

# COMMUNIQUE

Summer 2012

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Bryan (right) with one of her Jordanian students

## Alumna Finds Success in Marine Corps

When you think of a Marine, you might think of popular media images: a tall, fit man charging into battle with a rifle in hand or a squared away soldier snapping off a salute. However, if you were to meet Kat Muehlstein Bryan, your opinion and definition of a Marine might change.

Compared to the population of men, women make up about 15% of the Marine Corps. About one percent of those women are officers, but an even smaller percentage makes up female captains. These female captains are few and far between, and Bryan, an alumnus of the Communication Studies department, can say with pride that she has achieved this honor.

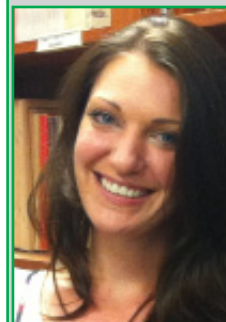
Bryan has always been one to march to the beat of her own drum. "I was a very involved student [in high school] but only participated in things that were unique in themselves," she says.

"I was lucky enough to get to participate in everything from powerlifting, to throwing the discus for track and field, playing percussion in the band, performing on the flag line, and being the president of the art club. I was always interested in learning things that not many others knew how to do."

Originally from Longview, TX, Bryan enlisted in the Marines the summer before her senior year of high school at the age of 17. "I have a family history of Army service so the military always something in the back of my mind as the Marine Corps was smaller, with higher standards, and more challenging."

She left for basic training in Parris Island, SC, only three days after graduating high school. Three months later in August 2003, she returned to Texas from boot camp and joined her first

## Meet Our New College of Arts and Sciences Communication Studies Ambassadors!



**Gretchen Messersmith** (Senior, Carrollton) is majoring in Communication Studies with a minor in Marketing. Her hobbies include recreational reading, and quality time with her gal pals. She loves a good debate, and really enjoyed watching classic movies until Gender COMM made her see the world through a critical eye.

**Dezzra (Dezz) Gomez** (Senior, Dallas) is earning her B.A. in Communication Studies with a minor in Psychology in pursuit of her dream of becoming a police officer and homicide detective. In addition to sewing, working out, shopping, and hanging out with her friends, Dezz has an obsession with collecting key chains.



## Corps Alumna, continued

unit in Fort Worth as an Aviation Maintenance Supply Clerk. Less than a week later, Bryan was in her first college class at UNT.

She was quite busy and hard at work at only 18 years old. While in school here, she majored in Communication Studies, minored in Italian, worked her Marine Corps job, and worked nights at RBar and Rockin' Rodeo in Denton. She attended Kilgore Junior College during her time off in the summers to knock out some basic courses and make a speedy trip towards her degree. On top of this already busy schedule, she also attended Officer Candidate School in the summers through her Platoon Leaders Course commissioning program through the Marine Corps. The program consists of two six-week sessions in Quantico, VA, and took over Bryan's summers between her freshman and sophomore years and her junior and senior years.

"Summers in Quantico are brutally hot and humid. I truly don't know how I could describe it other than getting yelled at constantly, writing a lot of essays as punishment, physically demanding, with little sleep – all the while being screened and evaluated for your leadership capabilities and qualities. You get in great shape though."

After graduation from UNT in December 2006, Bryan attended the Basic Officer's Course, a six-month school for new officers. She called the experience "a gut check," as this program proved to be a challenge. "It was a great time just due to the friendships that came



out of it, but definitely a challenge for somebody who is 5'1", 120 pounds and now training alongside 6' and taller, 200 pound men – and you're carrying the same combat load as they are and keeping up at their speed." Nonetheless, she successfully became a Logistics Officer and was stationed in Camp Pendleton, CA, in April 2008 to April 2011.

Bryan deployed to Iraq in October 2008 to April 2009 as a battle captain for Multi National Corps. She worked in the Joint Operations Center in the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, working in operations tracking and reporting on U.S. military operations in Iraq. She later deployed on the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit as the Landing Support Officer for Combat Logistics Battalion 15 and was responsible for the offload and throughput support of all the Marine equipment for the ships.

Bryan uses her Communication Studies degree everyday in her leadership role. "I loved Communication Studies from the get-go. I thought it was extremely interesting," Bryan says. "I

was undecided about my major at first, and that Intro to Communications class is what hooked me." She has learned many different styles of leadership and how to communicate effectively with others. She says that her coursework from her degree gave her the confidence and ability to speak in front of others and take on the role of a leader in the organization. Combined with hard work and determination, Bryan has utilized the lessons of her Communication Studies degree to be successful in the Marines.

Kathryn Muehlstein Bryan is married to Steven Bryan, who is also a member of the Marines and alum of UNT, and is currently living in San Diego, CA. She is working as an instructor and course manager for Marines and sailors, teaching them Maritime Prepositioning Force Staff Planning. This year will mark her ninth anniversary with the Marines. She says, "There is nothing I would rather be doing and I am one of the few people I know who can truly say I am where I am meant to be."





## Department Offers New Courses in Social Media This Fall

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed joins the faculty this fall after completing a Postdoctorate at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Ahmed is part of a team of three faculty members hired in the college this year who specialize in research on various forms of social media. Together with new faculty hires in Linguistics and Technical Communication and Radio, Television, and Film, Dr. Ahmed will be working to determine the future direction of the College of Arts and Sciences in this burgeoning area of teaching and research.

In the fall, Dr. Ahmed will be teaching an undergraduate course entitled “Communication and Virtual Gaming” and a graduate seminar in Communication in Virtual Environments.

Look for a more detailed profile of Dr. Ahmed in the Fall edition of our newsletter.

## COMM Undergraduate Receives Award at Scholar’s Day

Undergraduate James Nichols won an award on Thursday, April 19, for a paper he presented at University Scholars Day. James received second place for his proposal entitled “Negotiating in the 21st Century: Bridging the Gap Between Technology and Hostage Negotiation.” He was awarded a cash prize and is eligible for a \$500 travel grant to present his work elsewhere within the next academic year. Below is the abstract of his work.

James is a junior at UNT and is also a member of the Honors College. As a department, we congratulate James on his scholastic achievement.

Abstract: Hostage negotiation is an interpersonal communicative event that primarily relies on verbal communication through landlines. The purpose of this research proposal is to promote the inclusion of new technology, specifically cellphones with text, call, and video chat capabilities, into hostage negotiation situations.

## Capstone Class Benefits Friends of the Family

In addition to writing papers and completing research projects, the students of the department’s new capstone course were engaged in a semester long class community engagement project. Over the course of the semester, the members of the class selected the non-profit organization Denton County Friends of the Family and structured a plan to benefit the organization. In support of Friends of the Family, the class organized a dodge ball tournament and fundraiser to raise money, in which over ten teams with members of the university participated on May 4th. In addition to the dodge ball tournament, the students organized a live auction, to coincide with Friends of the Family’s annual gala fundraiser. All proceeds from the auction went to benefit this local organization that helps women and children who are victims of domestic violence.. Overall, both events were a success and the students raised around \$5,000 for the organization.

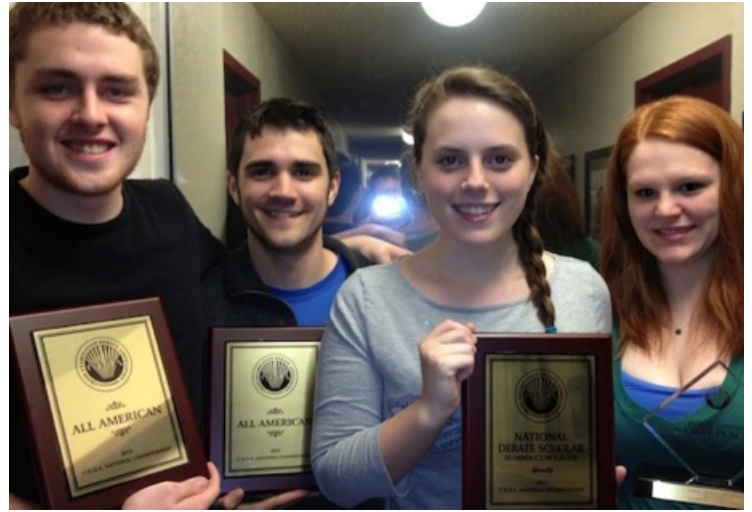


Team “Faculty Avengers,” Drs. Suzanne Enck, Shaun Treat, Kelly Taylor, and Justin Trudeau, prepare to compete in the dodgeball tournament.



Graduate and undergraduate students showing their school spirit before the live auction at the Gala Benefit for the Denton County Friends of the Family.

# UNT Debate receives National Public Sphere Award from Cross Examination Debate Association



The UNT Debate program won the National Public Sphere Award, which recognized the program's incredible public debates during the 2011-2012 season. The Award, presented by Dr. Eric Morris of Missouri State University, recognizes UNT's actions supporting public discussion, moderating public debates, and creating opportunities for new debaters. Past winners include the University of Miami, James Madison University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Vermont.

Additionally, two UNT students were named to the All American Debate Squad. Colin Quinn and Brian Kersch were both named to the Cross Examination Debate Association's 30 member all American Debate Squad. This titles recognizes them among the nation's best debaters.

Amy Schade and Shelby Pryor were named National Debate Scholars. This title recognizes them as among the best-accomplished debaters in the nation. Ms. Pryor was named National Debate Scholar Magna Cum Laude and Ms. Schade was named a National Debate Scholar Suma Cum Laude. The award, given to a handful of debaters every year, recognizes their academic achievements while participating in collegiate debate.

## Debate-A-Palooza!

The UNT Debate team, students in COMM 2140 (Rhetoric & Argument) and COMM 3840 (Argument & Debate), and UNT Debate alumni hosted Debate-a-Palooza this spring. The event featured more than 35 public debates in one day on topics such as politics, gender, and college education.

Dr. Tracy McFarland, the National Debate Coaches Association "Educator of the Year" was the keynote speaker at the April 28 event. UNT hosts Debate-A-Palooza every semester and everyone is invited to attend.

For more information on UNT Debate, follow their page on Facebook.





# Education the Campus through Course Fairs

## COMMunity Fair

On May 1 the COMM 1010 course put together the 2nd COMMunity Fair in the UNT Union, "Exploring Reality through the Lens of the Media." Topics such as sex education, fitness, gender, sports, and bullying were presented.



## Gender Fair

This April brought the 6th Gender Fair to the UNT Union, covering topics such as feminism, sexuality, masculinity, and race and gender. Lambda Pi Eta also accepted donations for Denton County Friends of the Family.



# Catching up with COMM Studies Alumni



**TAMMY CASTLEBERRY, MA 2008**  
Communication Specialist @ Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD

"It is not uncommon for me to use information I learned in Crisis Communications, Gender & Aging and Organizational Communication in my position on a daily basis.... all before noon. The skills and mentoring I received from my graduate professors, especially Dr. Richardson, prepared me for media interviews, crisis situations, managing four generations in the workplace and training employees on different aspects of communication."

**JANET MCEWAN, MA 2002**  
Director @ American Society of Radiologic Tech

"Getting my graduate degree in my 40s – more than a decade after my undergraduate – was something I did for personal satisfaction. It ended up refining my critical thinking skills and immersed me in research. My work in corporate relations requires me to interact with medical device and pharmaceutical companies at their level. The critical inquiry skills required by all the courses I took helped me better understand "science speak" and connect with my industry contacts.."



**NATIKAN LAZAR, BA 2003**  
7th grade Reading teacher @ Denton ISD



"Having been a COMM student at UNT has taught me to see the relevance and "intertextuality" of life experiences, the social fabric into which we are woven, and the way messages linger like the familiar tastes of childhood's sweets--right at the tip of the tongue, leading to utterings and insights anew. I love everything I learned as a COMM major and way it spotlights the sensibility of this mess of a spectacular mosaic of a world."

Send us an e-mail at [COMMStudies@unt.edu](mailto:COMMStudies@unt.edu) and tell us what you're up to--and send a picture!