Three alumni enjoy stressful but satisfying leadership positions with Fox Sports and MTV in New York

Every Sunday during the football season, Michael Mulvihill, BA '94 communication, works while watching the professional games on eight large-screen plasma TVs in the NFL suite at Fox Sports in New York.

Comfortable lounge chairs afford great views of the wall-mounted televisions, and a refreshment bar offers an inviting assortment of treats. For a die-hard sports fan, this is the perfect job.

Mulvihill is vice president of research and programming strategy for Fox Sports. He schedules professional NFL and Major League Baseball games, NASCAR races and, starting in January 2007, college football's Bowl Championship Series.

Through research that includes watching as many events as possible, he determines which programs Fox affiliates run in their market areas.

“When you make calls about how to program the games, it’s a lot easier to make those decisions if you’ve seen all the games,” he says. “We come in here (the NFL suite) and have every set on a different game. I try to see as much of every game as possible to get a better feel for what’s going on in the league.”

As strategy for making the programming decisions, Mulvihill considers which teams are fun to watch, as well as team rankings and news around the league. Some of the scheduling choices are obvious, such as showing the Rams in the St. Louis area and the Green Bay Packers in Brett Favre’s hometown of Biloxi or even capitalizing on the many Chicago retirees living in Arizona by running the Bears games in that market.

“When you get to the Super Bowl or baseball postseason, you feel like you’re working on things that a lot of people care about,” he says.

Judging the success of his decisions is another matter. Mulvihill says he’s often not sure how he’s doing until he makes a mistake. One of his most memorable miscues was a decision that generated an avalanche of disgruntled fans calling from markets in Iowa, northern Missouri and southern Illinois. Mulvihill had pulled a bunch of Midwest markets from a “blowout” Vikings game before it ended. (Continues on Page 2)
(Big Time, continued from Page 1)

The network generally will pull away before the game ends if a game becomes one-sided, and, he says, most of the time fans appreciate that policy. But not that time.

Stress is a part of the game plan for Mulvihill. It spikes during the baseball postseason with games every night and heightened fan interest. He worries then about whether the games start too late and about how to gain the most favorable publicity for Fox's coverage.

The NFL season brings another round of stress with five to nine games that need to fit into viewing areas on a single day. At times Mulvihill agonizes over the decisions. “There are many, many judgment calls, and people care passionately about the NFL,” he says. “We have to be as thorough as possible in making the right choices for every market.”

Growing up in Pittsburgh and cheering for the Steelers, Mulvihill knew at an early age that he wanted a media career. He played basketball in high school but preferred broadcasting a sports radio show.

At Mizzou, Mulvihill learned how to manage relationships through his communication classes and extracurricular jobs at The Maneater and KCOU, where he was student manager of the campus radio station for a year. He enjoyed what he called the raucous environment and bright, talented people at KCOU. The atmosphere, he says, was chaotic anarchy that was thoroughly applicable to the professional world.

“A lot of it was managing relationships, being a conduit between the students and the University,” he says. “That’s a lot of what I do now, being a conduit between the network and the leagues while trying to line up advertisers.”

MU’s communication department is underrated in the industry, Mulvihill says. “People on the East Coast don’t realize how good the department is.” Mulvihill credits the department for preparing him for a career and says his student internships helped him begin that career.

As a student, Mulvihill completed two internships in Los Angeles with Fox through the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences — the people who do the Emmys — and one in New York through the International Radio and Television Society. The internships helped him secure an entry-level market-research job with Fox 10 years ago, and he kept rising through the ranks.

Recently, Mulvihill received an unusual nod of appreciation for his work when Sporting News magazine named him to its 2006 list of the “Young and Powerful” in sports.

Aaron and Brent Stoller are twin talents at MTV

The Stoller twins, BA ’98 communication, admit they were cut-ups in class when they were undergraduate students at Mizzou. They’re still cut-ups, but now they get paid for it.

The fun-loving brothers found careers with a company where being cut-ups may be a job description. Aaron works as director and senior producer, and Brent is director and executive producer of the on-air promotions department at MTV.

The Stollers stole an hour from their hectic routines to double up on an interview in their New York offices. It wasn’t destined to be a serious encounter. This was, after all, MTV.

“Aaron and Brent were both majors in communication, both cards, great cut-ups in class and very, very creative,” says Associate Professor Michael Porter, who remembers them from his mass media course.

The twins laughed when they heard Porter’s description of them as students. “He just gave us three C’s,” Aaron said.

There’s been a lot of sibling togetherness since the two, as they put it, shared a womb. Aaron claims to be the oldest twin. “It was a C-section,” Brent says in objection. “We both saw light at the same time.”

The St. Louis natives both selected Mizzou as the best value for the quality of the education. They chose the same classes, challenged the same professors and earned the same degrees. Now they work in offices just a few steps from each other, yet none of that sibling closeness seems (Continues on Page 7)
Let’s Talk

Program review provides reason to celebrate
By Michael W. Kramer
Department Chair

We pride ourselves in the department on the quality of our teaching and scholarship. It’s gratifying that outside reviewers are coming to the same conclusion. (Please see a related item on this page about our national rankings in scholarly productivity.)

This spring our department underwent an extensive program review, something all departments experience about every five years. The process involved distinguished professors from communication programs at the universities of Illinois, Oklahoma and Texas, as well as professors from programs in the University of Missouri System.

I’m delighted to report that the reviewers were unanimous in their praise of our high-quality instruction for undergraduates and graduates. They were impressed by the quantity and quality of research produced by the graduate students and faculty.

It’s no secret that our faculty is tops in teaching and research. The many teaching awards earned by faculty members confirm the quality of teaching in the department. In recent years, Michael Porter and Bill Benoit received national teaching awards; Pam Benoit, Porter and Michael Kramer received prestigious MU Kemper Fellowships for Excellence in Teaching, and Jon Hess, Mitchell McKinney and Bill Benoit were nominated by the College of Arts and Science for the Kemper awards; Bill Benoit received the Gold Chalk Award for graduate teaching; Kramer received a Provost Junior Faculty Teaching Award; Debbie Dougherty received an Excellence in Education Award; and Melissa Click received an award for instruction for women. Congratulations to all.

The reviewers did find a flaw. They were unanimous in pointing out that the department has significant financial needs that are not being met through state funding. They pointed to the need for increased funding from external sources and endowments.

We hope you will remember how your career has been advanced by your education in the department and will use the enclosed envelope to support one of our endowments, either the Loren Reid Fund, the Graduate Student Support Fund or the Opportunities for Excellence in Undergraduate Education Fund. Your donation will enable us to continue to provide the quality education that students expect from our department.

We would be remiss if we did not thank the many alumni and friends who have generously supported our department. Thank you to all, and special thanks to alumnus Steve Beebe for his significant gift to the Faculty and Alumni Graduate Student Support Fund. Steve’s contribution equals the amount of the stipends he received as a graduate teaching assistant.

Best and Worst of Switzler Hall

Many of us know that Switzler Hall, the oldest academic building on campus, is in need of refurbishment. But it is, after all, our home, and it undoubtedly holds memories, both good and bad, for many of you. Why not share those with us. Use the enclosed envelope. We’ll publish some of the comments in the next newsletter.

Celebrate this Ranking

The Department of Communication has received national recognition with a ranking of fourth in the nation for the scholarly productivity of its faculty. A 2005 article by Ulla Bunz, published in the Journal of Communication, analyzed publications in journals of the National and International Communication Associations for 1999 to 2004. The article also reported that Bill Benoit ranked as the second most-prolific author for those years. A similar 2004 article in Communication Research Reports also ranked MU’s department as fourth nationally.

Send Your Business Card and News

A few years ago, the department began collecting business cards from communication alumni. Now a three-foot by three-foot bulletin board posts those cards for students to read. “We have a fair number of cards but could use more,” department Adviser Helen Atkinson says. “We’d love to hear from alumni.” Alumni may use the enclosed envelope to send their business cards and brief career notes for the next newsletter.

Faculty Addition

Rebecca Meisenbach will join the department as it continues its growth trend by adding new faculty positions. She received a doctorate from the University of Purdue in 2004 and wrote a dissertation on fundraising for nonprofit organizations.

In addition to teaching courses in organizational communication, Meisenbach, who has an interest in communication ethics, will teach Controversies in Communication. She has been teaching at Concord University in West Virginia for the past few years and served as interim dean her last semester there.
Faculty Kudos

Jennifer Aubrey continued her research on the effects of sexually objectifying media on young adults, with articles appearing in the Journal of Communication and Sex Roles. She is intrigued with her recent work investigating how exposure to “lad magazines,” such as Maxim and FHM, affects male body image. This project was presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence in March. Aubrey also enjoyed teaching her first graduate classes this year — one on media effects and the other on qualitative research methods.

After moving to Columbia July 2005, Jennifer Becker is continuing her research on problematic interpersonal communication, which includes various forms of communication that are difficult, disruptive and damaging to relationships. Four of her journal articles and two book chapters were published recently, and she highlighted her research while teaching the undergraduate relational communication and research methods courses. In addition to research and teaching, she is the basic course director for the public speaking course. In that role, she particularly enjoys serving as a mentor and resource for graduate teaching assistants.

Bill Benoit spent three months in Hong Kong as a University Fellow at Hong Kong Baptist University. During a week in Taiwan, he was invited to address the Foreign Ministry about his theory and research on political crisis communication. He finished editing the Journal of Communication at the end of 2005. He is now reviewing manuscripts for Communication Studies and must be ready to print his first issue in January 2007. Benoit has three books in press: one on political campaign communication, one with Pam Benoit on persuasive speaking and one with current and past graduate students Kevin Stein, John McHale, Sumana Chattopadhyay, Rebecca Verser and Steve Price on the 2004 presidential campaign. A recent article in Journal of Communication ranked him the second most-published author in the field of communication for the years 1999 to 2004.

Melissa Click continues to study Martha Stewart’s fans, and a piece of that work will be published in fall 2007 in a volume on fan studies from New York University Press. Her work with Michael Kramer on gendered messages in popular songs and music videos will be published in an upcoming edition of Popular Communication. She is excited to begin a new project on the impact of DVDs and on-demand programming on the television schedule. Click continues to teach media criticism courses and has been working to strengthen the department’s internship program.

Debbie Dougherty submitted her tenure documents in the fall, published several scholarly articles, spearheaded the Buck-a-Person for Relief fund and won an Excellence in Education Award for her work with students. Articles about her research on the sexual harassment of nurses by patients appeared in newspapers and publications across the nation. This year her husband took a new job in St. Louis, where he stays for most of the work week. Debbie acted as a single parent for the last semester and is building a home in Callaway County so that her family can be reunited.

Jon Hess published two book chapters this year on communication with problematic co-workers. The topic emerged from a line of research that began with his dissertation on relationships with people we don’t like. “It is fortunately not a topic of any relevance to my work at MU, where I am blessed with terrific colleagues,” he says, regarding a question he is commonly asked. Outside the classroom, Hess has put his interpersonal communication and instructional skills to use serving as a dialogue group leader at the Wakonse Conference on College Teaching and as head coach of his son’s little league baseball team for Columbia’s Diamond Council.

In his third year as chair of the department, Michael Kramer continues to be a productive researcher. He published four articles in 2005 and received the Group Communication’s Best Article in 2004 award at the National Communication Association Convention in November 2005. He sat in on a class on playwriting the past fall and has now written four full-length plays. A short play he wrote received a staged reading at a conference in Chicago and as part of the Mizzou New Play Series. After taking off some time because of an injury, he’s back running and biking but won’t be doing any marathons soon. He keeps busy at home remodeling his kitchen and managing the “forest” he has planted on property outside Columbia.

During the past year Mitchell McKinney has been active with several teaching, research and service activities. His undergraduate large-lecture course, Controversies in Communication, experienced the introduction of instructional technology as students used hand-held wireless remotes to register opinions and provide feedback that was instantly charted for the class to examine and discuss. McKinney’s political communication research appeared in such
Student Communicators Share their Knowledge

As they have done for the past 12 years, communication seniors assisted local government and nonprofit agencies in developing communication programs to solve their unique problems.

Melissa Click’s fall class developed programs for the American Cancer Society to provide increased awareness and education for men about prostate cancer. The University of Missouri Research Reactor (MURR) received proposals from Michael Kramer’s fall class to increase awareness of the benefits of the nuclear research reactor (located on Reactor Field) to the community.

Debbie Dougherty’s winter class tackled the problem of increasing community involvement in the Neighborhood Pride Program for the city of Columbia. Loreen Olson’s winter class worked on the needs of the campus organization Men Against Rape and Sexual Assault. Kramer’s winter class developed proposals to increase the number of volunteers and retain girls for The Heart of Missouri Council of the Girl Scouts of America.

Although the benefits to the client organizations are fairly obvious, the students benefit as well, their professors say. The chance to work with real organizations facing real communication problems provides students with an educational opportunity that reaches beyond the classroom.
A Class Act

The students in Debbie Dougherty’s organizational communication class decided that writing a check to a relief agency wasn’t the only way they could help the victims of hurricanes that hit the Gulf Coast last year. As part of the class, the students decided to create an organization designed to aid local relief efforts for those victims. They created an organization called Buck-a-Person for Relief Fund.

Through Buck-a-Person, the students set a goal of collecting at least one dollar from every Mizzou student and each member of the faculty and staff. That effort raised more than $4,300 for local agencies such as the Mid Missouri Food Bank, the Adopt a City Program and Boone County Community Partnership.

“I was astonished by the students’ decision,” Dougherty says. “They knowingly took on extra work so they could help others. These students are remarkable people.”

Although the students fell short of their goal, they did provide substantial aid for the hurricane victims. The project also was an excellent learning opportunity. “The students were able to see how the theories and concepts we studied in class operated in a real organization,” Dougherty says. “They observed how an organization is formed, gains legitimacy, is maintained through communication and then dissolves over time.”

Enthusiasm for the project quickly spread to students not involved with the class, and by the end of the semester, several clubs and Greek organizations were working for the fund. Among the memorable successes of Buck-a-Person were a press conference with the mayor of Columbia and fundraising at a basketball game.

Perhaps the most-appreciated donation came from a student – not part of the class – who walked across campus to Dougherty’s office to thank her and the class for taking on such a project. She contributed $20 to the fund. “It was a special moment,” Dougherty says.
to bother them. In fact, they still socialize together and recently threw a bowling birthday party for another MTV colleague, producer Matt Giulvezan, BA ’00 interdisciplinary studies.

Both Stollers reflect on the Mizzou experience with amazement at their professors’ tolerance of their youthful exuberance, which they now describe as “over the top.” Brent recalls that Porter used to say in class, “I don’t know what you’re talking about, but I appreciate the effort.” They laugh at the recollection.

Aaron credits Dave Dunkin for grounding him in the technical part of his job. Dunkin, who directs MU’s Academic Support Center, taught a field production class that Aaron absorbed, along with Dunkin’s dry sense of humor. “I loved him,” Aaron says. “I love Mizzou!” Brent adds.

The Stoller brothers have the cool job of crafting the image of MTV, the way the channel looks and its attitude. As producers they take concepts and make them happen. Aaron creates the commercials that promote all things MTV. His spots develop through detailed ideas that start as documents, often as long as 15 pages, and he collaborates with such clients as Disney, PepsiCo and Paramount Pictures.

Using his technical skills and wild imagination, Aaron crafts engaging concepts and characters while working with A-list celebrities that include Tom Cruise, Ashton Kutcher, the Black Eyed Peas, Kanye West, Ashanti, Jessica Simpson and P. Diddy. In addition to his position with MTV, Aaron works as a director with the Los Angeles based company Backyard Productions, where he creates commercials for some highly visible accounts: Bud Light, Nintendo, Burger King and others.

Backyard’s East Coast representative Chris Zander says Aaron is “new, brilliant and hot, a fresh, hyper-contemporary, future A+ comedic superstar with an award-winning personality.”

Brent directs MTV’s on-air promotions department and manages 80 people who do the writing, editing, design, strategizing and marketing. He shoots his long-format shows in Los Angeles with celebrity talent. His productions have featured Tom Cruise, Beyonce, the Black Eyed Peas, Coldplay and Terrance Howard, to name a few.

Brent’s previous work has included larger-scale MTV productions such as the Video Music Awards, the Super Bowl halftime show (not nipplegate, he stresses) and Movie Awards. Before his promotion to executive producer, he also produced all of Aaron’s gigs, which Giulvezan has taken over.

“Brent has risen quickly in the ranks here at MTV because he has that careful balance of straight-ahead business acumen coupled with intuitive creative chops,” says Kevin Mackall, senior vice president of MTV.

A 2005 Clio award sits on the top shelf of a metal display unit in Aaron’s office. He won it for the “If MTV Were a Foosball Player” campaign.

Other trophies and awards honoring Aaron’s spots are scattered around his workspace. There’s recognition from the Association of Independent Commercial Producers, One Show, the Art Director’s Club and Communication Arts, which showcases outstanding work worldwide. Some of Aaron’s work is part of the permanent film collection at New York’s Museum of Modern Art.

Brent, too, has a slew of honors: an Emmy nomination for a public service announcement, a 2005 Telly Award and 2003 Peabody and Beacon awards. In his collection there’s also an award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. He knows it’s there. It’s just lost somewhere on the shelving amid statues of St. Louis Cardinals baseball players. Oh well.

The brothers are most proud of their commitment to creating public service announcements. Early in 2006, they learned that an MTV campaign for sexual health, which they produce annually in partnership with the Kaiser Family Foundation, had elicited major behavioral changes. Research indicated that 49 percent of young people exposed to the PSAs had talked with a boyfriend or girlfriend about safer sex.

“Quite a mind-blowing statistic,” Brent says.

The twins are clearly touched by the significance of the power of their productions, but any serious discussion on the quality of their work is brief.

Aaron: “I’ll take credit for anything good.”
Brent: “If it’s bad, I didn’t do it.”
Steve Beebe, chair and professor of communication studies at Texas State University in San Marcos, gave the inaugural Loren Reid Lecture Feb. 17. His presentation to faculty, graduate students and a few department alumni was part of College of Arts and Science Week activities.

Beebe, PhD ’76 communication, focused on graduate students and based his talk on the title of a book written by Reid, *Hurry Home Wednesday*. Beebe encouraged graduate students to hurry home by staying true to what they know – communication, which will help their careers and personal lives. He told them to hurry home by seeking support from their families, colleagues and faculty members; he also reminded them to be a source of support for others. Finally, he encouraged them to hurry home to their passion by reminding them that life does not come with a syllabus of assignments and deadlines; they should pursue those things that give them a sense of calling.

The lecture series was created in honor of the 100th birthday of Reid, a professor emeritus of the department, and it provides an opportunity for graduate students to meet alumni and discuss career topics.

When Beebe received his doctorate, the communication department was officially the Department of Speech and Dramatic Art, and Reid was on the faculty. Beebe’s research has focused on public speaking, as well as interpersonal and group communication. He has written several textbooks, including the public-speaking textbook that was used by the department in the 1990s and will be used again next year.