

Communiqué

Summer 2004

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Election Campaign Advice: Accentuate the Positive

The White House takes note of Benoit's study

Professor Bill Benoit expects his Presidential Campaign 2004 Web site to heat up in a few months as the campaign for the general election swings into high gear.

The site, which went live at presidentialcampaign2004.coas.missouri.edu on Jan. 6, has been averaging about 1,000 hits a month and will benefit from links on other Web pages, such as the link on C-Span. Benoit believes the site will draw a range of people, such as voters, teachers, reporters and scholars.

With four doctoral students in communication — Sumana Chattopadhyay, Glenn Hansen, Kevin Stein and Rebecca Verser — Benoit created the site to help educate the public. The students assist by collecting information and completing content analyses of the candidates' Web sites, radio and television advertising, and talk-show appearances, as well as media reports.

Topics displayed on the Web site include subjects that interest Benoit as a scholar of political campaigns: campaign history; and analysis of polls, debates, radio ads, news coverage and political-action-committee ads. Benoit is known nationally for his research on campaigns that date back to 1948, and he frequently serves as an expert for the national media.

"I wanted to get the word out about what we know of



Photo by Justin Kelley

Professor Bill Benoit established a Web site to help inform voters and assist the national media on questions about the 2004 presidential campaign. Benoit is quoted frequently by the press on political campaign issues.

presidential campaigning," he says. Among the general observations that Benoit has gathered from his research on past campaigns are these:

- Winning candidates talk more about policy and less about character than losers do.
- Democrats talk more about policy and less about character than Republicans do.

"I should point out that these are elements the candidates can control," Benoit says. "They may not be able to control the media, but they can control their own messages."

Despite its relatively new status, the Web site quickly gained the attention of the White House. The MU News Bureau learned that an internal White House bulletin issued on Feb. 20 focused on Benoit's research on negative vs. positive campaign tactics. That bulletin credited Benoit's research on television spots from 1952 to 2000, which included the 2000 campaign of George W. Bush and Al Gore. In summarizing Benoit's research, the bulletin reported: "A new study says Republican presidential
(Continues on Page 2)



(Benoit, continued from Page 1)

candidates historically engage in more character attacks and fewer policy attacks than Democrats in TV ads, debates and direct mail.”

The bulletin also included Benoit’s interpretation of win/loss possibilities because of character attacks in campaigns: “Emphasizing character in one’s attacks does not guarantee a loss, but it makes a loss more likely.”

Benoit himself became the brunt of some negative comments on CNN’s political-debate show, *Crossfire*. When host James Carville, a Democrat, used Benoit’s statistics on Republicans attacking more on character than Democrats, the Republican interviewee called the study “bogus.” Ironically, by his response the interviewee fell in line with Benoit’s statistics on Republicans and Democrats and demonstrated how politicians use character attacks as an attempt to counteract policy information.

“The Republican operative, knowing nothing about the study, resorted to a vague character attack without evidence. It was a mindless, knee-jerk reaction,” Benoit says.

Let the games begin

Although Benoit’s advice to the candidates is “focus on policy,” he predicts that the campaign will get uglier as political action groups begin their campaign strategies. Groups such as MoveOn.org, Media Fund, and Grassfire.org already have entered the fray. Benoit describes the latter as a PAC attacking another PAC.

He says the negative politics out of the PACs isn’t necessarily all bad. “It gives me more to study.”

“A survey of Southern voters shows that the majority thinks candidates’ attacks on policy are fair but character attacks are unfair.”

— Bill Benoit

Benoit’s Web site reports that the 2004 presidential campaign began earlier than any previous one when Bush and Kerry began to run ads in March.

Benoit speculates that team Bush started early because Bush’s approval ratings dropped from 71 percent in March 2003 to 49 percent in February 2004. After Bush appeared on *Meet the Press* in a failed attempt to improve those ratings, Benoit reports, he started running campaign ads.

“Why shouldn’t he run ads early?” Benoit asks. “He has \$170 million to spend.”

Presidential Campaign 2004 does not report the candidates’ positions on issues. Voters who are seeking that information can find it at Vote-smart.org, a Web site that Benoit con-

siders objective. “We study their messages,” Benoit says.

If citizens are looking for additional methods to educate themselves before voting, Benoit recommends watching debates that feature both candidates, visiting the Web sites of each candidate and reading the ads from both sides “with a slightly skeptical mind.”

Benoit criticizes television and newspaper reporting of the campaign as unhelpful for decision making. He says those stories tend to focus more on the “horserace” — who spoke where and who’s ahead in the polls — than on issues.

Because there are more than 100 registered political parties — some with as few as 82 members — not all of the nation’s political parties are represented on the site. To draw the line on how many parties to include, Benoit says he decided to list only the parties named on Missouri’s ballots.

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The publication of *Communiqué* is a gift to alumni and friends from Debbie Snellen, BS Ed ’79, MA ’80 communication, and Steve Snellen, AB ’73 history.

How does your favorite candidate score on use of policy vs. character attacks?

Bill Benoit categorizes the messages of presidential campaign candidates under policy or character statements. Policy statements concern governmental action and problems amenable to governmental action. Character statements address the characteristics, traits, abilities or attributes of the candidates.

Department Royalty

Students give back to society after enjoying university life

For two consecutive years, a communication student has reigned over Mizzou's Homecoming as king. Senior Neil Dwyer wore the crown in fall 2003 and Mykael Wright, BA '03, in 2002. In a bit of one-upmanship, Dwyer managed to capture the Homecoming title in a year when singer and MU alumna Sheryl Crow served as Homecoming grand marshal.

But a crown and communication aren't the only things that Dwyer and Wright have in common. Both students signed two-year commitments with Teach for America. As Wright did after graduation, Dwyer will train through the program and then accept a position in a low socioeconomic community with a history of difficulty in attracting teachers.

Dwyer will teach middle-school general science in inner-city Philadelphia. When his commitment ends, he plans to continue his own higher education with a master's degree in education administration or public policy.

Wright is teaching in Phoenix.

While a student at MU, Dwyer was a member of the Experiential Education staff, which provides high- and low-ropes team development programs on campus. He was a peer adviser in Laws Residence Hall, a Summer Welcome leader in 2001, a mentor in an after-school program in Columbia, and a member of two senior honorary societies, Mystical 7 and Mortar Board.

It's not surprising that Dwyer accumulated a rich history of achievement. He says he has a "passion for success" and that his communication classes provided perspectives on the different ways in which humans share information.

One of the greatest lessons he learned is to listen. "If we work together and communicate, our problems will



Alumna Sheryl Crow appears at MU Homecoming 2003 with senior Neil Dwyer, who served as king of the event. Dwyer is the second consecutive communication student to hold the title. Mykael Wright was king in 2002. Both students also have a record of public service in common.

usually be averted or solved," he says.

Through the partnerships he developed with classmates, Dwyer learned to value togetherness and to find solutions to problems through collaboration with the opposing factions. "Everyone brings something different to the table, and if we bring those unique views together through collaboration we accomplish some of the greatest feats," he says.

Dwyer says he will remember his favorite communication classes because of the teachers' enthusiasm and passion for the topics as well as the close relationships he formed with classmates in every one of the classes.

Welcome New Faculty

Three new faculty members will join the department in the fall. Loreen Olson will teach courses in interpersonal communication, communication theory and qualitative research methods. A graduate of the University of Nebraska, she comes to Missouri after four years at Cleveland State University. With an expertise in interpersonal communication, Olson focuses her research on issues of domestic violence.

Jennifer Aubrey, who recently completed her doctorate at the University of Michigan, will teach mass communication courses and quantitative research methods courses. She specializes in using quantitative research methods to study mass communication and its effects on the general public. Of particular interest to her is the way the images of women in the media influence the self-images of young girls and teenagers.



Loreen Olson



Jennifer Aubrey



Frank Esser

Coming to MU from Germany is Frank Esser, who will teach mass communication courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels. His research examines media coverage of key political and social events ranging from campaigns to hate crimes and violence.

Faculty Kudos

Bill Benoit just published his eighth book, this one on the 2000 presidential campaign. A new study of scholarly productivity ranks him second in the communication discipline, as measured by articles published from 1996-2001. He received an all-expenses-paid trip to China in June 2004 to talk about research at a conference at Wuhan University. When he's "off-duty" as a professor, he's been working on stained glass.

After serving as department chair for more than four years, **Pam Benoit** accepted the position of assistant dean of the Graduate School in December. She is now responsible for improving the quality of instruction across the campus, including the Preparing Future Faculty program, as well as the coordination of a graduate school serving more than 4,000 students. "I'm really busy," is a common comment from Benoit, who as a communication professor won the prestigious Kemper Fellowship for Excellence in Teaching.

Debbie Dougherty has had a busy year. Not only has she published research articles in top-tier communication journals such as the *Journal of Applied Communication Research* and *Human Communication Research*, she has been featured in various newspaper and magazine articles around the country. She continues to serve on the Campus Institutional Review Board and will be guest editor of a special issue of a journal on that topic next year. Her children, Fionna, 6, and Finnian, 2, are a constant source of pride and humor.

Jon Hess has taken over the role of director of graduate studies. In 2003, he published articles on distance in personal relationships and on teacher behaviors that can help students sustain their motivation in a class. One of his conference papers won a top-four paper award. He joined the editorial board of the journal *Personal Relationships* this year. Last April, Hess participated in a discussion with public health officials from eight East Coast states about ethical issues in communication with the public in the event of a biological or chemical terrorist attack. Last fall, he received tenure and a promotion to associate professor.

In addition to becoming chair (see related article), **Michael Kramer** published a book, *Managing Uncertainty in Organizational Communication*, along with some book chapters and journal articles. He continues to publish research based on his experiences

as a participant in local community theater productions. He was tapped as an honorary member of the Mortar Board Honors Society this spring. As empty nesters, Kramer and his wife have been taking dance lessons and traveling more in their leisure time.

Mitchell S. McKinney began 2004 traipsing through the snows of Iowa where he experienced first-hand the Iowa caucuses and spent time with the likes of John Kerry and John Edwards. He plans to attend the Democratic National Convention in Boston in July, and he will attend the general-election presidential debates this fall to continue his work with the Commission on Presidential Debates. With Diana Carlin, he co-wrote a chapter on political campaign debates in the new *Handbook of Political Communication Research*. He serves as co-director of Uvote2004, a national consortium of students and faculty that examines how young citizens receive and process information about political candidates and issues. See the Web site at www.uvote2004.org. McKinney reports that one of the greatest honors he received this year was being named Alumnus of the Year by the communication department at Western Kentucky University, his undergraduate alma mater.

Michael Porter stays busy directing the Special (multidisciplinary) Degree Programs for the College of Arts and Science. He claims he has one of the best jobs on campus because they pay him to spend time talking with students. He spends the rest of his time directing dissertations and teaching the introductory course, Media Communication in Society, to more than 300 students. He hopes he will be able to teach other courses in TV criticism this coming year. Porter inspires incoming graduate teaching assistants each year by giving a keynote address on how to succeed at MU, and he also speaks to incoming freshmen and their parents as part of the Summer Welcome program in June. He is the doting grandparent of two of the cutest kids in all of Cornwall, England.

For **Mary-Jeanette Smythe**, the highlight of the past year was unquestionably a return trip to Ireland. As recipient of a curriculum development grant from the European Union, Smythe visited the Centre for Irish Studies at Queens University in Belfast, the INCORE center in Londonderry, and Ulster University, as well as Oxford University in the U.K. Although Irish by heritage and inclination, she still finds the expression "Ah, it's like your first Guinness in Dublin," as unfathomable as the drink itself.

Alumni Achievements

2000s

Maria Dixon, PhD '04, is a professor in the Department of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Her dissertation examined the rhetoric of the Southern Baptist Convention surrounding leadership changes in the 1980s and 1990s.

Glenn Hansen, PhD '04, is a professor at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Okla., where he directs the Political Communication Center in the communication department.

John McGuire, PhD '04, continues as a professor in the School of Journalism and Broadcasting at Oklahoma State University. His responsibilities include teaching, research and managing the radio station. His dissertation examined the history of sports broadcasting in Missouri.

David S. Silverman, PhD '04, is beginning as a professor in the Department of Communication at Xavier University in New Orleans. His dissertation examined issues of censorship and cancellation of four shows during the past 40 years.

Erin Jones, BA '02, is a staffing specialist for Kelly Mitchell in Clayton, Mo.

Michael Koenen, BA '02, works for Glazer's Marketer of Fine Wines, Spirits and Malts as a sales representative for the Gallo Division.

Kristin Peterson, BA '02, is an account executive for the Richards Group in Dallas, Texas. One of her major accounts has been Corona.

Scott Burdt, BA '01, is a sales representative for Anheuser-Busch in Carson, Calif.

Doug Little, BA '01, is assistant director of student involvement and leadership at Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla.

Melissa Puster, BA '01, works as the traffic reporter for seven radio stations in St. Louis under the Clear Channel Radio and Rams Radio Network.

Justin Shepherd, BA '01, has stayed close to home working as the Shurz Residence Hall coordinator for the Department of Residential Life at Mizzou.

Jennifer Wegner, BA '01, is a special project assistant to the president of Community Physical Therapy in Wood Dale, Ill. She continues to assist with media relations for the Chicago Fire, an MLS soccer team.

Erin O'Neill, BA '00, is an account executive at Google in Newport Beach, Calif., after previously working in ad sales for Time Inc. on *Sports Illustrated for Kids* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*.

1990s

Anne Barry, BA '99, is a senior meeting planner for the American Optometric Association in St. Louis.

Jacob Sappington, BA '99, is an attorney for Blackwell Sander Peper Martin in Springfield, Mo.

Brett Jones, BA '98, is an education sales specialist for Maryville Technologies in Overland Park, Kan.

Denika Jones, BA '98, is the marketing manager for La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries in Albuquerque, N.M.

Michelle Mayer, BA '98, is director of recruiting with the Hempstead Group of Northwestern Mutual Financial Network in St. Louis.

Amy Childs, BA '97, works for Boone County National Bank in Columbia as a customer service center assistant manager.

Jeff Logan, BA '97, works for Ames Color-File in Elmhurst, Ill., as a systems representative.

Kevin Roberts, BA '97, is vice president of the Kansas City region for Bank of America and a stock broker with Banc of America Investment Inc. His office is in Blue Springs, Mo.

Travis Summer, BA '97, has moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa, where he is the operations group leader for Target.

Mark Trochtenberg, BA '97, is a senior writer for Momentum located in St. Louis.

Lisa (Morgan) Hagan, BA '96, works as a video editor and provides creative services for Court TV in New York.

Lisa (Farrenkopf) Bolding, BA '95, works as a sign language interpreter in her own business, Sign Language Specialists Inc., in Lee Summit, Mo.

Bruce Dorries, PhD '95, is a professor at Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Va. He co-chairs the college's community service learning task forces and coordinates the United Way Fund Drive.

Mehdi Semanti, PhD '95, is a professor at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Ill., where he teaches media criticism. He co-edited a 2003 book, *Studies in Terrorism: Media Scholarship and the Enigma of Terror*.

Lori Konomos, BA '94, operates LK Marketing in Blue Springs, Mo.

Sarah (Hiemberger) Haas, BA '92, works as a public information officer for Mineral Area College in Park Hills, Mo. She does graphic design, photography, news releases and advertising.

Bob Hodson, BA '92, owns his own production company, Missouri Video Productions.

Alumni Achievements

Chris Stevens, BA '91, works for Boone County National Bank as a relationship manager for the bank's preferred customers.

Marty (Tade) Wynn, BA '91, has moved up to the position of independent sales director for Mary Kay. She supervises independent beauty consultants in Springfield, Mo.

Susan Brinson, PhD '90, continues as a professor of communication and journalism at Auburn University in Alabama. She published her first book in 2002, and her second one, *The Red Scare, Politics and the Federal Communications Commission*, is coming out this year.

1980s

Jay Dallum, BA '89, is the chief executive officer of Express Logistics in Overland Park, Kan.

France Kendall, PhD '89, continues as a professor of mass media and television production at Salisbury University.

Darrin Widick, BA '89, operates Widick Marketing Inc., an advertising and public relations firm in Kansas City, Mo.

Debbie Dornfeld, BA '88, of St. Louis does casework for Missouri Senator Jim Talent.

Mark Goodman, PhD '88, continues as a professor in the communication department at Mississippi State University.

Linda (Bluestone) King, BA '88, worked as a special events planner and public relations specialist for a non-profit arts organization before becoming a stay-at-home mom in St. Louis.

Karen (Kniestedt) Potter, BA '87, lives with her husband, Daniel, and her two little girls in Milwaukee, Wis.

Kelvin Simmons, BA '86, has been active in government for years. He was elected to represent Kansas City's 5th District from 1997 to 1999. He currently serves as chair of the Public Service Commission and as co-chair of the Utilities Commission of Homeland Security Task Force, among other activities.

Paula (Clark) Briggs, MA '85, is a professor of mass communication in the Department of Journalism at Norfolk State University.

Ferald Bryan, PhD '85, is director of communication studies in the Department of Communication at Northern Illinois University in Dekalb.

Mary Caldwell, BA '82, works in the media department for St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley doing instructional design and creating instructional resources.

Tracy (Thomas) Peterson, BA '82, returned to Columbia and currently works in the development office for MU's School of Nursing.

1970s

Steve Twitchell, BA '78, owner of Steve Twitchell Production in Columbia, won three awards last year: 2003 Telly, Communicator and Axiem awards. These were for productions for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Lenoir Retirement Community and Columbia College.

1940s

Molly (Penson) Krival, BA '47, retired in 1988 but continues to use what she learned in speech and parliamentary procedure as the director of the National Wildlife Association.

Alumni Award To Ty Christian

The College of Arts and Science honored communication alumnus Ty Christian, BA '77, with a 2004 Distinguished Alumni Award, which was presented during Arts and Science Week in February. The award recognizes his career accomplishments, as well as his service to MU.

Christian is president of YPB&R/Christian, a communications firm with offices in Orlando, Honolulu, London, Los Angeles, New York, Saul Paulo and Zurich. The company provides services to clients in travel, tourism, publishing, sports, entertainment and communication industries. As busy as Christian is, he still finds time to serve MU as a member of the A&S Strategic Development Board.

Christian took advantage of his on-campus time to meet with communication students. He spoke to students in the Senior Capstone course about careers as communication consultants. In the Gender, Language and Communication class, his presentation on diversity marketing emphasized the importance of niche marketing. Christian also spoke to graduate students on how to better prepare students for jobs after college.

"I enjoy working with students," he said at the end of a busy day. "I want to do more of that."

Thank You, Helen

You knew you should have thanked her when you walked across the stage at graduation. If you were a communication undergraduate student since 1990, you interacted with Helen Atkinson, the department's undergraduate adviser, and you benefited from her personal attention.

She's the person who welcomed you into the department after you were accepted into the major, the one who helped you figure out how to get that last class you needed and the one who made sure you met all the degree requirements to graduate.

On Feb. 17, Atkinson received a token of thanks for her outstanding efforts as adviser — the Blue Chalk Award for excellence in undergraduate advising. The College of Arts and Science Student Legislative Council selected Atkinson from a group of nominees and during Arts and Science Week presented her with a plaque, which she proudly displays in her office.

Students who wrote letters supporting her nomination gave a variety of reasons for endorsing Atkinson's work. They appreciated her thoughtful gestures, such as taking an instant photo of each new student who declared communication as a major. Atkinson still posts those pho-



Photo by Justin Kelley

Undergraduate adviser Helen Atkinson received a College of Arts and Science award for excellence in advising, which was presented during A&S Week in February. Communication students wrote letters of support on her behalf.

tos on a hallway bulletin board for all to see.

"Every semester Helen goes through this same but extraordinary process with every new student," Neil Dwyer wrote in his letter of support. "She wants those she is advising to know that the communication department is proud to accept them as an individual, not a number."

Jessica Reinbold's letter told of Atkinson's personal guidance through the rules and regulations for graduation. "Helen knew the answers to all my questions and was quite aware of what I needed to do to meet all requirements for graduation. Because of this, I always felt confident and satisfied with her advice."

The students pointed to her support when they faced doubts about achieving goals. Mindy Coronado remembered Atkinson's encouragement to complete a difficult class in another department.

Atkinson was surprised but delighted with the award. "It's an honor to have a small contribution recognized," she

said. "The thing that keeps me doing the job is the fact that I have interesting students to work with, and I appreciate their support."

Nationally Ranked

Getting good reviews isn't just for movies, music and art any more. Reviewers determine how productive communication professors are by examining how many of their articles are published in communication journals.

A recent study by a team of researchers ranked the top 50 communicators and found that MU's communication department is among the most prolific in the nation. The study placed Professor Bill Benoit in the position of No. 2 nationally and Professor Michael Kramer at No. 36. As an institution, MU ranked fourth

nationally with the most articles published from 1996 to 2001.

Benoit had 28 articles published by journals in the study period, and Kramer had nine articles published. These numbers do not count articles published in journals that were not included in the study.

Researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, who conducted the study, say the results are based on the number of articles published in 24 communication journals. The journals examined include such publications as the *Journal of Communication*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* and *Communication Research Reports*.



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Let's Talk

By Michael Kramer
Department Chair



It has been exciting and challenging assuming the role of chair of the department.

It's exciting because of the excellence in the department. Undergraduate students continue to receive high-quality instruction as they achieve their academic goals. Graduate students gain the expertise they need to become faculty members at other colleges and universities.

Alumni notes on page 5 indicate just some of the successes that our graduates have experienced. Our faculty members add to the national reputation of the program as they continue to write books and publish in top journals and present their work at national and international conferences.

The role of chair is challenging because state funding continues to drop. This year for the first time ever, student fees provided a larger portion of the University budget than state funding, which means there are fewer dollars to support excellent programs such as the Department of Communication.

Alumni and friends can make a difference in this situation. We invite you to continue to support us in one of two ways:

Send us your business card. Please feel free to use the enclosed envelope to send a new card or an update if you have recently changed jobs. So often students are unsure of what they can do after they graduate. We now have posters around Switzler Hall that display business cards of alumni from our program. We want to add to those posters and

create a display for all the business cards we receive. What better way of supporting current students than by showing them your success after graduation.

Send a donation. As the enclosed envelope indicates, your contributions can create opportunities for excellence by supporting one of three endowments or the department's general fund.

Your tax-deductible contribution, perhaps matched by your employer, provides opportunities for excellence for the department. We greatly appreciate your support for one of the nation's finest communication departments.

Success!

Graduate student Glenn Hansen and Associate Professor Michael Kramer finished the Lewis and Clark Marathon in St. Charles, Mo., in not-too-competitive times last fall, but they still managed to score a first.

The athletic twosome ran the marathon in an effort to raise money for the department. The activity resulted in the most money the department has ever raised through a direct appeal to alumni and friends.

In a general letter sent to 2,200 alumni and friends, Hansen and Kramer asked for contributions for their sweat-equity on a per-mile basis.

Even before the letters of appeal went out, the two athletes were training. In the end, communication department supporters rewarded the racers' efforts with more than \$8,000 and surpassed their stated goal by \$1,000. Of the 390 racers who finished, Hansen was 162nd and Kramer was 180th. They beat the slowest finisher by more than four hours.

The proceeds, which went into an endowed fund to support graduate students, brought that fund to \$16,000. The department now can begin awarding assistance for research and travel to the graduate students.