

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS Meeman Matters

Newsletter of the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media

April 2018

Tiger News students mark MLK50 anniversary



PHOTO BY JOE HAYDEN

Journalism student Max Vincent shoots video of Deja Davis and Erin Cooper doing a stand up during the remembrance ceremonies for Martin Luther King Jr. outside the Lorraine Motel in downtown Memphis on April 4. Students and faculty participated in several MLK50 events.

BY EVANGELINE PEDEN

Dozens of UofM Journalism and Strategic Media students spent the day on April 4 in downtown Memphis reporting and participating in the historic events to remember and reflect on the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's death.

Students at Tiger News, the television news broadcast for the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, spent about nine hours interviewing more than 100 people about what King meant to them and what brought people to Memphis.

"I interviewed multiple people that came from across the country," said Allison Plummer, a 21-year-old journalism major. "It wasn't just Memphis people. It was people from all over. This one lady came from California on a girl's trip — just for this."

Plummer, producer for Tiger News, said the most interesting thing was seeing how people from so many places came together for the events, which were centered on the National Civil Rights

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Alumni, friends working to keep journalism and strategic media education affordable

When we ask our University of Memphis students why they have not registered for the upcoming semester — some just a semester or two short of graduation — the No. 1 reason they give is financial. They simply cannot afford the tuition so they drop out to work full-time to make enough money to come back the next semester. That would not be so bad except that once students start working full-time, they often find it difficult to return for the final semester or two of university study.

Students committed to finishing their university degrees in four or five years often have to take out student loans to finance their education. In 2016, American university graduates left with student loans averaging \$37,172, up 6 percent from 2015. Some leave college with debts much higher than that average, and these loan balances become a financial nightmare for those who do not secure well-paying jobs at graduation.

One way the University of Memphis has tried to relieve this financial pressure is by keeping tuition low. The UofM has had no tuition increases in two of the past five years, making Memphis tuition affordable compared to peer public universities. Our students do their part. Almost all of our students work at least part-time; many work full-time to pay for college. When I was an undergraduate, I only had to work a limited part-time schedule because I received scholarships as well as support from my public school teacher parents, who made their children's education a priority. Many of our students' families



David Arant, Ph.D.

*Journalism and
Strategic Media*

cannot afford to support their children's education. Some students are completely on their own to make their way through college

The university also offers scholarships to bridge the gap between what our students can afford and the cost of higher education. Our Journalism and Strategic Media students are fortunate to have access to nearly \$40,000 each year in named scholarships.

Our most recent student scholarship is the Pennington Abroad Award, which starting this year will provide 10 students with a \$1,000 award to support participation in study abroad programs. We consider study abroad vital to a well-rounded media education in this increasingly global economy, so we are grateful that this fund makes study abroad possible for Journalism and Strategic Media students.

We will announce the 2018-19 recipients of our named scholarships at our Journalism and Strategic Media Student Awards Banquet on April 27 and will publish the scholarship recipients in the next issue of Meeman Matters. I am grateful to our many alumni and friends who support our students with their gifts to the department

Thank you.

David Arant is chair of Journalism and Strategic Media.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Daily Helmsman, Memphis Mirror win SPJ awards

The Society of Professional Journalists has recognized The Daily Helmsman as one of the top daily campus news organizations in the South.

The Helmsman finished in second place in the Mark of Excellence Awards as the best daily campus newspaper in 2017. Accepting the award at the SPJ Region 12 conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, on March 17 was Hira Qureshi, president of the UofM SPJ chapter.

Also recognized by SPJ was Christian Volk for getting second place in the Online/Digital Feature Videography category for work he published on MemphisMirror.com.

New Commercial Appeal chief meets with alumni

The UofM Journalism and Strategic Media Alumni Club conducted its regular social event Feb. 27 at the Alumni Center on campus featuring Mike Jung, president of The Commercial Appeal and The Jackson Sun.

Jung discussed the future of the Memphis newspaper with about 25 alumni, faculty and friends. He said the future of news reporting is strong in Memphis, but he acknowledged there are challenges these days in the news business.

Jung was named president of the newspapers in May 2017.

Sanford honored by UofM Black Scholars United

Professor Otis Sanford received the University of Memphis Black Scholars Unlimited Igniting Excitement Award at a ceremony Feb. 15.

The award recognizes a UofM faculty member or employee who has done significant work in helping minority students achieve success. Past recipients include Provost Karen Weddle-West and Rosie Phillips Davis, both of whom attended the ceremony.



PHOTO COURTESY GEORGE DANIELS

Journalism and Strategic Media graduate student Paul D'Ambrosio presents his research at the 2018 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Southeast Colloquium at the University of Alabama.

Grad student wins top paper, thesis awards

Journalism and Strategic Media graduate student Paul D'Ambrosio was recognized twice in the spring semester for his research examining the issues of whether clickbait journalism is affecting news judgment decisions.

D'Ambrosio was awarded the Top Student Paper in the Newspaper and Online News Division on March 10 during the 43rd Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Southeast Colloquium at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.

His research was also recognized with the Morton Thesis Award as the top thesis of all master's degree students at the university in the 2017-18 academic year. He was recognized by Provost Karen Weddle-West at a ceremony April 22.

D'Ambrosio's paper, "Growing the Audience: Does a Metrics-Driven Newsroom Lead to More Web Clicks but Fewer Watchdog Stories?" used a mixed-method of a national survey, reporter interviews and quantitative analysis of newsroom data to examine the impact of newsroom metrics pres-

sure on watchdog reporting.

At the colloquium, discussant Chris Roberts of the University of Alabama noted that D'Ambrosio used qualitative interviews to answer the "why" behind the data.

The research study found that despite the temptation to write "cat-in-tree" clickbait stories for viral hits, reporters are writing more and deeper watchdog stories because they are driven to expose wrongdoing – and the public is responding with higher page views.

D'Ambrosio is also a news professional serving as Director of News and Investigations for the Asbury Park, New Jersey, Press and administrator of DataUniverse.com, the Press' public records site with more than 80 million government records. He leads the award-winning investigative team and has won more than two dozen national journalism awards including the Selden Ring and Farfel prizes for investigative reporting, three Associated Press Media Editors Public Service awards, four National Headliner awards and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Public Service.

Department loses mentor, friend in death of Helmsman business manager

The death of Daily Helmsman Business Manager Bob Willis on Jan. 17 was a difficult loss for the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media's students, faculty members and alumni.

Willis, 73, died just one day before the start of the spring semester after being hospitalized for several weeks with a lung complication.



WILLIS

His funeral service at the Second Presbyterian Church brought together many current and former colleagues and students, all of whom remarked on Willis' kindness and mentorship.

Willis grew up in Midwest City, Oklahoma, and earned a degree from the University of Oklahoma. He earned his master's degree in journalism from Ball State University. He taught journalism at Boston College and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater before coming to the University of Memphis 21 years ago.

He was also a veteran, serving in the Army in Korea in 1966 to 1967.

Willis touched the lives of thousands of students. Along with his duties at The Daily Helmsman, he was a faculty member of the department teaching public relations. He left his wife, Candy Justice, general manager of The Helmsman, two children and three grandchildren.

Here is a look at what some of Willis' students and colleagues said about him in The Daily Helmsman:

■ "I can't tell you how many times this sweet man let me cry my eyes out in his office about being stressed in school and he ALWAYS was there to listen and give advice. I'll remember that always." — former advertising student Loghan Laufenberg



Bob Willis is recognized for 20 years of service to the University of Memphis by then CCFA Interim Dean Moira Logan in 2016.

■ "RIP to a true champion of the U of Memphis newspaper — and any student that worked for it. Recall many conversations we had late night about Tiger basketball in Helmsman offices. He'll be missed." — former Helmsman sports editor and Memphis radio host John Martin

■ "When I first heard the news, I kept it together as best I could, but now I'm fully breaking down with tears. Bob was one of my biggest supporters and mentors. He believed in my potential before I did. I'm thankful to have met him, and I'll miss him dearly." — Helmsman sports editor Jeremiah Graham

"The news of Bob's passing feels sudden. Out of nowhere. Shocking.

Devastating. He and Candy were our champions in college. Champions of us as reporters, of us as students and of us as people." — 2012 Helmsman editor-in-chief Chelsea Boozer

■ "Bob was a great communicator, too. He never stopped supporting my 'knack' for writing and wherever I end up in the future, I'll take a sip from my toilet-shaped coffee mug and thank Bob Willis for his thoughtful support." — 2017 Helmsman editor-in-chief Gus Carrington

■ "Terribly sad to hear this news. We will keep Bob's family and friends in our thoughts and prayers. Bob will be missed by all in the UofM family." — UofM President M. David Rudd.

The first African-American woman reporter at The Washington Post shared her journey covering the Civil Rights movement during the Norm Brewer First Amendment lecture at the University of Memphis on March 13.

"Mississippi was a frightening place for me to go, and I really felt like a reporter covering wars when I went to Mississippi," Gilliam said. "I always felt like going to Mississippi was like going to war because black lives were so cheap."

Gilliam was one of 300 reporters who traveled to Oxford to cover the Ole Miss integration. Instead of writing about the riot that ensued on campus, she said her editor Ben Gilbert sent her to report about the black community's attitude towards the integration.

Gilliam also covered another one of the most famous Civil Rights events in history, which was the in-



Professor Otis Sanford interviews journalist Dorothy Gilliam, the first African-American woman reporter at the Washington Post, on March 13 in the UC River Room about her experiences reporting on the Civil Rights movement.

"What I remember most vividly were all the black reporters that were covering the South for years were there," Gilliam said. "I think there was only one hotel for black people in Little Rock and they didn't have enough room for everybody. A lot of people just stayed in Mrs. Bates' House."

During the questions and answers with journalism professor Otis Sanford, Gilliam would continuously drop little gems, like having to stay in a funeral home once at Ole Miss, throughout the lecture. She would later answer any questions the audience had, leaving the 200 participants feeling connected to

"I loved hearing about James Meredith and about the University of Mississippi," said Alexis Williams, 18, of Jackson, Mississippi. "I'm from Mississippi and Mississippi is known to be as a racist state. Hearing her story about how she covered that situation was very terrifying."

“The most interesting thing for people to hear about her story is that she made it,” said Yasmine Jones, a student at Uof M. “She found ways to overcome the challenges she faced, and anybody can do anything they set their mind to.”

Student at home in sports radio job

BY CARSON HARRELL

One UofM journalism student has turned his love of sports into his dream job — executive producer for one of Memphis' top-rated sports talk shows hosted by Grizzlies broadcaster Eric Hasseltine.

Devin Walker, 25, of Memphis said he always had a love for sports, especially basketball. He is a former member of the Houston High School basketball team, but he first learned to appreciate sports talk as a kid at his local barbershop.

"You know what it's like," Walker said. "The debates, conversations, arguments. I was the kid always in the middle of that."

It was during one of these discussions that his fellow barbershop patrons who were impressed with his knowledge and debate skills urged him to consider pursuing a sports media career. Walker took this to heart and became a student in the UofM's Department of Journalism and Strategic Media.

There he learned to further sharpen his writing skills, how to cover stories and how to produce for a program at WUMR, the UofM campus radio station. Walker also had the opportunity to call football and basketball games for WUMR.

Those experiences would serve him well as he would go on to be an intern at WMFS 92.9 ESPN in Memphis. Walker was a member of the street team promoting the station for six months before another opportunity presented itself.

"One of the old producers was offered a job at another station so a position opened up at this station,



PHOTO BY CARSON HARRELL

Devin Walker works behind the scenes during "The Eric Hasseltine Show" at WMFS 92.9 ESPN during the afternoon sports talk station.

and they offered it to me. And I said 'Yes!'" Walker said.

Walker would finally attain the job he'd worked so hard for in Au-

"I think that's the biggest thing for me, for people to walk up to my mom and tell her that they or someone they know respects my opinion and I'm doing something that makes my mom proud as well as being an example for my younger brother."

— Devin Walker

Journalism and Strategic Media student

gust 2016, and he was enthusiastic whenever he described his daily routine and called it a "blessing" to be able to do something he loves every day.

Walker is currently an executive producer at 92.9 ESPN, and his job is to work on Hasseltine's afternoon sports talk radio show.

"I knew Devin before he was a producer here, and I saw how hard he worked on the street team," Hasseltine said, "When the position opened up I told my colleagues I don't care how young he is. He has what it takes to be successful."

Walker has become a bit of a local celebrity around town as his presence on social media and the radio has increased. Memphians have begun to recognize him and talk to him about the radio show and local sports.

Even his mother is impressed when her co-workers tell her about how their relatives listen to him on the radio.

"I think that's the biggest thing for me," Walker said, "for people to walk up to my mom and tell her that they or someone they know respects my opinion, and I'm doing something that makes my mom proud as well as being an example for my younger brother."

Walker is active on social media and encourages people to follow him on Twitter at @Devin_Walker5.

Key figures from 1968 strike speak

The Department of Journalism and Strategic Media conducted a successful discussion on Feb. 6 at the UC River Room called, "Where Do I Stand? Lessons from the 1968 City Sanitation Strike."

The event featured former Memphis City Councilmen Fred Davis and the Rev. James Netters along with student RaSean Jenkins. It attracted about 125 people who were able to hear from two of the key figures in the 1968 sanitation strike, which was 50 years ago this past February.

The event was organized by Prof. Otis Sanford and UofM NABJ Chapter President Jurnee Taylor.

Faculty member

speaks at Newseum

Journalism and Strategic Media faculty member Tom Hrach was one of the featured panelists on March 1 at the Newseum in Washington DC as part of a discussion of the 50th anniversary of the Kerner Commission.

Hrach is the author of "The Riot Report and the News: How the Kerner Commission Changed the Reporting of Black America." The Kerner Commission Report was issued on March 1, 1968.

The panel was led by Newseum CEO Gene Policiniski, and it was broadcast on the Newseum's in-house television network.

New award supports study abroad trips for students

Five Journalism and Strategic Media students were awarded in March the inaugural Pennington Abroad Award for international studies.

Each student was awarded \$1,000 as part of a new program that encourages the department's students to study abroad. The Pennington family donated the



PHOTO BY MATT HAUGHT

From left, UofM history student RaSean Jenkins and former Memphis City Councilmen the Rev. James Netters and Fred Davis speak with Prof. Otis Sanford at "Where Do I Stand? Lessons from the 1968 City Sanitation Strike," on Feb. 6 in the University Center.

funds for the first time in 2018.

Students plan to use the funds to participate in the department's exchange programs and other media-related international study experiences.

Advertising, Public Relations students win fellowships

Senior advertising major Madison Inman won an internship through the American Association of Advertising Agencies' Multicultural Advertising Intern Program. Inman will intern at DigitasLBI in Chicago.

Junior Public Relations major Kyland Evans won a fellowship from The LaGrant Foundation. Evans will receive a \$2,000 scholarship and an all-expenses-paid networking trip to New York. LaGrant provides scholarships, career development workshops, professional development, mentors and internships to African American/Black, American Indian/

Native American, Asian American/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino undergraduate and graduate students.



Advertising team presents campaign at AAF District 7

Advertising students Marshea Oliver, Addie James, Madison Inman, Garrett Pilgrim, Angel Kelly, Tori Johnson and Hayden Michael, above, presented their campaign for Ocean Spray to the American Advertising Federation District 7 in the National Student Advertising Competition on April 14 in Jackson, Mississippi.

Students connect with story covering MLK50 events

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Museum. The museum is at the site of the Lorraine Motel where King was killed.

The April 4 events in downtown Memphis offered a chance for the students to report on a major news event.

Caleb Suggs, 19, journalism major, started his broadcast journalism career in high school and then joined Tiger News to further his skills. He spent part of that day at Clayborn Temple, which was the gathering place for many of the marches back in 1968.

At Clayborn Temple, a bell ringing took place in memory of the moment that King was assassinated. The bell rang a total of 39 times, the age that King was when he was killed. After the bell rang, there was a moment of silence at 6:01 p.m., the time King was killed that day.

Besides filming, Suggs also interviewed people who came into town for MLK50. He said it was a meaningful experience.

"I ran into a white man from California who was telling me that he was thankful for Dr. King," Suggs said.

Tiger News puts together a show every Wednesday during the semester. The student jobs range from reporting, making the videos and interviewing people. Reporters for Tiger News also edit their own videos.

"We do cover a lot of school activities that are happening, but we also go out and shoot stuff that's going on in the community," Plummer said. "I think we bring a lot of awareness to our broadcast of what's happening now."

Professor Joe Hayden, executive



PHOTO BY ROXANE COCHE

Senior and Daily Helmsman editor Mitch Koch shoots photos of the re-enactment of the iconic "I am a Man" photograph on April 4.



PHOTO BY JOE HAYDEN

Journalism students Brittany Cousin, Maisa Jabi and Allison Plummer stand outside the Lorraine Motel on April 4 in downtown Memphis during their work shooting video of the remembrance ceremonies for Martin Luther King.

producer for Tiger News, said that the students found it easy to find people to interview, and that it was a great opportunity to be a part of history.

"It was kind of like a celebration environment," Hayden said. "People were really pumped up and very talkative and eager to share. We found it a great environment."

Aspen Hayes 23, a journalism major, said that going with Tiger News to the MLK50 was great exposure for her career. She was able to meet reporters from Miami and Houston.

Plummer said she was proud of

all the students who participated.

"We have a lot of good talented people, it takes a lot of work but we have a good group of people that help put it all together and make it good," Plummer said.



Other MLK50 activities where Journalism and Strategic Media students participated include:

■ Professor Otis Sanford was one of the featured panelists after the March 31 showing of "At the River I Stand," a documentary film about the 1968 Sanitation Workers Strike.

■ Students in the Reporting classes this past fall and spring conducted oral interviews with Memphians recalling the events of 1968.

■ The National Association of Black Journalists sponsored a session on Feb. 6 called, "Where Do I Stand? Lessons from the 1968 City Sanitation Strike" featuring two key figures from the 1968 Sanitation Workers Strike.

■ Students from precision language, media writing, reporting and multimedia news lab courses spent time at the remembrance, writing stories and producing content about MLK50.