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In 2005, Dr. Bill Cowen, associate teaching professor of Communication, launched the Villanova Communication Alumni Network (VCAN), a program designed to connect undergraduate and graduate alumni working in all areas of communication. Through networking and professional development events as well as opportunities to mentor current Villanova students, VCAN invites alumni, faculty and others in the Villanova community to engage in innovative programming relevant to the communication profession.

By 2008, VCAN had premiered its now biannual newsletter, a student-written and produced publication in conjunction with Lambda Pi Eta and select design students and faculty, which features updates on VCAN and Villanova’s Department of Communication. All these years later, the newsletter still provides students with the

VCAN's 2005 kick-off in Philadelphia.

Dr. Bill Cowen and Claudia Russo at her graduation (left) and at a recent VCAN New York event with that photo in hand, which she proudly displays in her office.
opportunity to actively engage with the alumni network. These connections foster professional opportunities, provide mentor relationships and create internship and job possibilities for current students.

“We are thrilled to celebrate all we’ve accomplished together over the years,” said Cowen. “We are excited about what the future holds for the program and our alumni.”

This year, we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of VCAN with some of our alumni who discuss what VCAN means to them.

Since the launch of VCAN, there have been countless events and memories with Villanova students, alumni and faculty.

Kevin Moran ’09 CLAS, ’12 MA thanks VCAN for helping to facilitate lasting relationships with members of his graduate cohort and for helping him create new relationships with professionals from other graduating classes. While at Villanova, Moran served as the station manager for WXVU, Villanova’s student-run radio station.

Dave Clarke ‘05 CLAS appreciates that VCAN helps alumni expand their Villanova network beyond their graduating class. Through the network, he has identified and developed professional relationships with other Villanovans for future collaborations. As an undergraduate student, Clarke served as the president of the Villanova chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America.

Claudia Russo ’04 CLAS asserts that people’s professional success is all about their network. From her first internship to her first job, "every professional opportunity has been granted through my network." Through VCAN, Russo and other alumni have the unique experience of creating connections with communication professionals across different sectors and levels. As a member of the leadership committee, she has served as a panelist on a crisis communication panel and has reflected on her ability to meet other professionals not just in television but in the government sector as well.

Here's to 15 more years and beyond for VCAN!

“We are thrilled to celebrate all we’ve accomplished together through the years." -Dr. Bill Cowen

Kevin Moran during his time working with WXVU radio.
Kevin Moran is now a communication, nonprofit and economic development leader with an affinity for urban places. As senior manager of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Philadelphia District Council he works to advance the mission of creating and sustaining thriving communities, specifically in the Philadelphia region through the membership and educational institutes. Moran joined ULI this May after previously serving as the executive director of the Northern Liberties Business Improvement District as well as the Fairmount Community Development Corporation. He also teaches in the Planning and Community Development Program at Temple University.

Claudia Russo currently works in corporate communication for Verizon. She previously worked at FOX Television Stations for 14 years where she served as director of corporate communications and led corporate communications and media relations for FOX’s 28 broadcast television stations and first-run entertainment syndication division. Prior to her time at FOX, Russo worked at Hill & Knowlton Strategies, one of the leading global public relationship consulting companies with clients such as Walmart, Deloitte and Geoxx. Russo is a contributor to Suburbs101, an “insider’s guide to the New York suburbs,” where she writes on various lifestyle topics, including parenting and dining.

Dave Clarke is the founder and owner of Authentic Matters where he develops digital go-to-market strategies for companies across all verticals—from financial technology, e-commerce and autonomous vehicles to hospitality, B2B and commercial real estate.
Raka Shome is currently the Harron Family Endowed Chair and Professor of Critical Media and Cultural Studies in Villanova's Department of Communication. Her interests at Villanova lie in postcolonial studies, culture and globalization, transnational feminism, critical race studies and nationalism. She currently teaches Cultural Studies at the graduate level as well as an undergraduate class on postcolonial approaches to communication.

"My experience here so far has been very good. I enjoy my department and the supportive colleagues," said Dr. Shome. "I have also encountered many bright students committed to social justice and cultural inequality—which is what I am committed to."

While she writes on postcolonial cultures, transnational feminism and media/communication cultures, Dr. Shome's current research interests are in Asian modernities, transnational relations of India, cultural studies, especially beyond the Birmingham framework, racism and media in a global context, transnational media cultures and gender and the transnational politics of knowledge production as a communication issue.

Dr. Shome has published numerous articles and book chapters in leading journals and anthologies in the field of media and communication studies. Most notably, she is the author of *Diana and Beyond: White Femininity, National Identity and Contemporary Media Culture*—a book that examines how new sets of postcolonial relations in contemporary western cultures are mediated through images of white femininity, especially privileged and celebrity white women. In addition, many of her essays have been reprinted in key texts in the field of global communication as well as media studies. Plus, her work has been heavily cited both in the field of communication as well as beyond.

Dr. Shome is in the process of writing a book about the Clean India movement and contemporary Hindu nationalism guest-editing a special issue of communication and critical/cultural studies "Cultural Studies and the Global South."

"My current research is on nationalism and its connections to religion and how these connections are often forged through a regulation of the female body," said Dr. Shome. "Broadly, I am interested in feminist approaches to nationalism and colonialism."

Dr. Shome has delivered several talks, including keynotes and plenaries as well as workshops on issues of post-coloniality, gender, transnational feminism and racism in contemporary global contexts. In 2011-2012 she served as the Inaugural Harron Family Visiting Endowed Chair of Communication at Villanova University. Prior to this, she held full-time faculty appointments at the London School of Economics, Arizona State University and the University of Washington. In the fall of 2014, she was invited by the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden to serve as a visiting scholar where she also lectured at many Swedish universities during her visit.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Shome back!
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: RACHELLE JOY POTENTE

By Sophia Sardinas '20 CLAS
For many college students, taking part in a summer internship can be a daunting task. Interns must be willing to sacrifice their long-awaited summer vacation to gain working experience. For Villanova University senior, Rachelle Joy Potente ‘20 CLAS, not only did she spend the past summer consumed by office life, but she did so on the other side of the world.

Rachelle, a Philadelphia native, knew she wanted to intern abroad after hearing a Villanova graduate student reflect on her own international experience. A Communication major with a specialization in Interpersonal Communication and minors in both Asian Studies and Japanese Studies, she applied to her internship through Intern Group, a third-party internship coordinator.

Rachelle was very pleased with her internship choice as she was paired with Japan Travel KK, a travel agency in Tokyo, Japan. For the Japanese enthusiast “this was an opportunity to do community development and outreach, marketing and also travel to Japan without having to spend a lot of money.” She also couldn’t have chosen a more opportune time as she had the exclusive chance to work alongside Japanese government officials from Saitama Prefecture and marketing executives to promote the 2020 Summer Olympics (now set for 2021), specifically basketball, which will be held in the city of Saitama. Rachelle assisted the Saitama government officials’ marketing team with basketball-centered social media campaigns for American fans who plan to travel to watch Olympic matches.

Interning for Japan Travel KK also meant Rachelle was able to travel extensively around the country and write articles about some of Japan’s lesser-known prefectures and tourist spots. As a foreigner, she improved marketing strategies to better suit the traveling American public. Throughout the summer, Rachelle noticed that her writing and photography skills and Japanese fluency improved drastically. While abroad, Rachelle wrote her articles in English and then they were translated by a coworker into Japanese. She was able to practice her language skills with her Japanese coworkers and in public settings when

"Hopefully in five years I am doing work to promote or include diversity and inclusion within the workplace..."

Rachelle Joy Potente at the Hakone Shrine in Kanagawa Prefecture.
requesting directions or places to eat. The most difficult part, she recalls, was trying to ask questions in Japanese at her internship and realizing that online translators were faulty and unreliable.

Rachelle credits Villanova’s Japanese and Communication courses, such as Multicultural Leadership and Dialogue, Intergroup Dialogue, and Intercultural Communication for providing her with communication skills and cultural differences between Japan and the United States. One aspect of Japanese culture that was surprising to her was how different genders communicated with and treated one another. She was able to experience first-hand what she had learned about in her Villanova class on multicultural dialogue. Even her Communication theory courses such as Organizational Communication and Interpersonal Communication, Public Speaking and Philosophy of Women also prepared her for a rich experience abroad.

In addition to gaining firsthand experience in writing articles and promoting social media, the international internship allowed her to obtain a different perspective on work-life. Japan’s rigorous work culture and business etiquette is credited to be some of the reasons why Japanese companies are so successful.

Rachelle looks forward to going abroad again to enrich a future career involving the promotion of diversity and inclusion. “Hopefully, in five years I am doing work to promote or include diversity and inclusion within the workplace or HR,” said Rachelle. “I feel so passionate about equality because of all the things I’ve learned in my internships and coursework about racism, colorism, stereotypes, diversity, and inclusion, so hopefully I can do that for any company that I’m in and make sure everyone feels like they have a place.”

“I feel so passionate about equality because of all the things I’ve learned in my internships and coursework about racism, colorism, stereotypes, diversity, and inclusion.”

-Rachelle Joy Potente
THE WATERHOUSE FAMILY INSTITUTE HOSTS "TRANSIT TALKS" LECTURE

By Sarah Jones ’21 CLAS and Solange Stamatos ’21 CLAS

The Waterhouse Family Institute (WFI) welcomed renowned scholar Karma R. Chávez from the University of Texas at Austin as a presenter for the second annual “Transit Talks” lecture series in collaboration with Temple University’s Klein College of Media and Communication. Dr. Chávez spoke at Villanova’s campus on Thursday, February 6th followed by a “master class” on Temple’s campus on Friday, February 7th.

Dr. Chávez is chair and associate professor in the Department of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies at the University of Texas – Austin. She is also the author of Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities (University of Illinois Press, 2013) and Palestine on the Air (University...

ALIENIZING NATION: HIV/AIDS AND THE RHETORIC OF QUARANTINE, BAN, AND RESISTANCE

KARMA R. CHÁVEZ, Chair and Associate Professor
Department of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies
University of Texas—Austin

Dr. Chávez’s Villanova lecture was entitled “Alienizing Nation: HIV/AIDS and the Rhetoric of Quarantine, Ban, and Resistance.” She argued that the United States is an alienizing nation and discussed how alienizing logic manifested in calls for quarantine during the early years of AIDS. Quarantines are commonly used in order to prevent those with infectious diseases from movement in attempt to curtail the spreading of the disease. People living with AIDS were often quarantined. In addition, immigrants and those who engaged in non-traditional sexual practices were particularly targeted, even though experts knew that quarantine was not an effective way to treat the disease.

Dr. Chávez also explained that there was hysteria surrounding AIDS that became a platform for politicians and interest groups to gain power. Quarantine became a political issue, rather than a health issue. This allowed ideas by those not affected, such as the religious right, to harm people living with the disease.

The WFI was founded to “highlight the centrality of communication in the creation of social change.” The WFI is housed within Villanova University’s Department of Communication. It was established by Lawrence Waterhouse Jr., ’59, founder of Waterhouse Investor Services, Inc. Bryan Crable, PhD, professor of Communication, is the founding director of the WFI. The WFI sees communication not as a process that is solely for the transmission, transfer, or exchange of information, but rather as how human beings create relationships with each other and to the world around them. One of the ways that the WFI enacts its mission is through lectures. The lecture series may differ in subject, but they always aim to spark conversation about communication, social change and social justice.

“The Transit Talks lecture series are a great example of how the WFI is designed to serve as the center of a network of Communication scholars and students interested in questions of social justice and they help connect our students and faculty to Temple’s students and faculty in media and communication,” said Dr. Crable.

“All of our speakers are not only doing cutting-edge work in the Communication discipline, but they also demonstrate the power of a communication perspective to generate a more just social world.”

Dr. Chavez’s “Transit Talks” exemplified the WFI’s mission of putting ethics at the center of communication.

The next "Transit Talks" lecture series will take place in September and will welcome Professor Lisa Flores from the University of Colorado at Boulder.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: EDGAR HERWICK
How Curiosity Brought Edgar B. Herwick III to Radio

Herwick's lifelong search for knowledge laid the foundation for his current success.

By Natalie Snyder ’21 CLAS and Cala Lejman ’21 CLAS

Do you ever wonder why empty buses drive by? Or if every piece of popcorn is unique like a snowflake? Why are certain words trending? Edgar B. Herwick III ’99 CLAS tackles mysteries hiding in plain sight for a living, and created Curiosity Desk, a weekly feature segment at WGBH Radio—an NPR station in Boston, Massachusetts where he aims to satisfy and inspire the listener's curiosity. From childhood through his education at Villanova University and his current experience at WGBH Radio, Herwick has always come back to radio. As a member of Villanova’s 1999 graduating class, Herwick focused his studies on communication and history. His love of learning drove him to Villanova because of its broad curriculum that allowed his curiosity to prosper. Although his mind was not set on it at the time, Herwick recalls all of the situations that brought him to radio.

“In retrospect, it is not a surprise that I ended up in radio,” said Herwick.

Herwick described his first encounter with radio when his grandfather organized a
reading of a public service announcement (PSA) for him on a small-town radio near his hometown. This experience overwhelmed him with excitement for radio as he was able to experience wearing headphones and speaking into a microphone for the very first time. Following his radio debut, Herwick’s love for radio continued to grow throughout his childhood. He recalled making fake radio shows with his siblings—recording them on cassette tapes.

During his orientation week at Villanova, Herwick followed his passion once again as he joined the on-campus radio station, WXVU. While he didn’t know exactly what he wanted to study, Herwick knew one thing: he wanted to be a part of the radio station. During the school year, Herwick worked various jobs, making it difficult for him to figure out a solid career path. At the time, internships weren’t as readily available as they are now, leaving him on his own to forge a path.

Not knowing how to get into radio after graduating from Villanova, Herwick tried his hand at different jobs. He joined AmeriCorps and moved to Denver, Colorado as a Youth Corp volunteer. After spending a year in Colorado, Herwick expanded his job positions to include bartending, photography and acting. Although Herwick enjoyed these jobs, he once more found himself pulled back towards the East Coast and jobs in the media industry.

After returning to Philadelphia, Herwick worked a frontline job at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He then moved onto the public relations and marketing team at the museum where he facilitated work between the museum and local television and radio stations. Working with stations such as WHYY and Temple’s WRTI sparked his interest in public broadcasting. Herwick adventurously applied to work at radio stations in big cities across the United States. In 2006, Herwick found his home at WGBH Radio.

During his time at WGBH, Herwick realized the importance of researching and interviewing behind the scenes in order to produce a meaningful story. He also learned about the intricate process and tools behind producing radio. Throughout his 13 years at WGBH, Herwick has mastered different sectors within the radio sector. His most recent production, Curiosity Desk centers around investigating mysteries that listeners suggest. He spends his time
conducted extensive research which has allowed him to meet and speak with various people, including a Massachusetts Institute of Technology food scientist, Boston government officials and astronauts.

“One of the things I love most about my job is that at its essence, it is to become a minor expert on something new every single week and that's cool,” said Herwick. “I never stop thinking about ways to do things in interesting ways.”

Herwick hopes that he finds himself back in Philadelphia one day. When asked about his future in radio, he spoke about the possibility of moving towards on-demand listening platforms such as podcasts. His broad education at Villanova cultivated his love for expansive learning which is evident as his knowledge is ever growing in his current position.
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