real-time production makes working with Pixar-style animated characters and narratives much easier. Because this is fundamentally the same content-creation environment, the second phase of the grant-funded project is to develop a follow-up course that would expand use of the technology for real-time environment creation into characters and animation, which could, in turn, provide unique opportunities for the college’s theatre arts majors.

“It’s exciting to see traditional production expand in new ways, but also to see how these experiences open up avenues for students in other industries,” Brust says.



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TIME TO RISE

THE MARQUETTE PROMISE TO BE THE DIFFERENCE



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THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW

As America confronts racism — past and present — alumnae experts in diversity and inclusion have been on the front lines of their organizations, striving for a better future for all.

BY LORA STRUM



“There’s an urgency in the world to do this work now,” Dr. Regina Dixon-Reeves says about increased attention to diversity and inclusion efforts following George Floyd’s murder.

When Floyd, a Black man, died in police custody in May 2020, it sparked a global uprising against systemic racism and led to what may be one of the largest protest movements in American history. As the nation stood poised for change, Dixon-Reeves, then-assistant provost at the University of Chicago focused on diversity and inclusion, found her talents in high demand. (Attesting to that, Dixon-Reeves recently relocated to the University of San Diego to take on the role of vice provost of diversity, equity and inclusion.)

“For those of us who do this work, we don’t have time to not do it well,” Dixon-Reeves, Jour ’82, says. Especially when diversity efforts can become performative and distract from an unchanging system.

Diversity, equity and inclusion work, or DEI, is not new — it originated in the 1960s during the civil rights movement. What is new, however, is sustained public demand for immediate and enduring change for the better.

Understanding this demand is crucial for Lisa Osborne Ross, U.S. chief executive officer at Edelman, a global communications firm. Ross found that last year, when the coronavirus pandemic disproportionately impacted communities of color and protests against discrimination in policing erupted, “Nearly 80 percent of my client engagements involved advising brands on how to address racial equity and social justice,” Ross, Jour ’84, says. “It was one of the hardest but most fulfilling summers I’ve had.”

To quantify the role brands should play in increasing equity, Ross helped develop a new iteration of the Trust Barometer, Edelman’s yearly survey gauging public trust in institutions, that focuses on race and justice. Only one in three of the Americans surveyed through this research said they have seen real progress in the fight against systemic racism and racial injustice in the last year, while 18 percent think things have actually gotten worse. Additionally, 53 percent expect brands that make a statement on racial injustice have to follow it up with concrete action to avoid being seen as exploitative.

“When our corporate partners and brands saw this data,” Ross pauses to consider the magnitude. “People know there’s an issue.”

“

I hate when I hear people say athletes ... should shut up and dribble. Athletes can amplify messages of social equality that the average person cannot.

Kareeda Chones-Aguam

Historically, corporate America did not engage with politics. Ross tells her clients this era is over. A mandate now exists for businesses to use their power to advance social causes. For organizations that don’t know how to begin, Ross recommends starting small. “Don’t boil the ocean,” she advises. “You cannot overcome 400 years of systematic racism on Juneteenth.” This incremental change should be measurable, and if successful, Ross reminds companies not to expect a thank-you. “As my mother says, ‘You don’t get credit for what you’re supposed to do.’”

Understanding that racial justice advocacy is what we’re supposed to do informed the Milwaukee Bucks’ decision to boycott Game 5 of their playoff series in summer



2020. The players walked off the court in Orlando, Florida, to protest the police-involved shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

“I hate when I hear people say athletes of any kind should shut up and dribble,” says Kareeda Chones-Aguam, Comm ’98, a senior vice president of partner strategy and management for the Bucks, 2021 NBA Champions. “Athletes can amplify messages of social equality that the average person cannot.”

Whether it’s working closely with organizations providing funding for minority businesses or creating social media content that reflects inclusive value systems, the Bucks want to use their platform for social good, Chones-Aguam says. That includes the work she does to build a more inclusive workplace. Throughout 2020, Chones-Aguam helped develop a council of about 25 Bucks employees

KAREEDA CHONES-AGUAM, Comm ’98, senior vice president of partner strategy and management, Milwaukee Bucks

of various backgrounds. The council’s conversations about identity and solidarity urged shapers of the company’s culture to increase and embrace diversity, including the creation of several employee resource groups within the organization.

It’s a discussion that Chones-Aguam would have relished 20 years ago when she got her start in other corporate workplaces. “It would’ve been nice to have a ‘Kareeda’ I could talk to,” Chones-Aguam says of her early career days. “That’s the main thing I wish I’d had — a universe of diverse industry professionals.”

Advocating for inclusivity and equality is not a priority for everyone — including some pro-sports fans. In 2016 then-San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick received death threats when, in protest of systemic racism, he refused to stand when the national anthem was played at games. Critical or intimidating commentary, however, should not stop an organization from supporting its players of color, says Alexis McKinney, Comm ’13, the DEI content specialist for the Portland Trail Blazers.

Cultivating an audience supportive of its social justice and racial equity efforts is critical for the NBA, where a majority of its star power comes from people of color deeply affected by injustice in America, McKinney points out. Understanding how authentic storytelling — prioritizing diverse voices, aligning with community activists — combats this injustice gave McKinney an advantage when she approached Blazers leadership last summer to create the DEI specialist position she now holds.



DR. REGINA DIXON-REEVES, Jour ’82, vice provost for diversity, equity and inclusion, University of San Diego

“Sports are an escape for a lot of people, but there’s power in authentic stories, in making someone feel seen,” says McKinney, who produces content online, on air and in print to underscore the Blazers’ dedication to fans of all backgrounds.

McKinney’s interest in DEI has its roots at Marquette when, as an undergrad, she protested racial profiling and stigma in Milwaukee. “Marquette really shaped my desire to serve others and be the difference, which ultimately fueled my passion for equity work,” McKinney says.

“Having real passion for DEI is important — it’s not for the faint of heart,” says Dixon-Reeves, who at the start of her career was told equity work would be a “kiss of death.” Dixon-Reeves ignored this opinion and instead worked to dismantle the spaces where it was allowed to thrive. Today, after more than two decades in the DEI space, Dixon-Reeves focuses on uplifting students, faculty and staff from marginalized communities who may be underprepared to thrive in academia. Students like who she was when, as a first-generation and low-income student, she enrolled at Marquette.

“I knew absolutely nothing about academia,” Dixon-Reeves says, recalling her pre-college days. “I don’t remember anyone talking about good grades, or internships or study abroad — things I now tell my students to do.”

The programs Dixon-Reeves champions, including networking, global experiences, internships and research opportunities for nontraditional students, weren’t promoted when she was in college. But today there’s a hunger to dismantle segregated systems like the higher education admissions process. “Everyone is looking for a diversity professional now,” Dixon-Reeves says. “I look forward to there being more of us.”

Creating more diversity professionals still feels aspirational to Dixon-Reeves, especially when DEI can be stigmatized as “hand-holding” communities incapable of success. She wants to debunk the myth that inclusion is about lowering any kind of bar. “We can’t solve the world’s most pressing problems without diversity,” Dixon-Reeves says. “The research tells us that diverse teams win every time.”

Success for all communities is fostered when DEI is expansive and empathetic. Chones-Aguam has opened

Understanding how authentic storytelling combats this injustice gave Alexis McKinney an advantage when she approached Portland Trail Blazers leadership last summer to create the DEI specialist position she now holds.

discussions on how to address hate crimes against Asian Americans and other marginalized groups, while McKinney hopes the inequities the coronavirus has exposed will also expose how much better we can be when we support one another.

For Chones-Aguam, it all comes together one person at a time. “If we can impress upon anyone who doesn’t believe in this space, if we change their thinking ... that’s one more person than we had yesterday,” she says.



ALEXIS MCKINNEY,
Comm ’13, DEI content
specialist, Portland
Trail Blazers

“
Having real passion for
DEI is important — it’s
not for the faint of heart.”

Dr. Regina Dixon-Reeves

LISA OSBORNE ROSS,
Jour ’84, U.S. chief
executive officer,
Edelman

*Lisa Osborne Ross is a
President’s Society member.*



**ADDRESSING
INEQUITY IN HIGHER ED**
Alumna Sheena Carey finds purpose at
her alma mater by breaking down
segregated systems and rebuilding
them with an eye toward equity.



As the internship coordinator for the Diederich College of Communication, Sheena Carey found her work inextricably linked to diversity and inclusion efforts. “I noticed how few students of color were doing internships,” Carey, Jour ’81, Grad ’83, says. “I resolved to make some changes so more students of color, particularly Black students, were taking advantage of internship opportunities.”

Carey taps into Marquette’s strong alumni network for internship and professional networking opportunities to help students, especially those who may not have community or family connections. This work not only challenges systemic racism in the workforce — for years unpaid work and discrimination in hiring barred many marginalized communities from gaining valuable professional experiences — it builds a better system.

By establishing new pathways for their success, “We’re turning the ‘good old boys’ network on its head,” Carey says. “Marquette students are sought after for their strong work ethic and willingness to rise to any challenge. It doesn’t matter what their background is.”

Carey, who also teaches about race and representation in the media, has considered equity in higher education since she was a student at Marquette. The work — to desegregate all spaces, to address implicit bias, to believe in the need for diverse workforces — isn’t new, she says, but it is expanding. Today, working with the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, she’s expanding cultural competency initiatives for staff, participating in discussions on race, ethnicity and Indigenous studies, and working to showcase the value of a diverse workforce. She’s also using art and media, serving as an interviewer for Marquette’s *Our Roots Say That We’re Sisters* podcast series, which highlights and uplifts diverse female-identifying voices to better tell authentic stories.

“We have to consider an institution’s policies, processes and procedures. Unless you are addressing inequity in those areas, you’re not going to effect major change,” Carey says. “At Marquette, we’re taking a hard look at how to engage students, staff and faculty to truly make that difference.” —Lora Strum

Great Adaptations

While the 2020–21 academic year was unlike any other at the Diederich College of Communication because of the coronavirus pandemic, faculty and staff nevertheless provided students with unique opportunities to expand their skills and networks. Many beloved learning activities and engagements had to adapt, and other innovative experiences emerged. Here, a few of our Diederich students reflect on how their plans transformed and how they found silver linings amid the year's uncertainties.

Photos by John Sibilski



By Mario Mendez Mendoza, Comm '21

Mario Mendez Mendoza, from Veracruz, Mexico, graduated this May with a double major in **digital media and advertising**. His favorite pastimes include talking about entertainment and technology, writing screenplays and playing video games.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

When the Diederich Experience trips to LA, New York and Chicago were canceled, networking with alumni professionals took on a new look.

Students and professors have become familiar with computer screens and video conferences over the past year. Speaker experiences especially have changed due to the pandemic, but this is a change that has had an upside for students — exposure to new faces and glances into industries they might be interested in joining once their Marquette journey is over. As part of the college's **Diederich Experiences**, I had such an opportunity with members of Univision Chicago — a television station that engages with and informs the Spanish-speaking audience of the city — as they shared their career journeys in journalism, marketing and producing.

My own interests are in marketing and producing. I was quite pleased when Vice President of Content Teri Arvesu Gonzáles expressed that knowing what their audience stood for helped create content that connected with and empowered their communities. The diverse team members from Univision Chicago each emphasized the key to community engagement is to listen thoughtfully. The speakers mentioned technology's role in this engagement, as social media commentary such as Facebook comments helped guide their coverage of current events and allowed them to be a part of the community and be responsive to it.

Prior to the virtual event, I expected the panel to just be about how professionals got to their current positions. However, it was more than that. There was indeed helpful information on what to consider when pursuing a career in the fields covered in the presentation, but the focus was on how the people up front and behind the scenes worked together along with the community to create value. And I learned that value is a notion that means more to people than a fleeting sense of just being told the news without context.



By Rachel Ryan

Rachel Ryan is a second-year graduate student in the **Master's in Communication program** and serves as a program assistant and reporting intern for the O'Brien Fellowship. After earning her bachelor's in communication at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, she worked at the Experimental Aircraft Association as a marketing coordinator. This summer she reported for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* as an intern, covering entertainment and local news.

ADVOCACY JOURNALISM

As the pandemic shifted the O'Brien Fellowship interns' reporting methods, it also highlighted the importance of telling stories that matter.

In any given year, starting a brand-new experience can be nerve-racking — imagine jumping into one during a pandemic. In the fall of 2020, I became a first-year graduate student at Marquette and began my reporting journey with the **O'Brien Fellowship in Public Service Journalism** as an intern. I was intimidated, worried and anxious. What was supposed to be an in-person experience had shifted to the virtual environment. I had never done any kind of in-depth reporting, and now here I was conducting interviews, meetings and everything in between, all virtually.

I felt a sense of loss for human intimacy: I couldn't see the sources I interviewed, couldn't shadow them through their day-to-day lives, couldn't connect as well as I wanted to. Despite these barriers, my O'Brien Fellow, Ashley Nguyen, independent journalist and former multiplatform editor with *The Washington Post*, stepped up to the plate by becoming a reliable resource and connection that I could count on throughout a whirlwind of uncertainty.

We got to know each other through safe get-togethers or occasional walks through the city, cups of coffee in hand. When our first series of stories published in *The Lily*, a publication of *The Washington Post*, I could not have been prouder. Seeing my name on a story in a prominent publication was something I never thought possible.

Even though the pandemic wreaked havoc on traditional ways of reporting, it didn't mean what we wrote made less of a difference. By reporting on doula care, my team was able to give back to the communities of doulas with whom we talked, telling these essential birth workers' stories with the goal of pushing for legislative and social change. Before the O'Brien internship, I knew nothing about doulas and the impact they have on maternal health outcomes. Now, I'm passionate about advocating for their role in the health care system. Without this opportunity, I wouldn't have realized the incredible impact journalism can make on human life; it's given me a sense of fulfillment in a year filled with tragedy.





By Vanessa Rivera

Vanessa Rivera, from Zion, Illinois, is starting her senior year this fall, double majoring in **journalism and digital media** with a concentration in communication leadership. She is the executive news producer for the *Marquette Wire*. Besides playing the clarinet for the Marquette Band, she enjoys spending time with her Siamese cat, Luna, going out for picnics and walks, crafting and baking.

CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC

Marquette's musicians and band directors arranged for innovative solutions to keep the music playing.

Playing the clarinet for 11 consecutive years has long served as a creative outlet for me. When I'm consumed in my academics and responsibilities, it can be extremely difficult to embrace my creative side. Sitting in my seat in Varsity Theatre with my clarinet in my hand is the equivalent of taking your shoes off at home and sitting on the couch after a long day. The process this year, though, has been different.

Burnout, anxiety and everything that goes with that describe this past year. Being a college student hasn't been easy during these times. With the pandemic, the schedule for **band** had to change. Hours of rehearsal every week, with all band members, shifted to as little as 20 minutes a week within small ensemble groups.

Even the way we band members go about playing changed. I had a face mask that had a mouth slit in order to fit my mouthpiece through. I also had a bell cover over the end of my instrument to help mitigate any aerosols from spreading. It was the only way to be COVID-19 safe and still play music with others.

While these changes didn't allow me to de-stress and use this creative outlet as much, my time playing had a more sacred feeling than before.

I'm a very busy person given my academics, work and extracurriculars. Sitting in my seat for 20 minutes makes me cherish being in the band that much more. I take in every minute, every note and every melody I create with my fellow band players. The music really becomes a form of therapy.

I'm hopeful to continue playing with more fellow band members this fall. Given how the program responded last year, I know my final year at Marquette will give me a cherished place within the band.



By Zoë (Isabel) Comerford, Comm '21

Zoë Comerford, from Naperville, Illinois, was the executive sports editor for the *Marquette Wire*. She graduated this May with a double major in **journalism and digital media** and a minor in Spanish. She enjoys talking about and watching sports, going to Cubs games, watching horror movies and traveling.

SPEAKER IN THE HOUSE

A new program launched because of the pandemic, the Diederich Drop-ins brought alumni industry expertise directly to eager student audiences.

When the pandemic started, the Diederich College was extremely innovative with online experiences for students. Over the summer of 2020, Dean Sarah Feldner and Sue Cirillo (then-office associate in the Diederich College) introduced **Diederich Drop-ins**, where industry professionals — from journalism, digital media, public relations, advertising, etc. — meet virtually with students to talk about their respective industry, followed by a Q&A with the 50 to 150 students who attend each event. Diederich Drop-in speakers are not only extremely successful in their fields, they also provide a plethora of tips to help students learn about the industries that students will soon be entering.

As a journalism major especially interested in sports journalism, I found a majority of the early Diederich Drop-ins extremely relevant to my career aspirations. Over the summer, one of the first was with Brian Anderson, the Milwaukee Brewers' play-by-play announcer. The second one was a panel of alums — WXYZ Detroit Sports Director Brad Galli, Comm '11; ESPN's Jen Lada, Comm '02; and the Milwaukee Brewers' Sophia Minnaert, Comm '09. I also attended one with writer and TV co-producer Chris Marrs, Comm '98; NBCUniversal executive producer Maureen FitzPatrick, Sp '83; and the Dallas Mavericks' Ivy Awino, Comm '13. The timeliest one was last October with CBS News White House correspondent Ben Tracy, Comm '98, Grad '04, right before the presidential election. It was such a unique experience talking with someone who had covered the Trump administration. These Drop-ins are once-in-a-lifetime experiences that I only received because of Marquette.

In April I was able to participate in a Drop-in in a different way — as a moderator. Moderating was different because I was able to call our guest speaker, Mark Kass, editor-in-chief of the *Milwaukee Business Journal*, prior to the event to get to know his background better and then moderate the Q&A after asking my own questions. Even though he didn't attend Marquette, he is still part of my network because of the Diederich Drop-in, and I am always a fan of connecting with someone who is in the industry that I aspire to be in.

Though COVID-19 has changed our world, it has provided College of Communication students with rare opportunities to connect and network with some of the best in the business — many who happen to be alumni as well. Marquette's alumni community is extremely strong. These Drop-ins have expanded my network and, in our business — especially in regards to the job search — it's all about connections.



the grapevine

1

RELATIONSHIPS AND REASONING

Alumnus Dr. David Brinker studies how mutual understanding can lead to healthy discourse.

While working on his doctorate at Penn State University, Dr. David Brinker, Comm '09, Grad '13, experienced a magic moment of democracy.



Brinker brought two groups of undergraduate students — one from urban Philadelphia and another from rural Pennsylvania — into a classroom. He asked them whether universities should allow concealed carry of firearms on campus.

The controversial topic was beside the point: Brinker wanted to find out how people create and share reasons. What influence would the students' interpersonal relationships have on their ability to consider another person's reasons? This would become a defining question throughout Brinker's career.

During the discussion, one student said that anyone who would want to bring a firearm into a classroom was crazy. Another asked why someone with proper training wouldn't carry a gun to protect their peers. It was a meeting of opposing worldviews. The students disagreed but tried understanding each other, sans yelling and belittling. They had a good conversation, Brinker says.

"That's the magic moment that has to happen in deliberation," Brinker says. "I've been chasing that feeling since then. I think my work can help do that."

Brinker is now a senior researcher at the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University. He tracks student voting data, such as turnout rates, and looks for the stories within the data. Brinker wants to help universities remove barriers to voting. Are there groups of students — for example, linked by race or major — who didn't turn out to vote? He believes that higher education can remove barriers and support students' engagement with democracy.

Brinker first grew to love asking questions at Marquette. Professors — especially Dr. Robert Griffin, Jour '68, now professor emeritus of journalism and media studies — inspired him to start with the questions, then find the right research method and tools to answer them. Brinker fell in love with these questions, which now drive his career.

Now, as the U.S. faces the challenge of political discordance, one of the more significant questions Brinker studies is how to foster mutual understanding and healthy political conflict. While Brinker doesn't believe there is any single solution, he does believe that guided conversations and starting from a place of similarity rather than difference can help. But education can best break down these walls of difference, he says, as it helps people become open-minded, question their own certainty and be curious about different perspectives.

"If you find someone who disagrees with you strange or weird, it's harder to engage with that person as a rational equal, or a person who has as much to bring to the conversation as you do," Brinker says. "That doesn't mean everyone should be ambivalent. But it does mean that education should make people generally more open-minded about more political questions. That can only be a good thing." — **Hal Conick**

2

FIRST SERVED

Alumna Lorna Mahlock becomes the U.S. Marine Corps' first Black woman to lead as brigadier general.

Lorna Mahlock arrived in the United States from Jamaica in 1985 at 17 years old. Just three months later, she enlisted in the Marine Corps.

Her older brother had been thinking about enlisting, but he decided the process sounded too difficult. "So I said OK, let me go talk to the recruiter," Mahlock says.

That tenacity took Mahlock from enlisted Marine to commissioned officer. Today, she serves as brigadier general; she became the first Black woman promoted to the position in 2018.

During Mahlock's decades-long military career, she has worked as an air command and control officer around the world, directed the Marine Corps Instructional Management School and earned multiple master's degrees. Mahlock earned her bachelor's degree in broadcast and electronic communication at Marquette in 1991 before becoming an officer.

"I went to an all-girls Catholic school in the Caribbean, and then coming to the Jesuit construct was very helpful to me," Mahlock says. "The professors at the NROTC unit at Marquette really embraced the idea that in order to make folks better, you had to know their story, meet them where they were and help them on the journey."

Over the years, Mahlock has witnessed major changes for women in the Marines: Up until 2016, women were barred from serving in combat.

"I've seen that barrier lifted in my career," Mahlock says. "We've got women flying strike aircraft, women in the infantry and artillery and tanks. ... Regardless of where you're from or your color, gender or ethnicity, we're just trying to figure out how to build the best fighting force."

Today, Mahlock serves as the director of the Information, Command, Control, Communications and Computers



Division, and deputy commandant for information leading the Office of the Chief Information Officer for the Marine Corps. She oversees the organization's servers and IT equipment at bases around the world, and she is at the helm of tactical communications systems, IT compliance and cybersecurity missions.

Those behind-the-scenes systems are crucial for Marine Corps operations.

"Our reason for existing is to enable command and control and information technology that will help Marines be successful in their missions," she says. "There are Marines going in harm's way across the globe, so quite frankly, there is no other option here but success."

Mahlock says she is inspired by young Marines and her conviction that "Ordinary people can do extraordinary things when they're part of a team."

"Every day I meet young people who reverse mentor me," Mahlock says. "I want to help ensure that the bright young Marine with the best idea has a voice, an opportunity or a seat at the table." — **Lauren Sieben**

The views presented by Brig. Gen. Lorna Mahlock, USMC, are hers alone and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Department of Defense or any of its components, nor do they represent an endorsement of the Diederich College of Communication.

3

GETTING IT DONE

Jorge Perez-Olmo uses the perseverance he practiced at Marquette to build brand success at a major retailer.

A 2-by-1-inch paper garment tag tells you everything you need to know about Jorge Perez-Olmo's approach to his work: determination, persistence and his willingness to shake things up.

It was 2008, and Perez-Olmo, Grad '97, was senior global marketing sourcing and logistics manager at Gap, which meant he was in charge of printed materials — bags and tags, in-store marketing and shoe hangers, direct mail pieces and more. When Gap decided to adopt standards for environmentally sustainable packaging, Perez-Olmo had to find a way to get it done.



At the time, vendors weren't used to worrying about the environment, but Perez-Olmo pressed them. "Many of them fought me tooth and nail," he says, but he didn't let up. A turning point came when he found a mill that could manufacture the paper that met Gap's sustainability standards produced with 100 percent renewable energy. Perez-Olmo went on to convert plastic gift cards to paper, use recycled plastic for content labels and transition many more materials for Gap.

"I realized back in those days that to change mindsets and shift all parts of the system at the same time was impossible," he says. "So I changed what I could for Gap brand. And eventually other brands within Gap Inc. were reaching out to me and saying, 'How did you do this?'"

Perez-Olmo, who lives in the San Francisco Bay area, recalls his Marquette experience often when discussing his



career. His experience began when he was initially turned down by the communication graduate program (he visited the person who wrote the rejection letter and talked his way in); continued through a particularly tough class (his mother wouldn't let him quit and return home to Puerto Rico); and survived many moments of doubt as professors challenged him to think harder. He had experience working at advertising firms in Puerto Rico, but studying in a second language meant extra effort and persistence.

He drew on those experiences soon after graduating. When his first boss at Gap informed him that he probably wouldn't succeed there, he remembered how he had met challenges at Marquette. He stepped back, asked himself hard questions and searched for the bigger picture. "I realized that I needed to humble down and learn from everyone."

It paid off. In 13 years at Gap, Perez-Olmo was given increasingly greater responsibilities that often had him traveling the globe. He went on to similar roles at Ariat International, a footwear brand, and Banana Republic, where he works today as director of global marketing production and studio for the company and its factory stores. In this role, he oversees the production of marketing print materials — including those paper tags — and the studio teams that create them.

"And to this day, I still have room to learn."

— Diane Bacha

4

AMPLIFYING CREATIVITY

As technology makes an impact in marketing, Chris Duffey explores how it's strengthening the relationships between brands and consumers.

A decade ago, Chris Duffey had a mind-bending experience with artificial intelligence that changed the trajectory of his career.

Then a global executive creative director in digital health at WPP, a health care advertising company, Duffey was working on a campaign for an electronic health records program that used AI to help physicians identify rare diseases. He wondered: If AI could be this powerful in health care, how powerful could it be in marketing, advertising and product design?

In the years since, Duffey, Comm '96, has worked extensively to help design digital experiences with AI, which he believes is leading the world into a golden age of creativity for both the consumer and creator. His mission is to amplify human creativity using technology, and he believes that AI can increase the amplification.

AI innovations, such as digital assistants, voice user interface and predictive text, are powering emerging features in design and analytics software to make these experiences possible. A whole new generation of content creators can now create videos, songs and art at the speed of thought, he says. And Duffey knows firsthand how AI can help create. He wrote his award-winning 2019 book, *Superhuman Innovation: Transforming Business with Artificial Intelligence*, with the help of an AI assistant as a co-author.

Duffey now works as senior strategic development manager at Adobe, running Adobe's Creative Cloud



strategic development partnerships. At Adobe, Duffey partners with creative agencies across the world, exploring how they can use technology and AI to design personalized digital experiences at scale for consumers. The industry has taken notice of his work, as *Business Insider* called him one of "the industry's leaders on the top issues, challenges and opportunities in the fast-changing world of mobile marketing."

There are now more touchpoints with consumers than ever before, Duffey says, which has turned the relationship between brands and consumers into an ongoing dialogue rather than a monologue. And this conversation must be respected by continuously providing value at every interaction point. A brand's "North Star" in all these conversations should be to provide beneficial service for lasting relationships.

"The industry is having an open conversation on how the relationship can be of equal value from the business and customer standpoints," he says. "The marketing industry is finding the balance on how it can respect privacy and drive customer value."

Personalized experiences are showcasing the business value of intelligent creativity, Duffey says. "It's a differentiator for businesses, brands and ultimately individuals who have the capability to combine creativity plus data." — Hal Conick

5

DREAM TEAM

Deny Gallagher reconnects professionally with his Marquette mentor to produce the *Ball & Chain* podcast.

They may be the MVP of Marquette mentor-mentee pairs.

Then-aspiring sports reporter Deny Gallagher, Comm '16, scored his junior year when he was matched with *Sports Illustrated* writer and novelist Steve Rushin, Jour '88, Hon Deg '07, through the Marquette Mentors program.

The two kept in touch after Gallagher graduated and moved to New York to work at Sirius XM. In 2017, Gallagher suggested Rushin start a podcast to promote the release of his memoir *Sting-Ray Afternoons*. Rushin liked the idea of a podcast but had a different vision in mind for its content.

"At first, I just assumed it would be a sports podcast," Gallagher says. "But if you know Steve's writing, you know it's about sports but also a 'slice of life,' so I kind of knew that's what we'd be getting."

Rushin brought aboard a co-host — his wife, WNBA Hall of Famer and basketball television analyst Rebecca Lobo. Choosing a play on words for the show's moniker, *Ball & Chain* ("Who's the ball, and who's the chain?" the theme song asks), the couple began recording from the basement of their Connecticut home. Today, more than 165 episodes later, the podcast has about 750,000 total downloads and nearly 300 reviews on Apple Podcasts.

Each week, Lobo and Rushin talk sports and current events while providing a glimpse of their home life raising four children. Loyal listeners enjoy Rushin's dad jokes and Lobo's stories from her basketball-playing days and broadcasting career. Once in a while, they get to hear from Gallagher, or "Denny with one 'n,'" as Rushin likes to call him.



WNBA Hall of Famer and TV analyst Rebecca Lobo (left) and *Sports Illustrated* award-winning writer Steve Rushin, Jour '88, Hon Deg '07, (right) host a husband-and-wife-teamed podcast produced by Rushin's Marquette mentee Deny Gallagher, Comm '16 (center).

Today, Lobo and Rushin still record the podcast from their basement studio, and as producer, Gallagher edits the audio, adds music, fixes technical issues and publishes the episodes, maintaining the professional standard and high quality they have established for the show throughout the years.

Now a producer at Sirius' NBA Radio, Gallagher says working with Lobo and Rushin has opened doors and provided him career credibility in unexpected ways. He has formed relationships with the couple's colleagues, friends and fellow sports journalists, such as Sam Farmer, Holly Rowe and Ryan Ruocco, who have appeared on *Ball & Chain* as special guests. Ahead of a recent Sirius interview with Chicago Bulls play-by-play announcer Adam Amin, Amin already knew of Gallagher through Amin's relationship with Lobo.

When reflecting on his collegial relationship forged with Rushin, Gallagher has some advice for current communication students in the alumni mentor program: "You've got to advocate for yourself. If you want to collaborate, ask the questions, and see where they lead. People are more open than you might think."

— Elizabeth Baker, Comm '17, Grad '18

6

RETURNING THE FAVOR

Jenna Santoianni's storybook career in the entertainment industry began with a serendipitous alumni connection.



*Jenna Santoianni is a President's Society member.

coast. In turn, Santoianni is a mentor today for Marquette students exploring careers in the entertainment industry through the Diederich LA Experience program. A few have crashed on her couch.

A native of Whittier, California, Santoianni applied to Marquette after encouragement from her Wisconsin grandmother. On her 18th birthday, in Straz Tower, she saw "the coolest thing" — her first snowfall. The next day she bought her first winter jacket, which she still lends occasionally to shivering studio executives on location. In the Diederich College, she gained executive experience as general manager of MUTV. Her professional desires moved toward creative development of new shows. "We embrace our TV characters, because they don't change in a three-act structure. ... They're the same characters week after week," she says.

After winning the George P. Wensel III Memorial Scholarship for digital media students, Jenna Santoianni, Comm '06, made her "thank-you" personal. She emailed George's brother, Brian Wensel, Bus Ad '81, only to discover that he was a production finance executive at Paramount Pictures, where she would intern that summer. Wensel took her to lunch weekly in the Paramount dining room, introducing her to Marquette alumni on the

Back in California after graduation, Santoianni worked for motion picture talent agent Beth Swofford before taking a series of development positions in television. At Sonar Entertainment, she teamed up with fellow executive producer Jordan Peele, who went on to create the movie hits *Get Out* and *Us*, on several projects including the docuseries *Lorena*, which explored domestic and sexual assault issues underlying the often joked about case of Lorena Bobbitt. As an executive producer of the series *Das Boot*, she flew periodically to Germany to represent the American interests in that international production.

Since March 2019, Santoianni has been executive vice president of development for Paramount Television Studios, a ViacomCBS subsidiary that creates about 25 productions annually. "The team that I oversee handles everything from inception of idea to delivery for the first season of a television show. It's pretty much the most fun job you could have," she says. Projects include the provocative *Made for Love*, with Cristin Milioti and Ray Romano, and *Station Eleven*, an adaptation of Emily St. John Mandel's award-winning novel about life after a devastating pandemic.

For students interested in breaking into show development, Santoianni offers two pieces of advice. "Read your way to the top," she says, repeating advice she heard from Swofford. Read books, scripts and articles, she exhorts. That forms your education and makes you able to talk about ideas in a constructive way. Point two: Take your connections seriously. "Marquette alumni are very willing to share their experiences and to help. A lot of times, they just don't get taken up on it."

— Jim Higgins, Jour '79

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DEEPLY ROOTED. AND WAY OUT IN FRONT.



DIEDERICH
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MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

In a world of shifting values, a Diederich College of Communication degree shines out. Our students, faculty and alumni know where we stand: rooted in Jesuit tradition, engaged with today's concerns and open to tomorrow's possibilities. Career preparation goes further here with distinctive experiential learning opportunities that connect students with our advancing alumni and prepare them to keep pace with change. To better encourage risks and take on real-world challenges. To shape ethical communicators who ask the big questions, pursue the just answers and truly seek to Be The Difference.