# NDSU

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION NEWSLETTER

> **IMPACTING COMMUNITIES**

Fall 2022

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■ Photos courtesy: Ross Collins and others

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**GRADUATE COORDINATOR**
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## CHAIR'S REMARKS

G reetings from the Communication Department at NDSU! We hope this newsletter finds you well during this wonderful fall season. As you know, our academic year has commenced and we've welcomed our students back to campus, including new freshmen and graduate student cohorts. This past week was Homecoming Week, and many of you joined us at events to celebrate this annual tradition. These moments always cause me to reflect on past years, when many of you were moving to campus, attending first classes, trying out new student clubs, meeting with professors during office hours, and figuring out your future. Those were great times!

As we think about those times, we also wanted to take a moment and provide a department update with this newsletter. Two of our graduate students took the lead in creating these brief highlights. A lot of great things are happening in our department. We hope this reminds you of the good times you had at NDSU!

One last note – our Communication Advisory Board has created a mentorship program, connecting our alumni with current students. The mentorship process involves meeting with a student periodically over the semester for brief chats. We feel this is a great way for students to gain insight into their careers. If you are interested in participating, please let me know! It is a great way to support our students.

**BEST,**
## STEPHENSON J. BECK
**CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

# Bison Information Network





The Bison Information Network is a student-led television production organization at NDSU. BIN produces a weekly news program called "BIN News" and a sports talk show called "Bison Overtime." BIN's studio and offices are located in Suite 250 of the Memorial Union.

At the BIN, there are numerous opportunities for students to learn about television production. These opportunities range from reporting, anchoring, graphics, and directing to remote broadcasting and live newscasts. BIN members also make commercials and promotional videos for many different entities around the Fargo-Moorhead area.

BIN members have won many professional awards, including the most recent first-place award in talk show from the 2022 North Dakota Professional Communicators Contest. BIN alumni have embarked on their professional journeys at WDAY, FM RedHawks baseball, Fargo Force hockey, and NDSU Athletics events, among others.

# A Fulbright Experience

■ Hiking In Korea During A Pandemic



BTS, K-Pop, and K-drama have been huge Korean global exports, but for those who get to actually visit Korea, Seoul, Busan, and Jeju Island—the "Hawaii" of Korea—are places they can't afford to miss. Some of Dr. Catherine Kingsley Westerman's favorite memories of Korea are engraved in hiking trails. "I absolutely loved that there were mountains everywhere in Korea, including city walls all the way around Seoul for hiking." The hiking trails were a good reason to get out, get fresh air, and see Korea as Dr. Westerman visited in the spring of 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an undergraduate student, Dr. Westerman longed to experience the world outside the U.S. She was able to study abroad in Athens, Greece for a semester but did not consider the possibility of applying for a Fulbright award back then. Having earned tenure and promotion to associate professor in the Department of Communication at NDSU, Dr. Westerman decided to take up new challenges and impact others by applying for a competitive Fulbright scholar-teacher award to the Republic of Korea



Dr. Catherine
■ Kingsley
Westerman

(otherwise known as South Korea). Fulbright programs are intensive academic modules as well as cultural exchanges. Dr. Westerman was fortunate to be awarded a Fulbright award to teach and conduct research in Korea for Fall 2020. Her visit was delayed until spring of 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though many restrictions were still in place (including a monitored 14-day quarantine upon arrival), Fulbright Korea deemed it safe enough for awardees to begin traveling to Korea again in spring 2021.

Dr. Westerman believes one of the major benefits of visiting or living in other countries is the opportunity to interact with and learn about different cultures and value systems. The learning that takes place during these experiences cannot be generated if one stays in just their country or comfort zone. Dr. Westerman encourages communication students to participate in study abroad programs to any country if at all possible. She hopes to organize a study abroad trip to Korea for NDSU students in the near future. The exposure and learning gained from engaging in other societies has a humbling impact on perspectives and knowledge acquisition. Dr. Westerman wishes for her students to be able to travel to Korea, or indeed other countries, to share the cultural experience Fulbright afforded her.

# From the classroom to the 'real' world

For most students, a college degree should be one that allows them to make an impact in the lives of people around them and improve their own careers. This calls for an education that goes beyond just the accumulation of theories to actual practice or application.

Professor Crawford's COMM 476: Advertising Campaign Practicum class is one of the several real-life application-oriented courses in the department. According to Professor Crawford, advertising, like most communication courses, involves both thinking and doing. To this end, students in the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) course complete an advertising campaign project assigned by the American Advertising Federation (AAF) that is presented to industry leaders for evaluation

This year's case involved working with Meta to develop an advertising campaign to promote the Meta Quest 2 VR headset. To participate in NSAC, advertising students completed creative and design executions, a comprehensive media plan, original consumer research, and a presentation pitch.

To produce the final campaign, NSAC provides market and media data, a budget, and branding materials for creating a campaign for a nationally recognized client. NSAC also facilitated a Zoom meeting with a marketing professional at Meta.

The team from the class won 3rd place at District 8 which includes teams from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. A student from the class, Owen Piehl, won the best presenter award at the competition.

With courses carefully curated to impact the general society, the department is certainly training students whose degrees mean a whole lot more outside the walls of the university.



ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS THAT MATTER

# How to make sense of big data

TWO COMMUNICATION PROFESSORS OFFER TRAINING IN COMPUTATIONAL SOCIAL SCIENCE



**Participants at SICSS-NDSU 2022** (Photo courtesy: Ross Collins)

North Dakota State University has hosted, for the first time, a two-week intensive training in computational social science for graduate students and early-career faculty, known as the Summer Institutes in Computational Social Science (SICSS).

Twenty participants from across the US took part in the training on web scraping, data wrangling, data analysis, and data visualization. The participant pool consisted of young faculty, postdoctoral researchers, graduate students, and senior undergraduate students from NDSU, University of Minnesota, University of Oregon, Baylor University, Washington University in St. Louis, Northeastern University, Metropolitan State University, and Loyola University Chicago.

Since 2017, SICSS has trained more than 1,200 scholars in computational social science. This year, NDSU was one of the seven locations across the US universities where SICSS took place. Two professors from the NDSU Department of Communication, Dr. Shuning Lu and Dr. Zoltan Majdik, conducted the workshop on June 19-30, 2022.

Lead PI of the workshop Dr. Lu said,

"The workshop provided abundant opportunities for participants to discuss their ideas and research with the organizers, other participants, and visiting speakers." Dr. Lu also noted that the workshop would bring long-term benefits to NDSU by allowing faculty to embed computational social science in the curricula and to foster cross-disciplinary collaborations on campus.

Shuxi Wu, a participant from the University of Oregon, described the workshop as "very intense and productive." She also appreciated the organizers' commitment to "let everyone get the most out of the workshop."

Participants learned a wide range of state-of-the-art computational methods such as natural language processing (NLP), network analysis, sentiment analysis, cluster analysis, and topic modeling. The daily schedule included a brief tutorial, learning and practice sessions, group activity, and presentations. Jesse DeDeyne, a participant from Baylor University, said, "I feel that the Institute really aided in my understanding of natural language processing (NLP) and the gathering and cleaning of 'big data'."

The workshop also featured talks on cutting-edge computational social science research, by both participants as well as guest speakers from the University of Wisconsin—Madison, University of Texas at Austin, NDSU, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Tilburg University in the Netherlands.

Speaking of the hosting of the Institute, Professor Majdik said, "The facilities that we had access to [at NDSU] were outstanding because we had that greatly connected room, the movable tables, and all the breakout rooms." He also appreciated participants' engagement in the workshop. "I think it was a really good experience that the people were really involved," he said.

SICSS was launched in 2017 by Christopher Bail (Duke University) and Jason Rhody (SSRC-Social Science Research Council) to provide free training to the next generation of researchers at the intersection of social science and data science.

In 2021, Dr. Lu participated in SICSS at Rutgers University and brought that experience to NDSU. The workshop received financial support from Social Science Research Council and NDSU's Department of Communication. After finishing the workshop, NDSU Department of Communication awarded $500 to one participant-led research proposal.

**"The Institute really aided in my understanding of natural language processing (NLP) and the gathering and cleaning of 'big data'."**

Jesse DeDeyne,
**Participant**
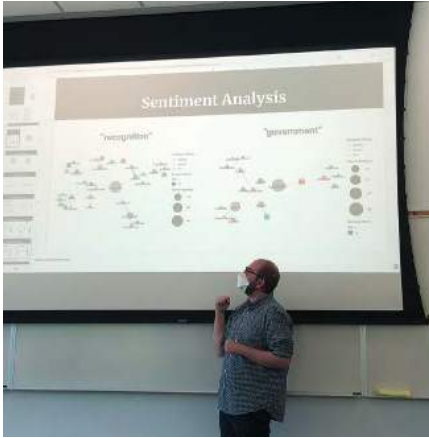
## GLIMPSES FROM SICSS-NDSU 2022

Participants learn and present their projects and enjoy the campus during the weeklong workshop.

Photos courtesy Shuning Lu

# Rhetoric meets computational methods

## The study concluded that human-coded data will maximize accuracy of the deep learning architecture.

With the use of machine learning tools gradually becoming mainstream in social science and humanities research, rhetoric scholar Dr. Zoltan Majdik has turned to computational approaches to gain insights from large corpora of rhetorical texts.

He employs various computational methods (e.g., natural language processing or NLP, text mining) to understand the circulation of rhetorical language in large textual corpora. He specifically looks at how the rhetorical devices people use – like metaphors to describe climate change, for example – gain or lose prevalence over time and interact with other rhetorical devices.

One of his most recent studies investigated how researchers can build artificial neural network models that most accurately classify rhetorical structures in small datasets. The 2022 study concluded that in some circumstances, manual feature engineering of training data will maximize the accuracy of the deep learning architecture even compared to more cutting-edge transformer-based models. This article contributes to computational rhetoric as a method. Dr. James Wynn, a professor of English at Carnegie Mellon University, co-authored this article.

Dr. Majdik is also collaborating on a prestigious R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The project involves three professors from UT Austin, Dr. Scott Graham, Dr. Josh Barbour, and Dr. Justin Rousseau. The researchers aim to extract conflict of interest statements in biomedical literature from unstructured text, identify different levels of conflict of interest, and create a network metric for assessing conflicts of interest. In other words, the project seeks to investigate which types of industry funding are most likely to compromise the integrity of biomedical research and associated health outcomes.

# Researching digital journalism around the globe

As a journalism and mass communication scholar, Dr. Shuning Lu has conducted research centering on news engagement in the digital media environment. More specifically, she looks at the social and psychological mechanism of audience social media engagement with news content as well as news workers. She also investigates the political consequences of uncivil comments cropped up in comment sections on news websites. She primarily uses online survey experiments and computational social science methods to explore the pressing issues surrounding digital journalism across the globe.

Recently, Dr. Lu secured a $10,000 research grant from Mass Communication & Society Division of Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication (AEJMC) to study audience-journalist relationships on social media in the context of Hong Kong. With the generous support from AEJMC, she fielded several online survey experiments in Hong Kong and revealed the dynamics of audience-journalist interactions on various digital media platforms. In the opening presentation of NDSU Social Science Colloquium Series in September 2022, she shared the research findings on the mechanisms of audience intervention in online harassment of female

journalists in Hong Kong. Attendees included faculty and students from different departments of College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at NDSU.

As the inaugural Faculty Fellow of The Challey Institute at NDSU, Dr. Lu has been researching journalism innovation in both China and the U.S. With the funding, she studied news innovation in China with computational text analysis of patent



*Dr. Shuning Lu*

data. This study provided practical suggestions to news start-ups and other organizations on patent applications in China. In another project, Dr. Lu investigated how the arrangement of civil and uncivil content in a comment thread influenced audience's engagement behavior on news websites. The findings rendered practical implications to news organizations and social media companies regarding how to innovatively arrange comment threads with the aim to encourage user engagement.

**The study provided practical suggestions to news start-ups and other organizations on patent applications in China.**

# Making science accessible to the public

*Professor Walden advises on dissemination of science research*

An organizational communication scholar with a focus on employee-organization relationships, Dr. Justin Walden has been consulting for a while, mostly voluntarily. His current consulting work concerns external and internal communication in a project called "Track 1 of North Dakota Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (ND EPSCoR)." As communication lead with the Track 1 program, he advises on social media use and publicizing research related to material science and computational social science. Professor Walden assists research and program participants in disseminating their work to legislative, scientific, and citizen stakeholders in North Dakota.

In the past, Dr. Walden consulted voluntarily for Proof Artisan Distillers and Memory Café of the Red River Valley, a group that supports people who are assisting loved ones and friends with memory loss. Both are in Fargo, North Dakota. His strategic communication capstone course, Public Relations Campaigns, involves students consulting for non-profit organizations in Fargo-Moorhead through service-learning projects.

Some of Dr. Walden's recent research involves social media use by public relations (PR) practitioners. In a 2018 paper, he explored how PR practitioners view their role in voluntarily spreading organization-supportive messages using their social media accounts (e.g., Twitter). The study recommended that employees should not be expected to use their social media accounts to speak for their organizations - their personal and professional boundaries should be respected. In a previous study, he found that PR practitioners are expected to promote their organizations in their personal online profiles, and organizational priorities strongly dictate their posting behaviors. The study found that PR practitioners feel constant pressure to demonstrate occupational competence via their personal social networking accounts. However, it might also prevent them from showing their true selves and views online.
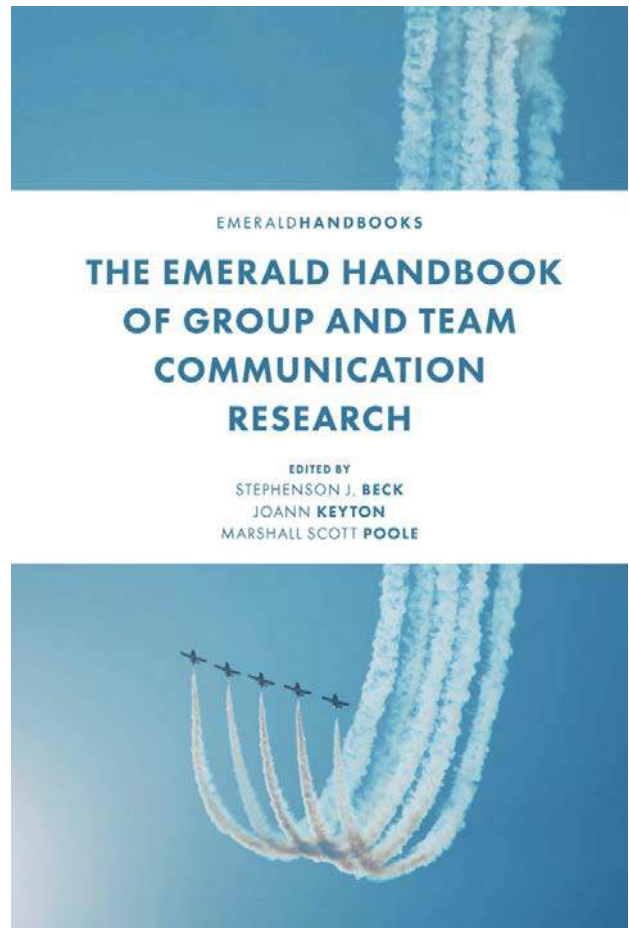
# Training school administrators on conflict management

## *Professor offers research insights for actionable solutions*

Twice a semester, Dr. Stephenson Beck leads trainings on conflict management and meeting facilitation for more than 50 principals, assistant principals, and other administrators in the West Fargo Public School District. Dr. Beck uses his research on groups and team communication to help administrators in their interaction with students, parents, and teachers throughout the school district. Using data collected from the school district, Dr. Beck has published several journal articles on group communication in education. He then uses these results as the foundation for his trainings, bringing the research process full circle.

# New handbook for group communication research

Dr. Beck is the lead editor of a new handbook of group communication research. Along with collaborators from the University of Illinois and North Carolina State University, the handbook represents the state of the field of group communication research. Dr. Beck brought together 62 international authors to write 36 chapters to establish what the research community knows about group and team communication, and perhaps more importantly, provide direction on what pressing issues should be investigated next.

EMERALD**HANDBOOKS**

**THE EMERALD HANDBOOK OF GROUP AND TEAM COMMUNICATION RESEARCH**

EDITED BY
STEPHENSON J. **BECK**
JOANN **KEYTON**
MARSHALL SCOTT **POOLE**

## Caitlin heads communication advisory board

NDSU Department of Communication alum Caitlin Stoecker has been made president of the Communication Advisory Board. Caitlin is a program manager at Bobcat Company, and leads a product development team focused on a strategic growth initiative. She also worked in corporate communications and philanthropy. The Communication Advisory Board connects current students with alumni, and aims to help students explore future career opportunities.



## Dr. Wang joins as new faculty member



Dr. Wan Wang (PhD, University of Texas at Austin) is a new Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication. Her research focuses on health, science, and risk communication. She is teaching Principles of Strategic Communication this Fall.

## Summer interns

The Department of Communication had 24 interns in Spring and another 24 in Summer 2022. Here are the interns from Summer: Andrew Haugland, Anne Kesler, Autumn Kranz, Cameron MacNabb, Carolyn Schultz, Christa Anderson, Christian Walth, Gavin Jeppesen, Jayden Fore, Jordan Holte, Kaia Lembke, Krysten Ehlers, Laura Baldwin, Lily Anderson, Lukas Schiermeister, Maddie Hoffman, Madison Knoblauch, Mariah Schatz, Mekenna Erickson, Mercedes Jirak, Miranda Tetzloff, Nate Hanson, Sara Quiring, and Zachary McCarron-Mathis.

## College award winners 2022

The department won three awards at the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science reception this year. Mir Rabby won the Graduate Research Award, Olivia Vogt won the Graduate Teaching Award, and Dr. Shuning Lu won the Outstanding Researcher Award.


**Why study communication at NDSU?**


**Why study Journalism?**


**Why study Strategic Communication?**

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