We are relaunching this newsletter after a hiatus of several years. We will try to produce at least one newsletter per year, and as we proceed we will try to broaden its scope, include a wider array of news, and make the product more visually pleasing.

We would like to publish news about alumni and friends. To tell us what you have been up to, please send a message to Susan Oppenborn, soppenborn1@niu.edu, or send a note to Susan at the Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University, 1425 W. Lincoln Highway, DeKalb IL 60115.

Best wishes,
Gary Burns, Chair

Two summer camps brought 70 high school students to NIU’s campus in 2011 for in-depth experience in communication.

NIU Film Camp, June 26-30, 2011

The fourth annual summer film camp for high school students had its highest enrollment yet with 20 students attending. Over the week the campers learned about the history and theory of film, while also doing hands-on production work. Campers made their own short films and learned production skills including scriptwriting, camera operation, cinematography, directing, and editing. The week concluded with the annual NIU Film Camp Film Festival, which showcased the campers’ work. Each camper went home with a DVD of the films.

Mike Gentile returned as director of the camp, which he created in 2008. Camp counselors included alums Jennifer Rayphole, Jenna Broderick, and Lisa Henderson.

Former Film Camp participant Mark Breedlove won “Best Drama” at CineYouth 2011, presented by the Chicago International Film Festival.

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Effective August 16, 2011, Robert Brookey and Joseph Scudder were promoted to Full Professor and Craig Seymour was granted tenure.

Gary Burns recently received the Association Award from the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association. The award recognizes his “extraordinary and far-reaching service” to the PCA/ACA. The award presentation took place on April 22, 2011, the last day of Gary’s term as President, at the PCA/ACA conference in San Antonio.

Jeffrey Chown has been named Board of Trustees Professor. He was chosen because of his consistent record of excellence in teaching, scholarship, service, and outreach, and leadership within his discipline. The appointment as Board of Trustees Professor is for the five-year period 2011-2016. Jeff will be asked to participate in responsibilities to the University including delivering the Board of Trustees Professorship Lecture; participating in workshops for the professional development of junior faculty and in activities that advance the university’s reputation and mission; maintaining an active program of teaching, scholarship or artistry, and service; and submitting a report detailing activities and accomplishments during the award period.

Jeff also took 10 communication students on the 20th annual Media and Culture in Ireland summer program at Dublin City University in July 2011. Among the highlights, the group attended the Galway Film Fleadh and Gaelic hurling match and visited the Hill of Tara, the Book of Kells, and Kilmarnock Gaol.

David Gunkel has spent the Fall 2011 semester in Krakow, Poland, as part of his Presidential Teaching Professorship award. During his residency, David is lecturing in Europe, working on initiatives to internationalize the media curriculum, and writing a new media theory textbook for undergraduate students.

Janice Hamlet was appointed Coordinator of Academic Diversity Programs through the Provost’s Office and began her new duties on August 16. Janice will be responsible for providing leadership in promoting undergraduate and graduate interdisciplinary academic diversity at NIU. She will coordinate and assist diversity minor and certificate programs in developing and implementing strategic planning goals. She will serve as the primary liaison to college, program, and department administrators and faculty to improve diversity course offerings.

Allen May spent part of summer 2011 on a 90-mile back-country wilderness hiking expedition in the Sangre de Cristo mountains of New Mexico, where he led a group of Boy Scouts in successfully climbing Baldy Mountain (12,400 feet) at the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch. Allen is a Scoutmaster in Naperville.

On the Edge, directed by Laura Vazquez, was chosen as an Official Selection of the Geneva Film Festival, which was held in April 2011. It also received the 2011 Broadcast Education Association King Family Foundation Best of Festival Award. This documentary chronicles the struggles of seven women trying to escape homelessness in small towns and resort communities across America. It was screened at the Naperville Independent Film Festival on Sept. 19, 2011, and at the Sycamore Film Festival Sept. 23-25.

New Arrivals:

There were a number of “arrivals” to our Communication families this year. Congratulations the proud parents of:

- Eleanor Oates (daughter of Thomas Oates)
- Allison Larry (daughter of Aimee Larry and Jason Larry)
- Anna Henningsen (daughter of Mary Lynn Henningsen and David Henningsen)
- Calvin Ebert (son of Jessica Ebert)

Welcome New Hires:

Joining the Department of Communication as Visiting Assistant Professors for the 2011-12 school year are Randall Caspersen and Jennifer Eden. Randy has his M.F.A. in Film and Video Production from Columbia College Chicago and is teaching media production courses. Jen has her Ph.D. in Communication from Arizona State University and is an alum of both our B.A. and M.A. programs. She is teaching courses in communication theory and interpersonal communication.

Joining the department as instructors are John Bender, Matthew Briggs, Carrie Casper, and Joseph Hoffswell. All are alums of the M.A. program. All are teaching COMS 100 except Matt, who is teaching one section of interactive media production. Matt’s “day job” is at WIFR-TV in Rockford. John also teaches a media production class on Adobe Photoshop.

Susan Oppenborn joined the Department as Undergraduate Program Advisor in 2010. Susan has her M.A. from DePaul University.

Retired:

Arthur Doederlein retired in August 2010 after working for 40 years in the Department. He was Director of Undergraduate Studies from 1976 to 2007 in the Department of Communication and in the former Department of Communication Studies.

Mary Larson retired December 31, 2010, after teaching 37 years in the Department.

Other Departures:

Longtime instructor Floyd Sanders left at the end of Summer 2011 to pursue other opportunities.

Northern Television Center News Director Alex Wiertelak recently accepted a position at Richland Community College in Decatur, Ill.
Dorothy Bishop, 78, who coached two generations of competitive debaters and taught thousands of students, died Nov. 8, 2010, at her home in DeKalb. She began her forensics career at Washburn University in 1956. She came to NIU as assistant professor in the Speech (now Communication) Department in 1963 and retired in 2003. One of her major responsibilities was her work in the Forensics program, coaching NIU’s intercollegiate debaters. Suggested Department of Communication memorials include the Speech Communication Fund and the Forensics Fund. To contribute to either of these funds, please make check payable to the Northern Illinois University Foundation, Altgeld Hall 135, DeKalb, IL 60115-2882, and please specify fund.

Norman Greer, B.A. and M.A. alum, died June 18, 2011. He had taught at Southern Illinois University, the University of Tennessee at Martin, and Bethel College and was retired from Eastern Illinois University.

Halbert Gulley, 91, retired Professor of Communication (formerly Communication Studies), died January 5, 2011. He retired from NIU in 1979 after nine years as Chair of the Department of Communication Studies. Suggested Department of Communication memorials include the Martha Cooper Memorial Endowment for Support of Instruction in Graduate Teaching and the Speech Communication Fund. To contribute to either of these funds, please make check payable to the Northern Illinois University Foundation, Altgeld Hall 135, DeKalb, IL 60115-2882, and please specify fund.

Anthony Marsowicz, M.A. alum and former instructor, died March 20, 2011, in New York. He worked as a legal compliance officer for a money management firm in New York.

Albert Walker, 91, retired Professor of Communication (formerly Journalism), died June 22, 2011, at Oakcrest DeKalb Area Retirement Center. Al retired in 1990 after 23 years but returned to teach part time from 1995 to 1998. He founded the public relations curriculum at NIU and was Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Journalism. Suggested Department of Communication memorials include the Public Relations Student Society of America Award Fund and the Emeritus Professor Al Walker Visiting Professional Fund. To contribute to either of these funds, please make check payable to the Northern Illinois University Foundation, Altgeld Hall 135, DeKalb, IL 60115-2882, and please specify fund.

Daniel Zimny, Communication M.A. alum and former instructor, died June 25, 2011. He is survived by his wife, Roseanne Zimny, and by his young daughter, Annamarie Zimny. Donations may be sent to Roseanne in care of Gary Burns, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University, 1425 W. Lincoln Highway, DeKalb, IL 60115.
For as long as NIU has been training future journalists, it has also been home to the association of newspapers that ultimately employ many of them.

In 1962, Journalism Department founder Donald Grubb chartered the Northern Illinois Press Association, which later became the Northern Illinois Newspaper Association (NINA). Then and now, NINA’s mission has been to advance the quality, integrity, and credibility of journalism and journalism education in northern Illinois.

Daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, and even online-only news publications comprise today’s NINA membership. The Association brings journalists to NIU for several workshops a year, plus the annual Fall Conference and awards dinner each October. Speakers have included many NIU alumni, including Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists.

NINA’s administration is provided by the Department of Communication and by the Northern Star. The Board of Directors meets five times a year at the Northern Star, providing networking opportunities between NIU journalism students and potential employers.

For more information about NINA and its connection to NIU, see www.ninaonline.org.

The fifth annual Film Camp is scheduled for June 24-29, 2012. For more information, please visit the Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/pages/NIU-Film-Camp/207585829264464.

NIU Speech Camp, July 10-15, 2011

July saw the 26th summer high school speech camp at NIU, presented through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences External Programming Office. The camp was at full capacity -- 50 students from Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin attended the six-day camp. Students spent the week concentrating on one specific event and learned research, analysis, writing, and performance skills. While the camp concentrates on honing skills necessary for high school speech competition, the Department’s intention is to provide students with skills that transcend the competitive arena. Presentations on team work, finding your voice, the power of communication, and positive thinking and self-confidence round out the curriculum. Matt Swan again served as an instructor and counselor and offered his expertise in oral interpretation. Graduate students Lisa Roth and Kacy Abeln served as assistant directors and, in addition to teaching and supervising residence halls, assisted with curriculum development, administration, and marketing. As in summers past, alums Greg Solomon, Nicole Carreno, Peggy Merrillos Boyter, Jim Yeager, Jake Imm, Hillary Rasmussen, Damon Royster, and Marj Askins all worked as instructors and counselors in the residence halls. Current team members Bobby Browning, Lauren Scott, and Bernard Chestleigh also served as counselors and performed for the campers.

This year the staff was enhanced by two former campers who took time off from their professional work to appear: attorney Omar Udin, who was a three-time camper in the 1990s, and marketing analyst Joe Carpita. Omar and Joe enjoyed the opportunity to “give back” to an experience that meant much to them. On the last day of the camp, students performed in small groups and were provided individual feedback by the staff. This was followed by a presentation of certificates and a pizza party. As always, the camp was a great success with very talented students who have a passion for public speaking.

We’d like to hear from you! Keep up with friends and classmates by sending us some information about yourself and your successes. Remember to include your address and email address, your degree and year, and your occupation today. Mail to: Department of Communication, Attn: Susan Oppenborn, Northern Illinois University, Watson Hall 217, DeKalb, IL 60115 or email soppenborn1@niu.edu.