



NDSU

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER

Beck Becomes Department Chair of Communication Department

On July 1, 2017, Dr. Stephenson Beck became the chair of the Department of Communication. A native of Kansas City, Missouri, Dr. Beck is a proud husband and a father of two. He is excited to see where his new position takes him.

"I try to find ways to help others," Dr. Beck said when talking about his new position. Beck's passion for education and for helping others started early. He pursued a broadcast journalism degree at Brigham Young University in Utah. During his undergraduate studies, he took a year off to do mission work in France. Upon returning to BYU, he married, graduated and pursued a job with the Utah state government for a year. He later went on to get his master's at the University of Illinois and his Ph.D. at University of Kansas. Both degrees focused on organizational communication.

After an intense job search, Dr. Beck accepted a position at North Dakota State University as an assistant professor in 2008. He has stayed with the Department of Communication since, moving to associate professor in 2014 and earning tenure.

Dr. Beck truly enjoys working in the department. "I think it's the people," he said, "We have a really good faculty -- and then there's the students." Dr. Beck has a strong mentality towards education that he hopes to spread to the whole department.

He hopes to take the department to a new level by focusing on the quality of programs rather than quantity. This initiative started before Dr. Beck became chair by refining five majors into three.



Dr. Stephenson J. Beck, Associate Professor and Department Chair

As Dr. Beck described it, the department is striving to "not do a mediocre job in lots of areas, but do a great job in a few areas." He plans to continue this throughout his term.

Dr. Beck's goal to help others is a key part of his job. "I want to be able to help others, help others," he said. He is constantly looking for ways to work alongside faculty and students to help equip them with the skills to help those around them.

NDSU Unveils New Communication Course

Dr. Carrie Anne Platt is the very passionate instructor of a new communication course, COMM 189, so passionate that she calls it "her baby." COMM 189 was developed to help North Dakota State University students understand the communication program better. The course also gives students the opportunity to meet other students, faculty, and professionals at the start of their academic career. Dr. Platt would recommend the course for anyone starting college.

The course examines a different communication major each week (agricultural communication, management communication, journalism and strategic communication). Faculty present information on the majors as well as information on community involvement, clubs and activities, and global perspectives. Career professionals also present during COMM 189 to talk about day-to-day job activities, the skills needed to succeed, and job specifics.

The course helps students make connections between courses and majors and provides community building with classmates in the same major. COMM 189 reduces students' uncertainty in their communication major. It also gives them the confidence and ability to know they can figure it out and a more concrete idea of planning their academic path. According to Dr. Platt, "It is very rare a student knows exactly what to do when starting college; everything we can do to help students is time well spent."

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COMM 189 was originally designed to replace UNIV 189, but with a higher value and a more-in-depth educational experience. This course addresses resources more pertinent to the degree such as the TMLC for Adobe Creative Suite assistance. COMM 189 makes advising more productive and serves as an educational compass by helping students plan strategically the courses and activities desired to grow as a person, to support their academic path and develop their career goals.

Dr. Platt added that every person she emailed and asked to come in and speak, all said yes. "This is a testament to students in the program and who graduated in the program," said Platt. "They want to help people coming up behind them and help them succeed. That's amazing to me and is the best part of teaching."

Although this is very beneficial for the Department of Communication, the hope would be that all majors at NDSU could follow a program similar to this.

Communication Department Sees Highest Turnout for Comm Day

Every year, the Department of Communication hosts COMM Day to show what it has to offer to current and prospective students. During the event, NDSU students attend different panels of grad students, professionals in the field and clubs associated with the department.

COMM Day 2017 had the largest attendance the department has seen. This can be credited in part to the addition of the Northwestern Mutual professionalism panel. This panel consisted of Northwestern Mutual employees providing tips on how to land a job after graduation.

When asked how this panel influenced students, Dr. Elizabeth Crawford, Associate Professor, said, "A lot of students aren't really sure how to get that first professional job, and I think the panel helped with that."

Throughout the day there were four other panels offered. The professional panel, which consisted of Mike Vosburg (Forum), Nick Biewer (WDAY), Joseph Radske (KVRR), Katie Hasbargen (Microsoft), Adrienne Olson (Kilbourne Group) and Nate Callens (Jade Presents/ Owner/DJ at Boss DJ Services), discussed their use of communication degrees in the professional field.

The clubs panel introduced NDSU students to communication-related organizations currently available to them at NDSU such as Ad Club, PRSSA and Bison Information Network.

The grad student panel consisted of Malcolm Jason, Olivia Vogt, Tori Benders, Kelsey Earle and Dr. Zoltan Majdik. These graduate students talked about their experiences in the graduate program, why they decided to go into grad school and how the choice is affecting their professional career.



Dr. Stephenson J. Beck, Associate Professor and Department Chair introduces panelists at COMM Day 2017

Events like COMM Day allow the department to communicate what it offers to students and other professionals. The department is determined to continuously improve COMM Day by providing helpful information for those interested in the communication field.

If you are interested in attending or being a panelist for the next COMM Day, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Crawford at Elizabeth.C.Crawford@ndsu.edu or (701)-231-8720.



NDSU Students and Faculty attend the Professional Panel on Comm Day 2017

COMM 487 Fosters Leadership Skills in Communication Students

In order to find out more about COMM 487, we reached out to Dr. Cat Kingsley Westerman for a quick Q&A session. Simply put, the course is about organizational power and leadership. It is a senior-level seminar class, which is designed to complement the other classes in the Management Communication major. During this course, students complete a leadership training project.

What is the Leadership Training Project and the purpose behind it?

The origin of this project was that the NDSU Extension was creating leadership training for appointed, elected and emerging officials in the state of North Dakota. For Extension, the class helped them start to create a set of trainings to help officials in North Dakota learn about leadership.

For the students, they would learn about how to gather content on a topic related to leadership and how to package and present that information in a way that others can understand. In this case, it is applied to leadership specifically, but the skills of gathering information and packaging and presenting it are transferable to just about any job you might get.

What was the significance of the choice of the Air National Guard this semester?

We worked with Extension for the first two times I taught COMM 487 and unfortunately Extension was not able to work with us this year, and I had done a leadership training with the Air National Guard last spring.

I knew that Chief Master Sergeant Steve Crawford was interested in leadership and helping his direct reports become better leaders. So we made a plan to fit our training in with their normal monthly training days. In general, having students present to an external entity is more meaningful to them, but I think this one in particular really meant a lot to the students in the class. They felt the pressure of needing to represent both NDSU and themselves well when presenting to the Air National Guard, and as a result they put in the work and did an excellent job.

What do you hope students will learn from the Leadership Training project?

I hope students will gain some practical skills in terms of their ability to put on an excellent presentation and to know a good presentation when they see one. I hope they have a better idea of some strategies for how to take on a project like this. I also hope the students have learned about leadership, followership and teamwork from working with their fellow students.



Organizational Power & Leadership students and the Air National Guard contact (from left to right) Jenna Backes, Taylor Tachovsky, McKenzie DuFresne, Chief Master Sergeant Steve Crawford, Alexa Olson, Victoria Quast, Bernard Sweeney. Not pictured: Abby Nesbit, Kelsi Schuelke, Dr. Cat Kingsley Westerman

Newly Required Specialty Writing Course Enriches Communication Majors

Feedback plays an important role in curriculum development. The Department of Communication has received feedback that the curriculum could include more writing classes that meet the important oral and written skills required for a communication professional.



Communication 425: Specialty Writing class preparing articles for the department newsletter

After many decision-making meetings, the department decided to require students in strategic communication to take Specialty Writing (COMM 425) starting Fall 2017. This class is currently a hybrid elective taught by Melissa Vosen Callens, who has a Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Writing and Culture with a main focus in composition studies. She will continue to teach the class as it becomes a required course. The course will be offered every semester and possibly have more than one section in the future.

"We want to make sure we keep the class size small so I, or whoever may be teaching the course in the future, can give meaningful feedback instead of a checkmark for completed assignments," Dr. Vosen Callens said.

Vosen Callens explained the change as "exciting for me personally because this is something that I enjoy and went to school for, but I'm also excited for all of the students because we want to better prepare all of them for the workforce."

This class gives students the opportunity to prepare themselves for a wide variety of writing scenarios they may encounter as a communication professional, while also developing a portfolio that could be useful when interviewing after graduation.

The newly required class is divided into two sections. The first eight weeks cover ethics for a wide variety of writing scenarios, including social media. The second half of the semester is focused on the fundamentals of writing within the professional industry. During this time, students learn the different genres of writing while creating a professional portfolio.

This course covers communication writing genres strategic communications professionals will encounter, such as media pitches, news releases, internal memos, social media posts, and a newsletter.

The course, being a hybrid course, allows students to get the "best of both worlds," according to Dr. Vosen Callens by meeting in class and allowing personal feedback, but also having the online component allowing for peer review by other students.

Graduate Student Conducts Research on Organizational Communication in Oil Industry

Living in North Dakota helped Josh Parcha to develop his most recent article published in *Communication Research Reports*, titled “How Much Should a Corporation Communicate About Corporate Social Responsibility: Reputation and Amount of Information Effects on Stakeholders’ CSR-Induced Attributions.” The article focuses on the oil industry, something he has a unique view of due to living in the oil-boom state of North Dakota.

“I’ve learned a lot about how corporations communicate their social responsibility,” said Parcha. “One interesting thing I learned is that corporations in the petroleum refining industry tend to talk about their social responsibility in similar ways, even if the corporation is a large corporation... or a small corporation.”

Parcha received his M.S. in communication and B.S. in mathematics from Eastern Michigan University. His focus is specifically in organizational communication, because “I think that organizations have a lot of influence in society...I am trying to see if corporations can change how society members view controversial social issues.” He chose to pursue his Ph.D. at NDSU because of the “exceptional faculty in the Communication Department.”

“I knew I would be learning from the best!” said Parcha, “I am a more confident scholar and teacher because of the skills I have learned during my time at NDSU.”

Parcha currently teaches classes in public speaking, human communication and interpersonal communication at NDSU. He loves the work that he’s doing, both in research and in the classroom.



Josh Parcha, Ph.D. Student & Undergraduate Instructor

Parcha hopes to continue to engage in research, teaching and service after completing the doctoral program. “I am looking forward to being an assistant professor,” he said.

Former New York Times Photographer Teaches Journalism Capstone Course

Visiting Assistant Professor Chris Walker is bringing his experience in photojournalism and multi-discipline background to enhance communication coursework for students. “My background is in journalism,” Walker said. Walker’s undergraduate degree was in journalism. Photography was something he enjoyed doing and ended up working with. “It will be nice being able to nurture folks on all sides,” said Walker.

Walker has history in both academia and in the journalism field. He photographed for *The New York Times* and The Associated Press, as well as being a part of a three-person team that became a finalist in the 2000 Pulitzers for Investigative Reporting.

Walker is teaching several courses on campus, one of which will be convergence media. “In spring we are offering convergence media, which is one of the capstones,” Walker said. A journalism capstone has not been offered in the recent past. The convergence media course will enhance the curriculum of the journalism program by giving students an opportunity to hone their skills and produce a product which accumulates all of the skills they have learned up until that point.

He aims to structure the class similarly to the structure of a modern newsroom. “We’ll walk in and have editors, producers and copy people,” Walker said. “No doubt we’ll have people who’ve had photography with Ross (Collins) and the rest will be writers.”

The course will consist of a real-world application of communication skills in producing a media package of magazine quality. “I’ve taught something similar twice before at other colleges, so I’m kind of looking forward to it,” said Walker. Although the course is geared toward journalism students, it is open for any communication student to take.

Walker has also been teaching the introduction to media writing class at NDSU. In this course, he teaches students how to craft concise, informative and credible messages to be distributed by media outlets.

For some students, this class is their first encounter with AP style. “It’s hard to work with folks coming straight into a class and have never had a formal AP-based writing class before,” Walker said. “At this point you are building a car from the ground up.”

By teaching both intro to media writing and convergence media, he is able to actively develop students to become competent and exceptional communicators. Convergence media, “will hopefully be more painting and



Chris Walker, Visiting Assistant Professor

polishing. It’s a little more relaxed environment but also the product, once it comes out, should be really worth working for,” Walker said.

The standards and production of news is constantly changing and evolving. “How the current generation of college students consumes information is different from how I was taught it years ago,” said Walker. Instructors such as Walker are

"How the current generation of college students consumes information is different from how I was taught it years ago."

educating students on the newest technologies, and the courses he is teaching provide students with necessary skills that will be used when they enter the workforce.

NDSU Offers Several Communication Related Clubs

The North Dakota State University Department of Communication offers a variety of clubs and organizations to help students have practical experiences along with their coursework. These clubs include AdClub, PRSSA, The Spectrum, Bison Information Network and KNDS.

AdClub is a national competition run every year. During the Fall and Spring semester, the team works with one client to create a national advertising campaign with a set budget. Fall semester consists of researching data for the campaign, while the spring semester focuses more on the creation of the campaign. AdClub has won multiple awards, including "Best in Presentation" during the spring 2017 competition. Many students have also met their current employer through networking at these competitions. Dr. Elizabeth Crawford advises the teams each year and has worked on many campaigns in the past.

PRSSA, Public Relations Student Society of America, is the main organization for working with public relations. The purpose of the organization is to enhance your education, broaden your network and launch your career. Hannah Keogh, President of PRSSA, mentioned that the organization strives to fill the gaps of knowledge students feel they have. Next semester, they plan to hold a writing workshop and a crisis communication simulation.

The college newspaper, *The Spectrum*, continues to be a successful student organization that covers campus and local news. The staff is comprised mostly of students who produce a twice-weekly newspaper. The Spectrum is continuing to grow its physical presence as well as its online presence. In 2016 The Spectrum's Sex & Romance special edition won first place in the special edition category at the National Associated Collegiate Press Conference. According to the current editor-in-chief Jack Hastings, "The Spectrum is focusing on putting out an exceptional product along with special editions once a month." Hastings said that he is proud of the work his staff put in for fall semester. "I'm very excited to see the progress we will make in the upcoming semester," said Hastings.



NDSU Ad Club relieves a little stress by posing for a fun picture before leaving for the National Student Advertising Competition in Minneapolis during the Spring 2017 Semester

Bison Information Network News is NDSU's TV station. It broadcasts live every week on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and airs on Cable ONE in the Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo area. Along with their weekly newscast, BIN produces a comedic talk show called, "2 Dudes in a Room" with co-hosts Cordell Wagner and Zack Schulte. This year BIN won second place for the regularly scheduled news category at the North Dakota Professional Communicators Conference. Rich Lodeywk has been with BIN since its inception in 2007 and has acted as the organization's advisor. He will be stepping down starting spring 2018. Lodeywk's guidance has helped to shape BIN into what it is today and what it continues to strive for: bringing information and quality content to NDSU and the FM area.

NDSU's student-run radio station, 96.3 KNDS, continues to provide independent and alternative programming to the campus and the Fargo area. The radio station provides a voice for students and a place to express themselves while gaining professional experience. KNDS held its annual block party at the Great Plains Ballroom in the Memorial Union on December 2, 2017. It was a free event for students to attend and several bands played live music. These bands included Free Truman, Rounding Third, Under the Pavilion and Revelsoun.



Members of the 2016 Spectrum newspaper pose after receiving the first place award in the special edition category at the National Associated Collegiate Press Conference for their "Sex & Romance" special edition.



This newsletter was prepared by the Fall NDSU Speciality Writing class instructed by Assistant Professor Dr. Vosen Callens. In addition to each student contributing to the articles above, they were divided into the following teams that specialized in different areas of the newsletter:

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