Welcome to the Spring 2017 CST Newsletter! First, we’d like to say thank you. We’re elated that you have decided to stop by and give this newsletter a read. Putting together the exclusive stories and engaging content to follow has been a labor of love and something each of us will treasure as we prepare to depart UNC Greensboro.

If you’ve ever thought about what courses you would take during your last semester of senior year, or if you’ve NEVER thought about that, we’d like to quickly share one course in particular, that we think would perfectly cap off your undergraduate years.

Senior Capstone with Dr. Manning “is designed to help prepare you to leave UNCG and the Communication Studies Department with confidence in your abilities to articulate orally, verbally, and electronically the unique perspectives and skills you bring to the world.” That’s what the trusty syllabus will tell you. But how exactly does that look?

Imagine arriving on the first day of class and Dr. Manning having a large photo of a baby bird in a safe nest projected on the board. And then she says “Welcome to Senior Capstone! I am the mama bird and it’s my job to kick you out of the nest!” So, we look around and decide that the nest doesn’t look so bad.

For the next 4 months we deliver presentations that succinctly cover what we’ve learned from courses like Communication Theory and Gender and Sexual Identity, we have professional head shots taken for our LinkedIn accounts, we apply for jobs and cheer one another on as we land our dream jobs, we share our fears for the world we live in while laughing at ourselves along the way.

We can’t quite sum up CST 499- Senior Capstone in one word ; but we all approve, you should sign up for the course soon!

Signed,
Alex, Hunter, James, Leona, & Monique
As graduation approaches, I reflect back on these last four years. I am not the same person that I was freshman year. There’s a couple things that I should have done differently but now isn’t the time to reflect on missed opportunities. My senior self has some pretty useful advice for my freshman self. I hope you’ll find this information as useful as my freshman self would have.

You have four years to make connections. Make connections with as many people as possible. Once you get into your major classes, you’ll start to see the same people. Become friends with these people because they can be a valuable support system for you. These people will also make excellent study buddies. Not only should you make connections with your classmates, but you should also make connections with your professors. The communication studies professors have been here for a while and they are always more than willing to help. You ever heard the saying closed mouths don’t get fed? Well, it’s true. If you don’t tell them what you want or need then they can’t enhance your learning experience. Professors are also great people to get letters of recommendation from, but they can’t do that if they don’t know you. So, participate in class, sit in the front, and look attentive.

One word... INTERNSHIPS. Do them. The communication field is extremely broad. There’s so much you can do with this degree, but you won’t know until you explore your options. Do an internship for different fields until you find something you have a knack for. You’d be surprised how many big name brand companies that are in the triad area and have paid internships. Beyond the triad area, there are tons of companies that offer paid summer internships. Do some extensive research and get started with internships as soon as possible. Internships open the door for connections and connections open the door for careers.

Lastly, just enjoy your time here. Often times we’re in a rush to go nowhere fast, but these four years (or more) seriously fly by. You should definitely be excited to graduate and start your new life, but don’t do so without being excited about your present. The time that you’re spending here is helping mold you into a successful young adult. Take the good with the bad. There will be classes that you will excel in and there will be those classes that you struggle in. You need to know that failure is a part of life and growth. Also, you only fail if you give up. Take a deep breath and don’t allow yourself to become overwhelmed. One of the hardest things for me, was realizing its okay to ask for help and guidance. When people see you trying to better yourself, they are excited to help put you on the right path. Asking for help isn’t annoying or weak. It’s the mature thing to do. Most importantly, be passionate about everything that you do, and don’t forget to make time for yourself.

Students of Communication Studies contribute hundreds of service hours to the Greater Greensboro area each year. All CST students completes Communication and Community, a service learning based class that connects students to community initiatives where they use communication to address social tensions.

Dr. Spoma Jovonavic was instrumental in bringing Communication and Community to the department 15 years ago and has been an instructor of the course since. She says that the course has evolved over the years as it is responsive to the needs of the community, as many participating organizations consider the involvement of CST students vital to program success.

Project Spotlight: Greensboro Participatory Budgeting Project
Greensboro Participatory Budgeting is a democratic process in which community members of all five Greensboro districts directly decide how to spend $500,000 allotted by the city. Under the direction of Dr. Jovanovic, CST students have been involved with the process since it began in 2014. They helped to spread the word and increase support for the initiative, led get out the vote efforts, attended PB community events/meetings, and helped facilitate the voting process.

Project Spotlight: Dudley High School Senior Project Mentoring Dudley is a predominantly African American High School in Greensboro that serves a largely low income community. For the past eight years, the CST department has been partnering with the high school to connect Dudley seniors with Communication and Community students. The CST students serve as mentors, helping the high school students one-on-one with all aspects of their senior class projects.
For Rodney Johnson, it has always been clear that he was destined for a career in public service. After completing the Communication Studies program here at UNC-Greensboro, he moved back to his hometown of Roxboro, North Carolina where he is pursuing his passion for service and supporting others as a Professional Tutor and Program Coordinator of the Minority Male Success Initiative at Piedmont Community College. As Program Coordinator, Johnson spends his days collaborating with peers, superiors, and other members of the PCC community to develop programming to aid male students on their paths to academic and professional achievement. Johnson has coordinated several programs that address many of the issues that minority male students face as they pursue a college education. One of these programs brought male students together for dialogue through haircuts! The Barbershop Talk Program offered students free haircuts as they discussed cultural, social, and political issues within the community.

Johnson credits his first post-college job success to the CST program, “many of the concepts and strategies that I learned in the Communication Studies Program at UNC-Greensboro impacts my work every day.” He secured the position through effective networking and relationship building, skills he developed throughout the program. He then applies concepts from many elements of Communication Studies in his work, practicing communication ethics and strong small group facilitation skills to foster bonds with program mentees and other students.

Johnson encourages CST students to take advantage of opportunities within the department and the Greensboro Community. He says that employers value graduates who have demonstrated commitment to their areas of interest. As a CST student, Johnson pursued his passions for service and social impact by serving as a Research Assistant in the CST Department with Professor Spoma Jovonavic. As a Research Assistant, he assisted with the Greensboro Participatory Budgeting Project where he studied how people in the Greensboro community used communication to work through common issues together. Johnson also participated in Service Learning at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church where he worked with the Warnersville Community Garden.

The young professional says persistence and a strong work ethic are key to landing that first post-college job, “Brand yourself as a professional, both in person and online, and connect your experiences to what you can offer employers and your field.” Johnson says this includes staying dedicated to the organizations and groups that fuel your passions because they just might lead to a career.

James Geoghegan has been attracted to the theatre throughout his life. One week after graduating from UNCG with a Communication Studies degree in 2012, James moved to New York City with no place to work or dwell. Naturally drawn to theatre, he found employment as an usher at Lincoln Theatre. Once Geoghegan’s foot was in the door of show business, he put his communication skills to good use. The traits he honed in the CST department enabled him to network upward from usher to his current position of General Manager Assistant for Lincoln Theatre Company.

At the onset of his career, James had an interest in becoming a company manager, which involves handling the payroll and attendance for all those involved in a production such as actors, directors, and choreographers. However, after his first taste of general management he discovered a new calling. Specifically noting acclarity for the negotiation that aligns all the pieces necessary for a show to be produced. Geoghegan vividly recalled a 400 level class with Dr. Manning that helped prepare him for the professional realm. He referenced an assignment that required crafting a resume for your dream job, which for him was naturally a company manager in theatre. James claimed this assignment forced him to sit down and assess what it was a truly wanted to do after college. Ironically, this assignment became the resume he submitted for his current position following some minor adjustments.

Within the next decade, James hopes to continue working for Lincoln Theatre Company, citing that it is an exceptional work environment and a place you want to stay once you are there. Although he has designs on continuing to work for the same company, he envisions more vertical movement on the general management hierarchy. Geoghegan concluded his remarks by instructing current Communication Studies majors to never underscore the importance of listening. Noting that this aspect of communication is frequently overlooked when we focuses solely on speaking. He suggests listening to how both superiors and peers handle predicaments to pick up on habits that can strengthen your own communication skills.
William Clayton graduated from UNCG’s Communication Studies program in 2010. Aside from a 6-month stint on the West Coast, he has lived in Greensboro his entire life. William is currently in the midst of his sixth year as founder and president of local haberdashery Hudson’s Hill. However, the store does not deal strictly in garments, they also offer premium leather goods, tailoring services, and even vintage VHS tapes. The founder best described the store as a purveyor of local high quality products that doubles as a placeholder for Greensboro’s textile history.

Despite his success as an entrepreneur, Clayton did not envision himself owning a business at the conclusion of his academic career. Equipped with work experience at his families' screen-printing company and a “For Rent” sign in the window of a Greensboro landmark, the former Spartan hit the ground running and has not looked back. Daily tasks at the helm of his outfit range from finding new products for the shop to engaging with local artists.

Clayton made laudatory remarks when asked how well Communication Studies classes prepared him for his career. Stating being in retail requires an insurmountable amount of verbal and non-verbal communication daily. Strong communication skills are vital to successful business when you must be able to properly articulate the message behind the quality of your products, and concisely illustrate services a company provides. One message Clayton wanted to pass along to current students on the precipice of exchanging school for a profession is to go where opportunity presents itself. Additionally, do not be afraid of uncertainty and immerse yourself in a supportive community. Nonetheless, being a native of Greensboro, he also noted a yen to see more people making an impact in the local area following graduation.

It wasn't long after graduating from UNC-Greensboro with a degree in Communication Studies before Tiffany Green took to the skies as a Flight Attendant for Delta Airlines. Green wasn’t exactly sure what she wanted to do following her graduation in 2014 so she worked as a Nanny until she landed an interview with the major airline and was hired on the spot. Since her first interview with the company, Green has been utilizing skills she developed as a CST student.

“Developing relationships quickly is crucial to this job because you are always interacting with not only different passengers, but different crew members as well,” Green said. “Every individual that you encounter has a unique personality and background so you must be able to adapt your communication to meet people where they are.”

Green, who lives in Charlotte, commutes to her base in New York where she juggles scheduled days of flying and days where she is on call. Green says that her schedule is challenging but always rewarding. “I enjoy flying and I love interacting with people from all over the world because you began to connect with people on a human level,” she said. Green says that it is routine for her to interact with hundreds of people per day, so conflict is an expected part of the job. She finds that she falls back on the communication approaches that she studied in the CST Program.

“Communication is key to addressing critical issues that may arise over the course of a flight because you are dealing with a lot of people amid many communication barriers that emerge on a loaded plane,” she says. “Understanding Intercultural, conflict, and team communication are not only essential to having a pleasant work experience but crucial to ensuring that the passengers and crew alike make it to their destination safely.”

Green reminds CST students that professions with high levels of social interaction can feel like living in a fish bowl. “You want to be yourself and authentic while also understanding that you are in a setting where all communication is being interpreted,” she says. “Even if I am having a conversation with one passenger I am still sending a message to the dozens of other passengers.”

However, Green has a strategy for building meaningful relationships with her colleagues and the hundreds of passengers she interacts with each day. “No matter what, I always try to communicate honestly, openly, and with respect, she said.”
A year ago, Katherine Rodriguez was solving life decisions many Communication Studies students find themselves addressing now. Just two weeks after graduating from UNCG in May of 2016, Rodriguez found employment with Franklin American Mortgage Company in her hometown of Nashville, Tennessee. Although many young adults are eager to shun their birthplace once and for all after college, she was lured back by the many benefits of breaking into the professional realm in her hometown. One value Katherine specifically noted was working in the same building as her father, which enables them to frequently spend time together over lunch throughout the workweek.

The onset of her employment garnered glowing reviews just as the current state of her work environment. Since beginning, Rodriguez noted growth in both her ability and the company as a whole. Specifically highlighted was an inclusive work environment with supportive co-workers that she has become close to both professionally and socially. One area Katherine felt Communication classes polished most effectively was her confidence. Prior to taking classes in the department, she was apprehensive about speaking in front of a crowd and believed her orating skills were jejune. However, once completing the appropriate coursework within CST she was armed with exceptional confidence and a dilatant ability for public speaking. Contrarily, Rodriguez could not recall an area Communication Studies failed to refine for the workforce. Instead, she felt every class provided integral insight into molding herself into a capital professional.

Despite being ultimately satisfied with her current title, Katherine still yearns for the prospect of a public relations position at some point in her career. Within the next five to ten years, she would like to marry and refrain from limiting herself to a single profession. Whether or not that means giving up lunch with her father, only time will tell. Her parting words were directed towards current CST students, specifically those on the job search. Rodriguez advised students to practice patience and fortitude when searching for employment, as well as to disregard the preferred years of experience. She noted that the job offer she accepted requested 1-3 years of experience, yet there was no quibbling over offering the position to a recent graduate.

Caroline Blair graduated from UNCG with a dual degree in Communication and Media studies. She is a news anchor and reporter for Time Warner Cable News. She feels that the Communication department has helped in preparing her for her career. The department has helped Caroline become a more effective communicator across a diverse audience of people, and the communication studies department has aided in her becoming a better writer. The presentations that she delivered in class, now help her pitch story and series ideas. Interpersonal Communication and Communication and Workplace Relations have been most beneficial to Caroline. The classes not only prepared her to communicate with her colleagues, but she was also able to apply the major to her career. The classes enhanced her written and verbal communication, creativity in the workplace, presentation skills.

Even as a communication studies student, Caroline envisioned herself as a reporter. Her career is still in progress, but she has had much success. Caroline is happy to be serving the Carolinas because she knows the people and loves the state. Technology has altered some aspects of Caroline’s career. In the beginning, reporters who worked for larger markets were provided with a photographer. Currently, journalists are expected to be able to shoot, write, edit, and report their own stories. The desire for news to be accessible 24/7 has also shifted Caroline’s career. Traditional story telling has taken on new platforms such as social media, numerous print publications have gone out of business. Many people use social media as a news outlet. This requires journalist to use social media in order to connect with that audience. If she could do it all again, Caroline would have started interning earlier. If not interning, she would have at least liked to shadow more stations, but being a division 1 college athlete made that difficult. She would have also taken summer courses, and the maximum credit hours each semester. Stacking classes would have allowed her to start a master’s program earlier. Being out of school, she says it’s hard finding the time to go back. Caroline would still like to incorporate journalism into her future endeavors. Looking away from work, she hopes to start a family before the age of 40. Starting a family may change her career path, but Caroline still wants to not only help but inform the public through storytelling.

Caroline advises current students to stay focused, listen to professors, and apply the coursework to your career. She also advises doing as many internships as possible and finding a mentor for guidance. When recommending the department, Caroline says, “I would tell them that if they’re looking towards a career path in public relations or looking to become a spokesperson for a company, that is the way to go.”
On Monday, March 20th, 2017 I had the pleasure of interviewing Jacquelyn Handsome. As an engaged, recent college graduate, and Certified Lead Event Planner, Ms. Handsome’s days are seldom routine.

Handsome and I met during her last semester here at UNCG. We were both enrolled in Organizational Communication where we worked on projects together. One of the projects we worked diligently on was breaking down an organization and analyzing the culture of communication they utilized. While I also had an internship, because I tele-commuted for work, we decided that my organization would not be the best fit for the assignment. Luckily Handsome had an internship with an Event Planning Agency here in Greensboro which proved to be perfect. While working with Handsome over the course of the semester I learned that she wanted to become an Event Planner after graduation and I found that incredibly interesting considering I had never met someone who wanted to be an event planner.

There is a misconception among many college students that your degree must be specific to what you see yourself doing after college. Handsome notes how important it was for her to have an internship that laid a strong competitive foundation for her. When asked what she would tell other Communication Studies students she said:

“Toward current CST students to take their internships very seriously. They should treat their internship like they are working a full-time job because it might just turn into a full time job. It is also very important for them to network and get involved. I would encourage them to not be afraid to try something new.”

Handsome has now been working with her current company, Distinction Events and Design, LLC, for one year and admits how beneficial taking communication courses have proven to be not only in Event Planning, but also her future career goals. While Handsome explains that each day brings something different, she is always working with and building relationships with vendors and potential clients. Outside of spending hours online there is a lot of interpersonal communication happening.

Handsome had the pleasure of meeting celebrity wedding planner, David Tutera, at one of the many events she attends to continue learning and growing within her field. Overall, I enjoyed interviewing Handsome and was so happy to know she was doing well post-graduation.

Towards the conclusion of our interview I asked Handsome what her future career plans were.

“In about 5-10 years I see myself running my own Event Planning Company and expanding that company across the U.S” said Handsome.