



School of Journalism
and Mass Communication
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Vilas Insider

SPRING 2021

School of Journalism and Mass Communication



Day of the Badger
Raises Over \$31,000

Teaching Assistants:
Making the Student
Experience Possible

J-School Awards
Undergrad
Scholarships to 100%
of Applicants

Q&A: J-School
Alums at the
Milwaukee Bucks



Dear J-School Friends,

At the conclusion of my first academic year as director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, I wanted to take some time to reflect, not only on the challenges this year presented, but on the achievements, resilience and creativity of our faculty, staff, students and alumni.

First, I want to recognize our alumni community. Alums and former Board of Visitors members, with leadership from Ben Deutsch (BA'85) and Peter Fox (BA'73, MA'82), came together this spring to raise a \$10,000 match for our fundraising efforts during Day of the Badger. This allowed us to raise \$31,188 in total from 138 donors in support of current students.

While the challenge of switching instruction to a hybrid model of some virtual learning and some in-person classes was unlike anything we'd ever faced before, the J-School found new ways to present course material and engage with one another. Students and instructors not only adapted to new conditions, they found innovative new ways to take their work beyond the virtual classroom.

Students in the magazine class produced "Curb: Pause," which invited readers to take an intentional pause to reflect on 2020. Students in the broadcast news class rose to the challenge of producing The Badger Report remotely, sharing the latest news via livestream. Both *Curb* and The Badger Report were recognized for their outstanding work with awards from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association and the Milwaukee Press Club. Students in the account planning class had the opportunity to work with the UW-Madison Joint Information Center to analyze the university's COVID-19 communications and provide recommendations for the future.

Although the pandemic has prevented in-person gatherings, our graduate students offered their annual Communication Crossroads Conference virtually, showcasing research on a variety of subjects.

Research has also pressed forward, including important projects examining political polarization from the Center for Communication and Civic Renewal, and fact-checking projects to combat COVID-19 misinformation from the Mass Communication Research Center's Computational Approaches and Message Effects Research group.

Our faculty and staff have continued striving for excellence in research and teaching. I'm proud to share that Professor Lucas Graves received a Vilas Associates Award, providing funding to support his research. Deb Pierce earned the Distinguished prefix in recognition of her outstanding work as a faculty associate instructor. Additionally, Katy Bartzen Culver was named the 2020 Scripps Howard Teacher of the Year, a national honor recognizing her remarkable career as an educator.

The J-School community never ceases to amaze me, and for that I am eternally grateful. Here's to a happy and healthy summer and brighter days ahead!

On, Wisconsin!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Rojas'.

Hernando Rojas
Director, School of
Journalism and Mass
Communication

Gift Impact

Hiebing Announces Chancellor's Scholarship for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Amid calls for racial and social justice across the country, Hiebing, Madison's largest marketing agency, had a critical question to answer: Were they doing enough to address

racial inequity at their organization and in the marketing industry as a whole? Upon reflection, the leadership team decided unanimously the answer was no and set out to make a change. Recognizing the importance of education as a pathway to opportunity, they decided to establish scholarships benefitting underrepresented populations to help attract and support aspiring marketing professionals of color. One of these scholarships is a UW-

Madison Chancellor's Scholarship for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Their contribution of \$150,000 was matched by anonymous donors for a total of \$300,000. "We hope supporting underserved students on their higher education journey will lead to fundamental change in the professional makeup of our own agency and Madison's professional community as a whole," said Dave Florin, CEO of Hiebing.

J-School Awards Undergraduate Scholarships to 100% of Applicants

Earlier this year, the School of Journalism and Mass Communication announced the winners of its undergraduate scholarships for the 2020–21 academic year. In total, 178 students applied for scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$18,000. This year, the School was able to award scholarships to 100% of students who applied. The J-School awarded a total of \$210,800 to students, who received an average of \$1,184.27 in scholarship support.

The J-School has a variety of scholarships available to undergraduate students, funded by generous donors including alumni, friends of the school and other partners. The School offers both merit- and need-based scholarships, which are awarded based on financial need, academics, study area and involvement.

Senior Abby Moeckler received the Cedric and Ethel Parker Scholarship. Abby is a transfer student from Illinois, a fourth-generation Badger and the vice president of the Association for Women in Sports Media. Since the scholarship has no living donors, she wrote a letter to the J-School to express her thanks for the support.



Senior Abby Moeckler was one of 178 J-Schoolers to receive undergraduate scholarships this year. Moeckler received the Cedric and Ethel Parker Scholarship.

“The J-School encompassed all I was looking for in an academic program. While I’ve always had a passion for writing and sports, I wasn’t exactly sure how I would be able to intertwine my two interests. When the J-School created the Certificate in Sports Communication in 2019, I was ecstatic,” Moeckler said. “I am beyond grateful for this scholarship, which will assist me in beginning my first post-graduate job working for the Philadelphia 76ers & New Jersey Devils. This scholarship encourages me to push myself in my new positions and I’m honored to have earned this.”

VilasInsider

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Cover: Vilas Hall is pictured at the University of Wisconsin–Madison on June 17, 2020. The building is home to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. (Photo by Bryce Richter / UW–Madison)

Day of the Badger 2021



Faculty and staff celebrate Day of the Badger, an annual fundraising event. Proceeds go to the Annual Fund, which provides discretionary funding for things like student scholarships.

By the numbers:

Thanks to our generous donors, this annual fundraiser was a huge success. Here’s a look at how we did:

\$31,188

raised from 138 gifts
in 1,848 minutes

35

first-time donors to the
J-School

\$10,000

match from 10 gener-
ous former Board of
Visitors Members: Gift
leaders Ben Deutsch and
Peter Fox, Paul Counsell,
Shoshana Dichter, Cindy
Mori, Sharon Stark, Carol
Toussaint, Betsy Wyatt, Ali
Zelenko, David Zweifel



Former J-School teaching assistants pose with current Professors Mike Wagner (far left) and Katy Culver (far right) at the 2018 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference. (Photo by Bethany Swain)

Teaching Assistants Make the J-School Experience Possible *By Ashley Toy*

When you think back on your time in the J-School, what do you most remember? Tracking down a source for the perfect quote for a story? Late nights working on an advertising campaign book? Waiting by an elevator door in Vilas Hall that never opened?

For many of us, these memories and more are underscored by the instructors who taught us everything we know. We remember not only the faculty and staff, but also the teaching assistants who made our J-School experiences possible through every lecture, discussion, assignment, project and exam.

A vital part of the academic experience in many J-School classes, TAs have a range of responsibilities from leading discussions and labs to presenting lectures. Much of the work they do is behind the scenes, like grading assignments and helping to develop course curriculum. All of this crucial work is on top of their roles as researchers and graduate students.

“Our TAs are incredible,” said Professor Mike Wagner. “They live in this tension between being the professional scholars and teachers that they are, on the one hand, and being

students themselves, learning deeply in a discipline on the other hand. They embody that space with great energy, skill and compassion.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, TAs have played an important role in maintaining the high quality of instruction for which the J-School is known. One excellent example of this is PhD student and teaching assistant Xerxes Minocher, who received the College of Letters & Science’s Continuity of Instruction Award in the 2020 Campuswide Teaching Assistant Awards.

“Being a TA takes a lot of work, but I find it really gratifying. Our students are caring and smart individuals, and I appreciate the opportunity of getting to work with them in small classroom settings where we can talk about the material and also discuss how it relates to their own real-life experiences,” Minocher said. “Being a TA is a big responsibility, and as TAs we have to do much to lead and teach, but I also like that I get to learn from my students, too.”

Research MA student Arina Tveleneva echoed the experience of learning through teaching. She received

the School’s Excellence in Teaching Award earlier this year for her work as a TA.

“I’m very grateful for this opportunity because I learned a lot about the educational system from the other side,” Tveleneva said. “I’ve spent most of my life being a student and with this experience I finally got insight into what goes into developing learning objectives for a class and preparing assignments and discussions.”

While the job of a TA is often challenging, their hard work and dedication do not go unnoticed by students. “TAs are the folks our seniors seek out for a selfie and a thank you at graduation,” Wagner said.

Those graduating seniors go on to be professionals, researchers and sometimes educators themselves, taking the skills and experience imparted upon them by their J-School TAs out into the world.

We asked @uwjsjmc Instagram followers who their favorite TA was and why. Here are some of their responses:

@dana_munro: Hyungjin Gill! He guided us through J202 so well and was patient with us and proud when we succeeded.

@tiamartin10: Elaine Almeida. She’s super receptive of students’ needs and incredibly funny.

@ana_demendoza: Brandon Storlie, he really guided me and supported me since I was new to the Midwest area.

@cailyn_schiltz: Shreenita Ghosh! She juggles SO MUCH between multiple sections, and we appreciate her.

@olivia.fulton: Gryffin Loya! He made an online lab so engaging and always goes above and beyond!

@maddiebergstrom: Danny Parker!! She gave us super good feedback and made J202 lab so much fun!

Professor Lucas Graves Receives Vilas Associates Award

By Emily Knepple



Lucas Graves, an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, is a 2021 recipient

of the Vilas Associates Award. This award is given by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education and “recognizes new and ongoing research of the highest quality and significance.” Graves’ research focuses on news and politics and specifically political fact-checking.

“I mainly study the way that news organizations are changing in a digital media world and in particular, a lot of my research up to now has focused on the rise of fact-checking outlets in the United States,” Graves said.

Graves plans on looking specifically at the code of principles that fact-checkers have developed to make sure they’re all using the best methods. Amid a surge in the United States throughout the past decade and previous presidential elections, fact-checking groups have continued to diversify rapidly.

Over time, the fact-checking movement has become more global

and different types of groups exist internationally. Graves shares that some groups are based more in the traditional newsroom, while others are independent or exist at universities.

“One of the great things about working at UW–Madison is that there is so much support internally for our research and this kind of grant is so crucial when you’re launching a new project,” Graves said. “Grants like this and the fall research competition really make it a supportive climate for academics who are sort of early in their careers or later on but are trying to turn in a new direction to launch a new product,” he said.

Graves, who has been with the J-School since 2012, is excited about the possibility of more extensive research due to the funding. As more fact-checking organizations continue to pop up, those studying the role of news in the digital age must continue to ask questions and use available resources.

Faculty Associate Deb Pierce Earns “Distinguished” Prefix

By Emily Knepple



Debra Pierce recently earned a “distinguished” prefix to add to her title of “faculty associate,” a designation reserved for staff whose performance “[requires] extensive experience

and advanced knowledge and skills.” With both a BA in Journalism and an MS in Business from UW–Madison, Pierce is a true Badger who is actively helping the future creative thinkers of tomorrow.

What are you most proud of from your time working in the J-School?

I’m proud to be one of the first instructors in our department to create original courses for the digital studies certificate when it was first launched on campus. Over the last several years, I created different advanced-level strategic communications courses, which helped expand our course offering in this important area of our curriculum, and all of those classes are digital heavy. But what really fires me up is simply helping students as they navigate their first career and job paths. I’ve helped hundreds of students network to find positions, and now, some of my earliest students are hiring my current ones. It’s a great way to “pay it forward.” As a prior UW student

myself, my own instructors did that for me, now it’s my turn to do the same for our students.

What advice would you give to current J-Schoolers?

My biggest piece of advice: Use all the great resources we have here at UW–Madison! From career courses to student orgs, advisors, instructors and professional guest speakers — or even LinkedIn Learning videos and training certificates — there are a lot of ways students can explore all the great advertising and PR career paths that are available.

When we say J-School, what do you think of?

Our community. The J-School isn’t just a department or a building on campus. It’s a community of supportive students, friends, faculty, staff and alumni who are passionate about their experiences here at UW. #OnWisconsin!

J-School Alums Make an Impact at the Milwaukee Bucks



Barry Baum (BA'92), Chief Communications Officer, Milwaukee Bucks and Fiserv Forum, and **Arvind Gopalratnam (BA'04)**, Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility, Milwaukee Bucks, and Executive Director, Milwaukee Bucks Foundation

How did your time in the J-School help you get to where you are today?

Arvind: My experiences in the J-School let me pursue an education that supported my personal and

professional interests. The curriculum and, more importantly, the faculty helped shape who I am today.

Barry: The J-School gave me the tools to become a better and more thoughtful writer and to grasp the most important part of a story. It taught me how to tell a story clearly, accurately and with vivid details.

With so much going on with the Milwaukee Bucks, what efforts are you most excited about right now?

Arvind: Our commitment to

excellence on and off the court. Through our work in criminal justice reform, economic empowerment, community health and wellness, and youth education and mentorship, I'm excited to bring a voice to the voiceless and advocate for systematic change alongside all marginalized members of our community.

Barry: I'm very excited about our extensive health and safety plans to continue to bring fans back into Fiserv Forum. I'm also proud to be part of an organization that is a leader in the fight for racial and social justice and a supporter of small, minority-owned businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19.

What advice would you give to a J-Schooler who wants to do what you do?

Arvind: There is no exact blueprint to get to any one of our jobs. Establish, build and invest in the network of relationships required to connect you to an industry, profession or career you want.

Barry: Apply for internships in public relations, network with people in the field (check if they went to UW), take on assignments with enthusiasm, ask questions, don't be the first person to leave work for the day and always remember that details matter.

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



Events



Despite the restrictions on in-person gatherings, graduate students successfully organized a virtual Communication Crossroads Conference, an interdisciplinary conference on communication. The conference featured keynote speaker J-School alum Yini Zhang (PhD'20; highlighted box on left).



J-School senior Chelsea Hylton participated in a photo shoot as part of the university's Smart Restart plan to encourage safe and healthy behaviors for students returning to campus in fall 2020. (Photo: Bryce Richter, UW-Madison)



We are sad to share that J-School alum Meg Jones (BA'84) died in December. Jones was a beloved reporter for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel for more than two decades. She was given the J-School's Distinguished Service Award posthumously in April 2021. (Photo: Mark Hoffmann, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

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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, course material and current events. If you were enrolled in J202 now, how well would you do?

1. Fix this sentence: The state Superintendent candidates talked about the way they would affect change in Wisconsin classrooms, putting emphasis on their approaches to improving rural broadband access, addressing the school voucher system, and decentralizing the departments work. (4 errors)
2. What do we call the element of audio and video that reflects the environment where the audio or video is being recorded and allows the audience to feel like it's there with the content creator?
3. Although she didn't win for record of the year, this female artist broke the Grammy record for most awards won by any singer and tied the record as the living person with the most Grammys.
4. What would be the dateline for an AP story written from the state Capitol?
5. What was unique or record-setting about this year's Super Bowl?
6. Fix this sentence: The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is housed on the 5th floor of Vilas hall, located at 821 University Avenue. (3 errors)

- Answers
1. The state superintendent candidates talked about the way they would effect change in Wisconsin classrooms, putting emphasis on their approaches to improving rural broadband access, addressing the school voucher system and decentralizing the department's work.
 2. Nat sound (natural sound)
 3. Beyoncé
 4. MADISON, Wis. (AP) —
 5. Tampa Bay became the first team to win a Super Bowl at home
 6. The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is housed on the fifth floor of Vilas Hall, located at 821 University Ave.