



School of Journalism  
and Mass Communication  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Vilas Insider

SPRING 2020

School of Journalism and Mass Communication



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## From the Director



Dear J-School Alums,

In this time of global uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to reach out with warm wishes and hope that you and yours are safe and healthy. These are incredibly difficult times and we know that the entire J-School community is feeling the many effects of this pandemic, both large and small.

With strong guidance from the university, we've taken measures to ensure the safety of J-School students, staff and faculty. We are focused on ensuring that instruction and administrative services continue and that faculty and staff have the resources they need to work from

home. We are committed to keeping this community strong and to pulling through this together.

While we remain focused on the immediate future and on managing this crisis, we also want to share with you some of the accomplishments of our faculty, staff and students over this past year. You'll read about some of those successes in this newsletter, but I'd also like to highlight Professor Lindsay Palmer, who received a Vilas Associates Award in support of her important research on ethics in international news reporting and Faculty Associate Stacy Forster who last year took home an Early Career Award from the College of Letters & Science.

Students in the magazine class also produced a spectacular 18th edition of Curb. Students in the broadcast news class produced a 20th anniversary edition of the Badger Report. And in Deb Pierce's strategic communication classes, students created campaigns for real-life clients Taliesin Preservation and Camp Hometown Heroes. That's the Wisconsin Idea in practice!

It's because of colleagues such as these that we're one of the best journalism and mass communication programs in the country.

Finally, I am about to complete my

sixth and last year as director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I want to thank my faculty and staff colleagues for all their support over the past few years. It's an amazing group of kind and collegial individuals, and it's been a pleasure working with them. I've also been gratified by all the support from the vast network of J-School alumni and friends. One of the true pleasures of the job has been meeting and getting to know so many of you.

But now it's time for a transition. I'm happy to share that the next director of the School will be Professor Hernando Rojas. Needless to say, we'll be in very good hands. I hope you will join me in extending a warm welcome to Professor Rojas as he moves into his new role this summer.

Thank you for being a part of this community.

Stay healthy and stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hemant Shah".

Hemant Shah,  
Director, School of Journalism and  
Mass Communication

## Welcoming New Director Hernando Rojas



Professor Hernando Rojas joined the faculty in 2010. An internationally recognized expert on the role of journalism in public deliberation within societies experiencing civic rupture and social distrust, Rojas has made important contributions to understanding how citizens interpret and use news and other information to participate in political deliberation and form their political opinions. He previously served as director of the Latin American, Caribbean and

Iberian Studies Program and for three years was the editor of "The International Journal of Public Opinion Research," one of the most important academic journals in the field of public opinion. Rojas regularly teaches one of the J-School's gateway courses, Introduction to Mass Communication, as well as courses on international communication, public opinion and research methods, and graduate-level seminars on technology and global communications.



# Grad Student Jo Lukito's Real-World Impact

By Krista Eastman



"A lot of the time when we talk about academic research, we ask questions about whether it's going to have public value," Lukito says. "My family doesn't come from academia, I am a first-generation college student, so it was super exciting to see the research I was doing have this real-world value."

Lukito's work has brought awareness to the potential perils of including tweets in news stories.

"It's been really exciting to talk to different newsrooms about their code of conduct or their ethical considerations for using a tweet," Lukito says. "For me those conversations have been very positive and my hope is that journalists are thinking a lot more about how to go about verifying or contacting someone whose tweet they want to use."

As she finishes up her dissertation and prepares to take a faculty position this fall at the University of Texas at Austin, Lukito says that the J-School's especially collaborative approach to research will be making the trip with her.

"When you do research in that kind of environment, it's a lot more rigorous and a lot more fun," Lukito says. "There is something special about the way the J-School does research and that's something I want to carry with me wherever I go, including Austin."

On April 18, 2019, soon after the Mueller Report on Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. election was made public, J-School graduate student Josephine ("Jo") Lukito received an email while toiling away on her preliminary exams. For years, she'd been researching how major news outlets had amplified the tweets of Russian trolls by including them in news stories and now came some big news: her research appeared in a footnote on page 27 of the Mueller Report. By July 2019, she was appearing on CNN to discuss her findings.



## Vilas Insider

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Front page photo: Alesha Guenther and Alyssa Hui on the set of the Badger Report. Photo by Colleen Muraca (BA'20).



BRYCE RICHTER





Spring J202 instructors and teaching assistants from top left to right, Brian Lepine, Professor Lucas Graves, Faculty Associate Stacy Forster, SK Tay, Matt Minich, Hyungjin Gill. From bottom left to right: Gryffin Loya, Xinyi Wang and Brandon Storlie

# J-School's Model Curriculum Turns 20

By Colleen Muraca and Krista Eastman

Twenty years ago, low-rise jeans were in, flip phones were going mainstream and the J-School Class of 2020 was just beginning to practice their skills in basic communication. At the same time, news media, advertising and public relations were all starting to change in major ways, and Kathleen Bartzen Culver was busy hammering out a brand new course to take on those seismic shifts.

The school was preparing to launch a new and innovative two-track curriculum that would converge the School's strategic communication and reporting instruction. Future J-School students, regardless of specialty, would cross-pollinate, the goal to provide them with an in-depth understanding of the entire media landscape. Culver was hired to create J202, Mass Media Practices, the foundational course for the new curriculum.

"We had some nay-sayers," Culver says. "We had students who thought they were going to do the old way of siloed areas of expertise. It took a little convincing that this change was going to be beneficial and was going to meet the emerging world of technology."

The J-School, as it turned out, was ahead of the curve.

"The groundbreaking curriculum happened at Wisconsin because this is where we truly take research and use it to inform our teaching," Culver says. "Scholars here recognized early on that the internet was going to disrupt everything, and they used that to inform the curriculum and meet the disrupted world."

In 2000, students took on the robust challenge of J202 for the first time, completing the six-credit bootcamp

course that is now a shared memory (and sometimes a common point of commiseration) for two decades' worth of J-School alums. The course brought expected improvements — better preparation for teaching assistants, uniform training across writing and production assignments, and an admirable work ethic. But the unintended effects were particularly gratifying.

"One thing that fundamentally changed with this curriculum has been a stronger sense of community in the J-School," Culver says. "Our students truly learn how to work with each other and depend on each other."

While 20 years may sound like a long time, the curriculum is anything but stagnant.

"One of the most important things

about this curriculum,” Director Hemant Shah says, “is that it’s very adaptable and has changed to meet the needs of students and industry many times.”

“The faculty built something that could change and improve over time,” Culver says. “This wasn’t something that had happened in the past. In many cases, a static curriculum was in place for decades.”

Some recent changes include the addition of a course focused on recognizing, interpreting and using data in stories that is taught simultaneously with J202, a social media marketing course and a sports communications certificate program.

“When we launched J202, some students weren’t even using Google as a search engine, there was no Facebook or Twitter, there was no conception of tracking metrics for the launch of an advertising campaign,” Culver says.

Now, the Badger Report livestreams on YouTube, Curb magazine optimizes for digital and many courses have a strong emphasis on digital communication, including such advanced concepts courses as health communication in the information age and technology for social change.

Shah says the converged curriculum has helped the School create not only well-rounded practitioners, but also informed citizens, smart consumers and analytical thinkers.

“A lot of employers are eager to hire our students not only because they are prepared for the professional world, but because they understand why their work is important in the big picture,” Shah says. “It’s crucial to understand why things are done, not just how they are done.”

## School News

### Professor Kathleen Bartzen Culver Wins Distinguished Teaching Award *By Krista Eastman*



Kathleen Bartzen Culver, associate professor and James E. Burgess Chair in Journalism Ethics, has won the William H. Kiekhofer Teaching Award. She is one of 10 faculty members across campus to have been chosen to receive a distinguished teaching award, an honor given out since 1953 to recognize the university’s finest educators.

Culver has been teaching in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication since 1999 and is perhaps best known for teaching Journalism 202, the six-credit bootcamp course famous for its rigor and results. She also teaches courses in graphic design, media law and ethics and directs the Center for Journalism Ethics.

“Katy is a brilliant educator, and this award is well-deserved,” J-School Director Hemant Shah says. “The award also reflects the high value the School places on teaching excellence. In fact, this is the second year in a row that one of our professors has won a distinguished teaching award.”

Stacy Forster, a faculty associate and colleague, says Culver has been the driving force behind J202, which has become a model for journalism and mass communication programs around the world and remains a backbone of the J-School curriculum.

“In her 20 years of teaching at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Katy has positively influenced literally thousands of undergraduate students, graduate students, colleagues, peers at other universities and community members,” Forster says.

“It’s one of the great privileges of my life to teach in the J-School,” Culver says. “Our students excel through sweat and smarts, our colleagues encourage innovation and our alumni remain so dedicated and supportive long after their time on campus. I can’t imagine a better place to do something I love.”

**W** ALL WAYS  
FORWARD

Year after year, J-School alumni make a bet for the future. They invest in our students, helping us deliver experiences that make our program among the best in the country. Your gift helps us remodel learning spaces, develop new courses and support students in internships and hands-on activities. To give today, please visit [go.wisc.edu/givesjmc](http://go.wisc.edu/givesjmc)





### New Scholarship Honors Jon Wolman's Legacy *By Colleen Muraca*



In April 2019, the J-School community lost Jon Wolman '72, a passionate Badger and esteemed editor and journalist. To honor Wolman's dedication to the field of journalism and the J-School, his wife, Debbie Lamm, and friend and fellow alum

Owen Ullmann created the Jon Wolman Scholarship in Journalism.

A former Washington bureau chief and executive director at the Associated Press and editor and publisher of the Detroit News, Wolman was known for his generosity, intelligence and open mind.

"Jon was a kind, thoughtful and helpful man, but behind that soft exterior beat the heart of a dogged and skilled journalist," says Scott Angus, J-School alum and former editor of The Janesville Gazette. "I loved spending time with him and picking that bountiful brain."

"The Wolman Scholarship is a fitting tribute to a Madison native son and UW alum who exemplified the very best attributes of journalism: accuracy, fairness, inclusiveness and insight," Ullman says. "As an editor, he championed the weak

and dispossessed, cast a bright light on corruption and was an avid booster of the community he served."

Throughout his 45-year career, Wolman never forgot his roots and stayed connected to the J-School community. He served on the Board of Visitors from 2009 to 2015 and in 2019 helped create a matching donation for the J-School's first Day of Badger fundraising event that ultimately netted more than \$28,000 for the J-School.

This spring the first Jon Wolman Scholarship in Journalism was awarded to Alexandria Millet, a J-School student planning a career in education reporting. "Jon would be proud to know this scholarship will help produce a young journalist to follow in his giant footsteps," Ullman says.

## Alumni Q&A



The J-School is excited to announce that experienced communications professional Pete Long '06 will join us next fall as a faculty associate. We caught up with Long about his past J-School experience and his future plans for the classroom.

#### **Title and Organization:**

Pete Long, Associate Faculty Associate, UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication (Fall 2020)

#### **Graduation year and degree:**

2006, B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communication and History

#### **How has your time in the J-school served you?**

Like many of our students, my top academic goal from day one on campus was to gain admission to the J-School. That aspiration set in motion a path that afforded me many experiences to grow as a student, a writer and a member of the UW-Madison community.

Upon admission I pursued the reporting track, fueled by dreams of becoming a magazine features writer. A chance guest lecture inspired me to focus my career search on business journalism, which ultimately led me to take a business management job upon graduation to gain first-hand experience.

An MBA and a career in brand management, marketing and strategy followed. The skills I developed in the J-School — communicating complex

ideas to a diversity of stakeholders, asking strategic questions to expose underlying opportunities, using creativity to derive value out of established frameworks — proved critical in every job I've held since.

#### **What drew you to teaching strategic communication here?**

I am so thankful for the opportunity to teach our future communications leaders through my lens of "client-side" experience managing consumer packaged goods brands like Huggies, Kotex and Oscar Mayer. My initial course will be J345, which is not only an introduction to strategic communications, but also a group-based simulator of an advertising agency "pitch" to a hypothetical client. My years partnering with agency professionals will help me bring the experience to life for our students at a critical time in their career search. I am excited to be able to give back in this way to the school and university that gave me so much!



ANDY MANIS

We are sad to share that 2019 Distinguished Service Award winner Allee Willis '69 died in December. Willis was a hit songwriter, legendary thrower of themed parties and creative force of nature who studied on campus during its most turbulent era. She is pictured here on her last visit to campus, presenting last September at the Class of 1969 50-Year Reunion.



This hard-working graduate student committee organized this spring's Crossroads Conference, an interdisciplinary conference on communication. From top left to right, Kiran Bhatia, Brian Lepine and Carlos Dávalos. From bottom left to right, Xinyi Wang, Kruthika Kamath and Gryffin Loya.



Badger Report students Lucas Latterell and Caitlin Rowe confer with Journalism 425 instructor Pat Hastings. Hastings has taught audio and video journalism in the J-School for 20 years and recently earned a "distinguished" prefix to her faculty associate title, a rare designation reserved for staff whose performance "[requires] extensive experience and advanced knowledge and skills."



## J202 Quiz

As a J-Schooler, J202 is the first class taken after being admitted. It is impossible to forget the quizzes that started off each lecture on Monday morning to test students on AP style, grammar and current events. If you were enrolled in J202 now, how well would you do?

1. Cancer is the nation's No. 2 killer, blamed for about 6 hundred-thousand deaths a year, so even slight changes in the cancer death rate can have a big impact. The rate fell more than 2 percent, matching the drop in 2017. (3 errors)
2. The "nut graf" should come — at the latest — by the fifth paragraph in the story. (true/false)
3. What movie won Best Picture in the 2020 Oscars?
4. Fill in the blank: When evaluating information, be \_\_\_\_\_, not cynical.
5. This year marks the 20th anniversary of what J-School class?
6. More than 60 percent of people with Nigerian ancestry who are at least 25 have a Bachelor's Degree or higher, which is more than twice the general U.S. population rate of 29%, according to 2017 Census data. (4 errors)

- Answers
1. Cancer is the nation's No. 2 killer, blamed for about 600,000 deaths a year, so even slight changes in the cancer death rate can have a big impact. The rate fell more than 2%, matching the drop in 2017. True.
  2. Parasite.
  3. Skeptical.
  4. J202.
  5. More than 60% of people with Nigerian ancestry who are at least 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is more than twice the general U.S. population rate of 29%, according to 2017 census data. (4 errors)