

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Meeman Matters

Newsletter of the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media

December 2018

Student scores as media professional, Tiger athlete



PHOTO BY MATTHEW SMITH

Catherine Levasseur plays midfield for the Memphis Tigers during the first round of the NCAA women's soccer tournament against the Wisconsin Badgers at Mike Rose Soccer Complex on Nov. 9.

■ *Levasseur balances soccer, internship, double major to launch her sport media career*

BY WILLIAM SUGGS

Athlete and journalism major Catherine Levasseur said that juggling the rigors of getting her degree with the rigors of playing high-level collegiate soccer for the past four years has not been easy.

Doing things the easy way was never Levasseur's style.

The 21-year-old Canadian is set to graduate in May with degrees in journalism and communication. She earned them while also captaining the UofM women's

soccer team to the American Athletic Conference title this past season.

"I spend most of my days at the facility, so the little time I have to do work I have to be really efficient," Levasseur said about juggling the classroom and the soccer field. "It's been finding techniques that work for me and prioritizing all the work I have to do, but it's hard. It's not for everybody."

When she started in the fall of 2015, Levasseur was not in journalism, but she added it as her major 2017. Since then, she has maintained a 4.0 GPA and did an internship at 92.9 FM ESPN Sportsradio in Memphis.

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New program gives creative media students more choices

This fall, we will launch Creative Mass Media, a new concentration in the journalism major. It is the latest effort to keep our programs relevant in the ever-changing media landscape. Although all our majors develop basic visual media proficiency, Creative Mass Media allows students to specialize in the visual elements of media communications. New courses such as Information Design and Advanced Photojournalism are paired with existing visual media courses required of all journalism majors.

Our goal is to give students more choices in developing expertise in various areas of news and strategic communication.

Our goal is to give students more choices in developing expertise in various areas of news and strategic communication. Recent curricular additions include branding in advertising, sport reporting and food reporting classes in journalism, crisis communication, music promotion and event management classes in public relations. We have added analytics and social media classes to equip our students to communicate strategically on digital platforms.

While offering these additional opportunities for specialization in reporting and strategic media, we remain committed to equipping our students to be expert writers in their media practice. We also



David Arant, Ph.D.

*Chair,
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Strategic Media*

challenge our students to think critically about the media so our graduates can excel in the current media professions as well as adapt with the evolving media environment.

One graduate from the early '90s leveraged her news editorial program plus experience as editor of The Daily Helmsman to start a career as a beat reporter at The Commercial Appeal and then transitioned to corporate communications. Angie Craig worked Smith & Nephew and then rose to vice president at St. Jude Medical Co. in St. Paul, Minnesota. Having become active in politics Craig was elected Nov. 6 to serve as a representative to the U.S. Congress. More about Craig is available in this edition of Meeman Matters.

Let me encourage you to return for a visit to campus to see the changes for yourself. We are completing a major renovation of our Meeman Journalism lobby. We have added additional instructional computer labs to accommodate the largest number of undergraduate majors in the department's history.

Please visit anytime, but a great occasion for a visit is the Norm Brewer lecture, featuring Jemele Hill, at 6 p.m., March 12, in the University Center Theatre. These programs and the new initiatives I have described are supported by the generous gifts of our alumni and friends. Thank you.

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IN BRIEF

2 named top ad students in nation

Two advertising seniors, Jennifer Nichols and Cynthia Castor, have been selected for the 2019 class of American Advertising Federation Most Promising Multicultural Students.

The UofM students are two of 50 students who will spend three days in February in New York. The program connects the advertising industry with the nation's top multicultural college seniors.

The program honors the students and enhances their knowledge and understanding of the advertising industry by offering networking, interviewing and industry immersion opportunities with advertising professionals, marketing and media professionals.

Online master's program gets national recognition

The master's degree program at the UofM's Department of Journalism and Strategic Media gained national recognition this summer from two different college ranking services as one of the top online programs in the country.

The Best Schools.org in July ranked the department as offering the No. 4 ranked online graduate journalism and mass communication program in the nation. On the list were Harvard, Missouri, Nebraska and South Florida. In April, Best Value Schools ranked the online graduate journalism and strategic media program as No. 9 in the country in terms of affordability for online communications master's degrees.

The rankings have drawn praise from university administrators including Provost Karen Weddle-West who said, "This is wonderful news and a testament to the quality of the faculty, students and staff in your program."



PHOTO BY WILLIAM SUGGS

Ricki Fitzpatrick and Caleb Suggs get footage for the "The DH Postgame," which is the Tiger News sports show, during the football game against Tulsa on Nov. 10 at the Liberty Bowl.

Tiger News undergoes revamp for spring, future

BY WILLIAM SUGGS

Tiger News, a news organization run by Department of Journalism and Strategic Media students, was revamped in the fall semester to provide a more up-to-date way to build and polish their broadcasting skills.

The purpose of Tiger News is to report, inform and promote different events happening on campus, said Caleb Suggs, a sophomore journalism student and executive producer for Tiger News.

"Our priority is not only to make professional looking content, but also to train the people that work with us to make that professional content every single time," Suggs said.

Joe Hayden, a professor of journalism and executive producer of Tiger News, said the production has in the past served as part of the department's producing class which was offered once a year, and then twice a year as student interest increased.

The goal is to make Tiger News a registered student organization, which would make it an independent club, Hayden said.

"We have a lot of interest in it, so it seems like that's something that's viable," Hayden said.

Revamping and new leadership has increased student interest in Tiger News with 98 students expressing interest this fall.

"I never really understood Tiger News and everything that's gone behind the scenes until this semester," said Zachary Boyd, a senior journalism student and contributor to Tiger News' sports show, "The DH Postgame."

Students involved with Tiger News hope that other media and news outlets on campus will partner with Tiger News. Boyd, who also works as a radio personality for the campus radio station, WUMR, hopes that radio can be incorporated into the learning.

Joshua Vinson, a senior journalism student and sports personality for "The DH Postgame," said that Tiger News can make students more versatile.

"When you look at the generation we're in, I think most people want to know how to become a multimedia journalist," Vinson said. "If you ever apply for a job nowadays that's the only position you can apply for."

The primary focus of Tiger News for the fall semester was sports coverage and programming. The plan for spring semester is to expand into overall campus news.

New program applies creative skills to journalism and strategic media

■ *Creative Mass Media teaches print, multimedia, photography, video skills*

BY WILLIAM SUGGS

Students in the University of Memphis Department of Journalism and Strategic Media will soon have another option when it comes to areas of study.

Beginning Fall 2019, creative mass media will be officially on the books as a concentration in the journalism major. The new concentration is added to the three established majors of advertising, journalism and public relations.

"This program exists to blend the creative skills of advertising, journalism and public relations and teaches students the technology and creativity they need to be able to develop visual and multimedia messages for journalism and strategic media clients and organizations," said Matthew Haught, an assistant professor in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media.

Haught is one of the professors responsible for the creation of the new program, which has been in the works since 2015.

"Creating a new academic program is never easy," Haught said. "But CMM was an easy argument. It was something that our students said they wanted, and the classes for it were already in place."

Haught said there were about 50 students interested in taking the new concentration. The department in the fall of 2018 had in total about 370 undergraduate students in the three majors. The goal for the new concentration is to teach students the skills they need for the real-world competitive market.

"Having the ability to talk to students and potential students to show them that this program is being of-



PHOTO BY MALORIE PARKER

Keith Bowers, assistant professor of biology, left, talks with students Ally Goins-Williams, Morgan Postelle and Kix Patterson at the Meeman Biological Station on Sept. 7, while MBS Program Coordinator Cheryl Goudie looks on. All three students are working toward the new creative mass media program.



PHOTO BY ALLY GOINS-WILLIAMS

Austin Anderson pilots a drone as part of the Meeman Biological Station project.

fered and that those students are going on to successful careers and doing great things is the best way that we can show this program's value to potential students," Haught said.

Classes for the new concentration will consist of classes offered from the other department majors, including Information Design, Multimedia Storytelling, Web Publishing and Creative Strategy.

Haught also said that a new partnership with the Department of Art will give students the opportunity to

take photography and graphic design courses.

While students cannot technically be listed in the new concentration until the fall 2019, the courses are already in place for students to learn what they need. For now, students such as senior Kix Patterson are listed under one of the current majors. Patterson said he wanted to do the new concentration because of the versatility it gave him.

"It's a degree that once you get it you can anything you want to do with it," Patterson said.

Creative mass media will be offered as both an undergraduate concentration and a minor, Haught said.

The program already has made an impact. Students in Information Design this fall worked with Meeman Biological Station to create a multimedia project that helps grow exposure for the station. Most of the students in the class intend to join the creative mass media program in the fall.

Journalism graduate elected to Congress

BY WILLIAM SANDERS

University of Memphis journalism graduate Angie Craig will become Congresswoman Craig after being sworn into office to the United States House of Representatives on Jan. 3.

Craig joined other Democratic candidates who took control of the House during the Nov. 6 election. Craig, 46, will represent Minnesota's second congressional district. She is a 1994 UofM graduate and former editor of The Daily Helmsman campus newspaper.

"I was a freshman English major and wandered into the Helmsman to answer an ad that folks needed freelance writers," Craig said. "I think I got a couple of stories published, and the next thing I knew, I was a staff reporter. Then I was news editor. Then I was managing editor, and then I was editor."

Craig said she began digging into any controversy she could find at what was then Memphis State University.

"I think it's ironic that I ended up running for public office because I know the student [government] probably thought I gave them hell when I was a reporter there," Craig said. "I remember Tre Hargett, who's the Secretary of State in Tennessee now. He was the president of the student senate, and I don't know if he was too fond of my reporting at the time."

After becoming an editor, Craig described running a daily newspaper written by college students as the greatest challenge she ever faced.

"I always say that the hardest job I had was herding all those college students to put out a daily newspaper," Craig said. "That was still the hardest job I've had."

Elinor Grusin, a retired UofM journalism professor and former general manager of The Daily Helmsman, said Craig had both initiative and a hardworking attitude from the start.

"She came in as a young freshman," Grusin said. "I started asking her questions, and the long and short of it was she did not know

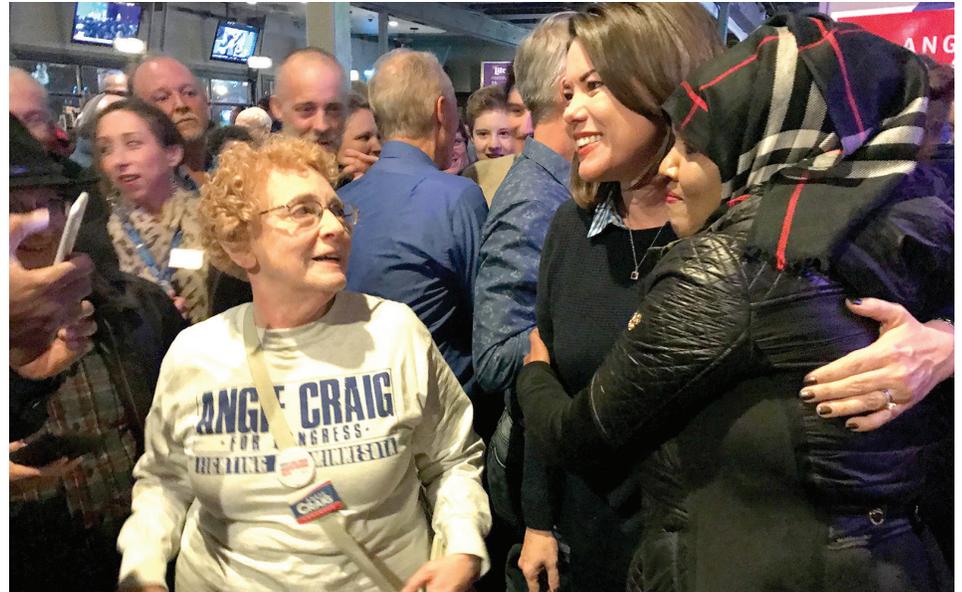


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGIE CRAIG FOR CONGRESS

Angie Craig hugs supporters on Nov. 6, the night she was elected to Congress from Minnesota's second district. Craig is a UofM journalism alumnus.

what she was doing. She hadn't had any coursework yet."

Grusin said Craig's work at the school paper produced excellent, popular stories.

"She began writing stories that were blockbusters," Grusin said. "I remember one that she wrote that involved a professor who had been hired at the college of business who, it turns out, had been accused of mishandling grant money where he came from."

After graduation, Craig was able to land a position as a reporter for The Commercial Appeal, where she worked for two years. She said she would do whatever was necessary to get the story.

"I remember one car accident that was down on the interstate, and I had some bystanders lower me off of a bridge down on to the hill so that I could make my way down onto the interstate because they had it closed," Craig said. "I was pretty determined even then to get the story."

Jerome Wright, director of communications at LeMoyne-Owen College and former opinion editor at The Commercial Appeal, said he was impressed with her while she worked for the paper.

"She was a good reporter," Wright

said. "She had a nice way about her. She knew how to be a bulldog without making the enemy run under the bridge."

Wright said, despite her aggressive reporting, Craig had a heart for people and will make a good representative.

"I think she's going to do really well," Wright said. "Angie's always been able to see the bigger picture. She cares about people."

Craig has won many awards including the 2013 Outstanding Young Alumni award by the Journalism and Strategic Media Alumni Club. It was that journalism background that gave her an edge when traveling around the district during her campaign.

"It's funny because as I traveled around the congressional district running for Congress, it felt a lot like driving around DeSoto County back in the early part of my career," Craig said. "My job was to drive around, meet interesting people, listen to their stories and, at the time, I wrote a story about them. What I did in my campaign is listen to their stories to help inform what I need to work on as a member of Congress."

This article was published with permission from The Daily Helmsman. It originally appeared on Nov. 8.

Alumni event recognizes top grads, student, faculty

The Journalism and Strategic Media Alumni Club Outstanding Alumni Awards dinner on Oct. 11 honored four alumni, one student, one media professional and two faculty members.

The 2018 event was conducted at the UofM Athletic Hall of Fame and attracted about 125 people.

Recognized were:

Julia Weeks, outstanding young alumna and 2006 graduate.

"I feel so appreciative and privileged to be awarded this honor among so many notable alumni. It just feels great to be back home at the University of Memphis," Weeks said.

Gale Jones Carson, Charles E. Thornton Award and 1977 graduate.

"I am so greatly humbled and thankful to have been one of the few chosen to receive this award," Jones Carson said. "I never would've dreamed that this would be a possibility for me to achieve in my career. I'm grateful to the U of M Alumni Association and the Journalism and Strategic Media Department for all that they do to benefit the alumni, students, and the communities here. I am so very elated."

Stacy Wiedower, Charles E. Thornton Award and 1998 and 2008 graduate.

Scott Williams, Charles E. Thornton Award and 1989 graduate.

Andrew Kix Patterson, emerging media professional, and current UofM student.

Marc Perrusquia, Herbert Lee Williams Award.

Robby Byrd, D. Mike Pennington Award for Outstanding Mentoring and current faculty member.

"I'm extremely excited to have



PHOTOS COURTESY UOFM ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Journalism and Strategic Media Alumni Club President Angie Golding presents Gale Jones Carson the Charles E. Thornton award on Oct. 11.



Stacy Wiedower accepts the Charles E. Thornton Award at the event.

won this award," Byrd said. "I work hard with the students in the JRSM department in hopes they will come back to win this same award 10 to 15 years from now and I'm really grateful to do that."

Kim Marks, D. Mike Penning-



Robby Byrd, Kim Marks and Kix Patterson show off their awards at the Journalism and Strategic Media Outstanding Alumni Awards event on Oct. 11.

ton Award for Outstanding Mentoring and current faculty member.

"Winning this awards feels amazing," Marks said. "The competition within the JRSM faculty members is steep because we all strive for our students to succeed. I am very humbled and honored to have been awarded the Mike D. Pennington Award."

Daily Memphian panel sparks interest, hope in local journalism

BY JALEN TAYLOR

The editor of Daily Memphian said the new online newspaper is spearheading the future of local journalism and improving news reporting — even for its competition.

James Overstreet said that there is no newspaper war in Memphis, but there is now a friendly competition between the Daily Memphian and the established Commercial Appeal.

“We’re just a little startup. We’re nipping at the giant’s heels,” Overstreet said. “Hopefully we’ll get bigger and better and provide even stiffer competition, but the main thing is the (Commercial Appeal) has stepped up. And if I’m talking to the community, what I say is, this is great for the community.”

Overstreet was part of a panel discussion on Nov. 12 at the UofM that featured four members of the Daily Memphian staff.

Local journalism in Memphis is suffering from cutbacks in the local newspapers and a dying era of print media. The Daily Memphian will provide the community with a new outlet for information gathering while propelling the future of local journalism in Memphis, Overstreet said.

“The Future of Local Journalism in Memphis” panel discussion was sponsored by the UofM Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media and the Helen Hardin Chair of Excellence in Economic and Managerial Journalism. The panel was this year’s Freedom of Information Congress, an annual speaker series at the UofM.

The panel discussion attracted 80 people to the UC River Room.

The Daily Memphian launched in September as an online publication for in-depth journalism, focusing on business, politics and sports.



PHOTO BY HIRA QURESHI

Panelists Elle Perry, Michelle Corbet and James Overstreet discuss the new Daily Memphian with Otis Sanford on Nov. 12. The three panelists are staff members at the Daily Memphian, and Sanford serves as an editor-at-large.

Overstreet said he was, at first, skeptical about the idea of an online publication when he was approached about it a year ago.

“When my boss came to me and said, ‘Here, I want you to put together a staff to cover the local community. You know, your dream team. And oh, by the way, you don’t have to worry about a pressroom anymore,’” Overstreet said. “I was like, what? I don’t know about this.”

After weighing the pros and cons of an online publication to a traditional print publication, Overstreet said the transition is liberating.

“There’s no more error court,” Overstreet said. “You don’t have to worry about marching into the editor’s office and explain why you screwed something up because you can change it real quick like nobody saw it.”

Michelle Corbet, a business reporter at the Daily Memphian, said while covering healthcare for the first time, she received an overwhelming response from hospitals wanting to tell their stories to the Daily Memphian.

“Before I can even reach out to

the hospitals, they’re reaching out to me,” Corbet said. “They really want to be a part of this new thing and they want to have their stories (heard) ... They’ve had it in the Commercial Appeal, and they’ve had it in the Business Journal, and they want it to be in the Daily Memphian in front of this new audience on this new platform.”

Corbet said joining the Daily Memphian would allow her to be vocal in shaping the future of local journalism in Memphis.

“When they approached me, it was really the people and the idea of being a part of something that was being built from the ground up,” Corbet said. “I wanted to have input, I wanted to have a voice on what the future looked like ... this could be an answer to how we get news back in our communities.”

Elle Perry, an arts and culture reporter at the Daily Memphian, said the overall response she received following the launch of the Daily Memphian was positive.

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Levasseur seeks career in sport broadcast

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She was named to the 2018-19 Google Cloud Academic All-America third team.

Levasseur is from Stoneham, Quebec, so making her accomplishments more impressive is that French, not English, is her native language.

"I learned English basically here in Memphis," Levasseur said. "So, I was always scared that language would be a barrier for me. I didn't pick (journalism) first because I wanted to see how I was going to do in school."

Levasseur said she began as a communication major because of a passion for public speaking and an interest in people. The major also served as a test to see how well she would do in her classes. After seeing that she was doing well in school and quickly learning English with the help of teammates, Levasseur decided to join the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media.

"She's a great student," said Joe Hayden, professor in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. "I always admire students who are able to do extracurricular activities including athletics and also excel in the classroom. You've got to be like a master of time management to pull that off, and she does."

Before coming to Memphis, Levasseur played soccer in camps for the Canadian National team, and has competed in England, Belgium



PHOTO BY TOM HRACH

Catherine Levasseur is honored before the Memphis Tiger Senior Night game on Oct. 26 with her father Marc Levasseur at the Mike Rose Soccer Complex.

and France.

Levasseur has expressed interest in a professional soccer career. She plans to enter the 2019 National Women's Soccer League draft. But she is also realistic about her chances of going professional as an athlete because she is not a high profile enough college player nor a member of the Canadian national team.

She said she has always been passionate about broadcasting, remembering always wanting to stay up late to watch the news with her father.

"I've always wanted an actual career before playing soccer," she said, "That's always been a dream of mine."

Levasseur interned last summer with ESPN Radio's "Jason and John Show." She plans to start using the connections she made to find jobs in broadcasting. Levasseur said her dream and goal is to become a sports broadcaster.

Levasseur has made the dean's list every semester since she enrolled and has earned academic honors as a student athlete every semester as well. She is also a member of the Tiger 3.0 club, the Tiger Academic 30, and was a member of the 2016 and 2017 All-AAC Academic Team.

The 2018 Tiger soccer season ended Nov. 9 with a 3-0 loss to Wisconsin in the NCAA Women's College Cup tournament. But it was still a great season for the Tigers, who finished with 17 total wins, tied for most in program history, along with AAC conference tournament title.

"If you asked me at the beginning of the season what were my expectations I probably would have said what we did this season," Levasseur said. "So winning 17 games in a season — it's rare that we do that, and then winning the championship for the first time, I mean, there's nothing else we could have asked for."

Memphian hopes to continue growth

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"I think very quickly I got an influx of emails," Perry said. "People wanted to be written about, organizations wanted to be written about. It's all been positive."

Because the Daily Memphian is an online publication, an issue for the people in Memphis is accessibility, Overstreet said.

"So, that's another part of our mission as a non-profit—to find ways to get this info into the hands of people that might not be able to afford it," Overstreet said.

Overstreet said the Daily Mem-

phian is, in one way, focusing on giving back to the community in the form of a dynamic internship program.

"As part of our non-profit model, there's certain business requirements, and one of those requirements for us that we chose was to kind of give back to the community," Overstreet said.