CARMEN BAEZ
HER THOUGHTS ON LETTING LIFE HAPPEN

DIGITAL CULTURES
CHANGING CURRICULUM IN A WORLD OF FLUX

THE SIMMONS EDGE
CONVERGENCE IS KEY

INTERNSHIPS
WHERE ALL THE SENIORS ARE WORKING THIS YEAR
commtracks is an annual magazine published by the Communications Department at Simmons College. The magazine is led by a team of five students as an independent study advised by faculty members. Members of this team and other seniors were responsible for the magazine content. Content was structured to highlight the many aspects of the department that come together to produce successful graduates. Each year the magazine selects different faculty and alumnae to feature in the publication. As students we appreciate all of our talented faculty and their contribution to the department and chose to feature a few of the professors whose personal interests brought valuable perspective to the classroom experience. Alumnae were chosen for profiles based on their continued engagement with current students through class panels and internship opportunities.

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WELCOME

We hope you enjoy this year’s issue of CommTracks as much as we enjoyed creating it. We are so proud to share this issue with you after long months of planning, copywriting, designing, editing and proofing. For the first time in its eight year history, CommTracks became a project separate from Studio 5. It was produced by a team of seniors doing an independent study and demanded a high level of responsibility and commitment. While this presented challenges, it gave us a chance to push our skills and ultimately prove ourselves.

This issue is an exploration of how the separate pieces of the Department of Communications contribute to the strength and success of our graduates. We wanted to showcase what makes us great, how the puzzle comes together through the countless connections that nurture our growth and success. These connections span every aspect of our lives as students, from the relationships we have with faculty and alumnae, to the experience and skills we gain in the classroom and in extracurricular groups.

These connections have prepared us for the most important of them all: our connection to our audiences. The convergence of media shapes how the world interacts with it, and thus changes how we must interact with the world as creators. It demands evolution and flexibility from all of us. It gives us power, and a duty to use it wisely. In the words of Marshall McLuhan, “We have become irrevocably involved with, and responsible for, each other.” In closing, we’d like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who made this magazine possible. We’d like to especially thank Andy, Judy, Ellen and Jim for their help as advisors.
The Department of Communications prides itself on offering students a curriculum that is an exciting blend of theory and hands-on application. A curriculum that focuses on media convergence — the blending of text, visuals, and sound to create new media — and the integration of academic knowledge and professional practice that prepares students exceptionally well for working in a range of careers in communications now and in the future. But do we?

Yes, it is true the National Communication Association praised the curriculum for its interactive, student-centered, and creative approach to education when it presented the department with its Rex Mix Program Excellence Award. And, yes, it is nice to have your peers and colleagues from across the country recognize the quality program we have built.

But what can we point to that gives us the confidence to say with such certainty what we provide a student is of value? Studio 5.

Studio 5: A Communications Workplace, is one of the department’s two capstone independent learning experiences, along with the Internship Program. It is organized as an in-house consulting group where the media convergence skills emphasized throughout the department’s curriculum — design, video, writing, advertising and public relations, and broadcasting — converge, and provide local non-profit organizations solutions to their marketing communications needs.

Teams are comprised of students from the different academic concentrations in the department so that each team member brings a different skill set to the team’s efforts — that work collaboratively with each other and their clients. They create a marketing communications project from inception through development and implementation. They gather information from their clients, do the initial research on the clients’ mission, goals, and audiences; develop the communications strategy and messaging; develop the visual messages for the project (graphic design, photographs, videos, web design); revise their work in response to feedback from their clients; and negotiate with printers and other vendors to produce the final products. The final products, which may include designing a website, creating a brochure, planning and producing an event, radio or video; setting up a photo shoot; or even developing an entire branding campaign.

How well do these teams perform? I’ll let the some of the clients answer that question.

From Nyansa, which sought a communications plan for a Ghana-based entrepreneurial school, “We approached the team at Studio 5 with a problem that we had been searching for a solution to for several years. How do we get information about our charitable work to a larger, interested audience in such a way that they could learn about us and support us?”

“They attacked the problem with energy and enthusiasm. They really helped us” — Michael A. Barry, Nyansa Board Member.

From Children’s Hospital in Boston, which wanted a two-minute video that tells the success stories of children overcoming their illnesses, “Over the past several years, we have had many different teams of students from Studio 5. Every experience has been wonderful and the outcomes have been very positive. But I would like to express our sincere gratitude to you for assigning this particular group of students. From our initial meeting with the students until the project was completed, each student was professional, well-prepared, organized, flexible with meeting times, and absolutely passionate about the project itself. Their desire to do a good job was made evident by the time they spent on various details and in their determination for the video to be a useful learning tool for patients.”

From Marc R. Laufer, M.D. at Children’s Hospital Boston, “Many, many thanks from all of us at the Center for Young Women’s Health and the Boston Center for Endometriosis.”

From Sarah Binning, marketing and editorial coordinator for Teen Voices: “I was absolutely blown away by the creativity and professionalism of our Studio 5 team. These young ladies really understood that the mission statement is the heartbeat of any nonprofit, and it really reflected in their work. They went above and beyond our expectations.”

It is these comments and many, many, many more like them — as well as the fact we have many, many, many more requests for the services of Studio 5 than we can fill — that give us in the Department of Communications at Simmons College the confidence and certainty to say we prepare students to meet the needs of the new, multi-platform media environment.
THE SIMMONS EDGE

Convergence is key

MORGAN GRENIER — Education is a huge piece of the puzzle that defines your career and your future. When I was looking at colleges more than four years ago, I was looking at science programs. One of the benefits of going to a liberal arts school is that changing your mind doesn’t mean changing your life, which was a relief when I decided, only four months into college, that being a scientist wasn’t what I really wanted. What I did want was to pursue a communications career, a path that I hadn’t even known about when I was googling college stats and making lists of pros and cons for places I’d only read about.

Research by Penn State has shown that as many as 80% of students enter college without knowing what they really want to do, and up to 50% change majors at least once. Many students in the Communications Department started off that way, unsure of what they wanted or thinking their future would become something very different. Of course, some did come to Simmons knowing the Communications Department was their destination. Regardless of how we ended up in the department though, we arrived somewhere truly special.

No matter your concentration, Simmons holds clear advantages over more specialized education. For one, we go to school with people who are very different from us and have very different values and futures. For students learning to communicate effectively, this is crucial; it helps to shape our ability to relate to, understand or debate others. College is an ideal place to open your mind, so opening it to the widest range of viewpoints should be a concrete goal of education. While Simmons is single-sex, the women who attend the college come from many backgrounds and from all over the world. For Writing majors, there should be no regret in not attending a journalism school. I think that Simmons is able to serve these students better, with more advantages. One of the major benefits of journalism school is the ability to network with professional connections. Simmons is able to provide those networking opportunities with a more personal investment because of the small size of our department. Faculty and students are able to become close, so the job connections that professors offer students are more tailored to their interests and talents. Similar virtues hold true when you consider Graphic Design majors, for whom art school is often a path. Talent in the arts doesn’t necessarily correlate with a mind for media, which is a major takeaway of our department’s graduates. Most graphic designers, wen’t only be working with artists in their careers, they’ll also be working with writers, who send them copy, or marketers, who send them campaigns to develop. The experience of working with fellow students with those careers in mind is a big part of the Communications Department’s advantage. Our graduates are more prepared and knowledgeable about the architecture of the communications world.

The point here is how media convergence changes the face of communications education. We are expected to be multi-talented. Education at Simmons allows us to take a wide range of communications courses and develop a puzzle box of skills we can use to impress our future employers.

The strengths of our departments are what give us an advantage. Our talented and personable professors, our connections with the Boston community and beyond, and the range of communication and media courses we are offered make the Simmons experience special for us. Our experience prepares us to be successful, equipped leaders in an industry that’s always looking for effective communicators with an ever-growing range of skills.

ALEXANDRA SINGER — For a Simmons student nearing graduation, few things are as important as real-world experience. But how does a student expose herself to the real world and gain that experience while in school?

Through Studio 5, of course.

Studio 5 is a course that counts for the independent learning requirements; it offers something that students can’t typically get while inside the four walls of a lecture room — real world experience with actual clients who need communications-based solutions.

It’s a student run, faculty-supervised creative agency that provides the framework for students to genuinely experience what a career in communications may entail. There is no better way to prepare for a communications career than by bringing the real world to the classroom.

After proving many years of success, clients both new and old continue to return to the Studio 5 students and boast about the level of maturity and quality in the work.

"Studio 5 is definitely a growing experience," said senior Gaby Fiorenza, who completed the course in the fall of 2012. "You learn how to work in a group of your peers alongside real world clients. If you take full advantage of the opportunities the course provides you, it is an invaluable experience that will benefit you throughout your career."

Delivering top-notch materials that will satisfy clients’ needs requires that each student apply all of the communication skills they learn in the Communications Department — verbal, visual, and written. And though most college courses are used as building blocks for later courses, Studio 5 is a building block of its own; it is not preparation for the next course, it is the preparation for, and application to, the real communications world.

"I feel a lot more prepared after taking Studio 5. I feel like I can talk to clients and in groups with confidence and manage schedules. I think the real strength of Studio 5 is that it taught me how to listen to a client’s problems, find a solution, make a plan, sell it to them, and complete that work," said senior Morgan Grenier. "Studio 5 demands creativity, ingenuity and patience. It demands a process. I learned so many invaluable lessons about real-world creative work, lessons I’ve already referenced to improve my work now. You get what you give and more from the course."

So, what truly sets one college’s communications curriculum apart from the next? The answer is simple: the experiences it provides and the skills that come of those experiences. Such experiences in Studio 5, and the skills derived from them serve as the integral pieces in successfully completing a communications-based education.
Unlike any other

MEAGAN GREINER — While the Communications Department has a wide variety of courses, from animation to advertising, not everything can be learned in a classroom. Sometimes, the best learning is fun and low-pressure, and that’s where the organizations supported by the department really shine. Organizations help students strengthen and deepen skills learned in the classroom, and also help them bring their interests to others. The Communications Department has four major student organizations: The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), Simmons Cinematic Society and Simmons College Radio.

The community we find in the Comm Lab can’t be replicated anywhere, but it gives us something to strive for in our future.

The Voice — Operating since 1922, Simmons College Radio (SCR) went on air in 2008 after five years of preparation. SCR is a student-run internet radio station, which allows it to broadcast 24/7 anywhere in the world. It can be accessed through iTunes and the Simmons website. Over 50 members of the Simmons College community, including students, faculty and alumnae, create all the programming. Mary-Katherine Bowering, who took a radio course with Len Maffucci, said this about the experience of working on the airwaves: “Radio gave me a chance to share myself with others — it gave me a venue for my ideas and my music taste. Being broadcast internationally was surreal, and working with peers from other departments really opened my eyes to the depth of the Simmons community.” Simmons College Radio is a member of the Intercollegiate Broadcasting Network and is hosting an IIBS Conference on November 16, 2013.

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The Communications Department at Simmons offers a startling amount of flexibility, allowing students to focus on a particular area of study. There are four major concentrations within the department: PR/Marcom, Writing, Integrated Media, Graphic Design.

**PR/MARCOM**
Students who have chosen to focus on public relations and marketing communications master the skills needed to manage the information that flows between organizations or companies and the public. Through electives, they learn to take advantage of a wide variety of media to meet their communications needs. With their skills in strategy and planning, they create seamless, consistent content for clients.

**WRITING**
Students with a concentration in Writing learn not only to write, but also to edit. They learn to write clearly, copy edit effectively for multiple media platforms. They are exposed to writing for public relations, radio broadcast and webdesign. In addition to the skills they gain, journalism students learn to tackle the ethical issues that face media writers.

**INTEGRATED MEDIA**
Students who choose to direct their talents to the Integrated Media track combine the skills of written, visual and electronic media to become communicators prepared for a world increasingly driven by media convergence. These students take courses that fall under all of the other tracks, but focus on building technological skills and engaging with both consumers and producers.

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**
Students in the graphic design track focus on print, web, and multimedia design. Taking courses in both the Communications and Art Departments, design students gain the experience and skills needed to become multi-dimensional graphic designers. Students in this track are well-prepared for design careers when they graduate.

Within those concentrations, students have the flexibility to focus on what interests them most about that field, giving them the freedom to shape their skillsets to their futures. All students take the same foundation classes, then build upon them with classes specific to their concentration.
What has the Simmons Communications Department taught you?

Simmons has shown me the value in being an independent, smart, and hardworking woman and to never feel like anything less.

Have confidence in the work you create. Don't let anyone take your pride away from you.

To take criticism and let it motivate me to push harder and do my absolute best.

Being at a women's college allowed me to focus on myself, which in turn taught me how to market myself effectively.

Networking, networking, networking!

I've gained an artistic and creative way of looking at everything, whether it's a poster or a business offer.

— Cristina Aiello — Ashlee Virtue

— Jennifer Kilar — Etab Alshathri — Aly O'Connor

— Alexandra Anthony

PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

GRAPHIC DESIGN

WRITING

INTEGRATED MEDIA
Morgan Grenier — Ellen Grabiner, a professor in the Communications Department, is one of many digital immigrants who have successfully assimilated into a world changed by social media. She has an active blog and Twitter account. She watches YouTube videos and keeps on top of what's viral. She does more than some digital natives do. Now, she's sharing her perspective in a new 300-level course, Digital Cultures: Communication and New Media.

The course is the result of an on-going review of the communications curriculum that ensures Simmons is offering students the skills they need to create successful careers. “We decided that there were three [courses] that were critical: a course on digital convergence, a course on storytelling, and a course on emerging media,” she said. “I think at that point, we weren't even using the term social media. We just knew we had to be thinking about the ways in which technology was changing the communications landscape.” All three of these courses have been integrated into the curriculum in the past year.

While students are typically “digital natives,” born during or after the advent of digital media, digital immigrants have a great deal to teach each other. Some digital immigrants know a lot more about social media than younger generations might expect. While digital natives grew up with the Internet, digital immigrants witnessed it as adults. They have the context that digital natives usually lack. The professors in the department are able to bring students the perspective and strategic thinking. They are the scholars, and digital natives are the savants.

“How do we mark ourselves in the digital age?” This was Professor Grenier’s question on the first day of the new course. As more people log on to the Internet each day, how does one person stand out? An influential Internet presence might be one of the most appealing qualities in a Communications graduate, but how can a student build a house without tools? For students in the class, setting up a Twitter account and a blog were the first steps in developing a structure of social media understanding.

Another component of the course is called Nuts & Bolts, which builds students’ social media toolbox. Nuts & Bolts asks pairs of students to become experts in a social media technology and to teach it to the class. Students explain how their technology works, who uses it, and the underlying theories that define its user community and culture. They also think critically about the technology, identifying its problems and suggesting solutions. This kind of collaborative learning raises everyone to high standards and gives them an edge with employers, who are always looking for graduates with more knowledge and experience in all aspects of digital media.

Between January of 2011 and January of 2012, the number of job listings that required social media skills rose 81%, according to a study by Wanted Analytics. Students have an edge because they’re more likely to be using more social media, but classes like Digital Cultures are vital in teaching them the theories behind the skills. Studying social media and how these technologies evolve and change us enables students to see what’s next, preparing them to be innovative and original. The experience and perspective gained benefits all students, whether they plan to use social media heavily in their careers or not. We are all part of a world that relies more and more on communication through technological means.

Alexandra Singer — Each year, the Communications Department at Simmons College rewards its most academically outstanding students with an induction into Lambda Pi Eta — the National Communication Association’s official honor society at four-year colleges and universities.

In 2013, 10 students were inducted into the honor society: Lambda Pi Eta, LPH was founded in 1935, and quickly became a part of the National Communication Association. Soon after, in 1955, it became the association’s official honor society, which is part of the larger Association of College Honor Societies, ACHS. The ACHS’s mission is “To build a visibly cohesive community of national and international honor societies, individually and collaboratively exhibiting excellence in scholarship, service, programs, and governance.”

As is discussed during most Lambda Pi Eta induction ceremonies, the honor society is largely built upon a philosophical framework. As the National Communication Association official website states, Lambda Pi Eta represents and demonstrates what Aristotle describes as the three ingredients of persuasion in The Rhetoric: logos, Lambda, meaning; logic; pathos, Pi, relating to emotion; and ethos, Eta, defined as character, credibility and ethics.

Once selected, the small group of Communications students participate in an induction ceremony in which the representative of the college’s chapter discusses the society’s mission and goals. At the end of the ceremony, students are given their official induction document, official LPH pin and a yellow rope to wear at graduation in the spring.

LPH members even occasionally get to do something quite different. Two years ago, Simmons chapter members got to spend a day behind the scenes at a Bon Jovi concert in Boston.

To be eligible for induction, students must maintain an overall CPA of 3.0 in the college, as well a CPA of 3.5 or above within the Communications Department. If selected, students gain the opportunity to network in both the ACHS and LPH communities and can pride themselves on their accomplishment into such a prestigious, scholastic honor society.
mapping the life of DAN CONNELL

ANNIE KARASEK — Professor Dan Connell has been a part of Simmons for 10 years, holding a position as a Senior Lecturer in journalism and African politics at Simmons College since 2003. But Connell’s past careers might surprise some. He’s worked as a carpenter, art and music librarian, farm-hand, house painter, book seller and copy-writer, just to name a few. Some of his most important work, though, centers on his connection to the small African nation of Eritrea.

Dan Connell’s love of travel took him to Africa in 1975. He set out with a backpack, a notebook and the desire to learn about liberation and democracy. When he set out, Connell never would have expected that he would blow the cover off a hidden war zone and witness the assassination of a high-ranking Ethiopian official, and that his report on the massacre would appear on the front page of The Washington Post. This set of experiences was a catalyst for Connell, affirming his passion for reporting on injustice in Eritrea and other African countries.

“The main thing I take from this is how difficult it is to transform a society toward greater equality and justice — how much entrenched resistance there is within the old culture,” said Connell. “How long it takes to change; how easy it is to suffer setbacks if you’re not paying attention, how important it is to have a popular movement pushing a government no matter how liberal or progressive it says it is.”

Since his initial experiences in Eritrea, Connell hasn’t shed away from confronting controversial and dangerous situations. Over the past 10 years, Connell’s writing has always focused on truth, no matter the consequences. His increasingly critical writing about Isaias Afewerki, who led the Eritrean liberation army and turned the country into a police state, led to Connell being kicked out of Eritrea in 2002. In addition to writing opinion pieces for the Boston Globe, Connell has lent his experience to radio too, participating in discussions on NPR and others. His experience and desire to spread knowledge has been a great asset to his students.

“There is nothing like being in a situation where you’re deeply affected by what you see and hear and want to communicate that to others who don’t know anything about it,” said Connell about the way he teaches journalism to not only Communications majors but to other majors. “Passion isn’t enough. You need writing skill. And you need to know how to package the writing so it’s accessible and interesting for people who’ve never been there.”

When Connell wanted to get his students more intimately involved, he created a biannual trip to South Africa. The first trip took place in 2005, and gave students the opportunity to learn about human rights firsthand. “We use the South African Constitution as a measuring stick to ask how well the government is keeping its promise of equality and social justice and what still needs to be done,” said Connell about the trip. Students who go on the trip write about their experiences, and those works have been published in collections of writings; Old Wrong, New Rights after the trip in 2006 and Women to Women: Young Americans in South Africa from the most recent trip in 2011.

To Connell, the way that he has integrated his life into his work as a professor is part of a larger pattern at Simmons. “Many Communications faculty have one foot in academia and one in the working world, which helps us to connect what we teach with what students face when they move on,” said Connell. “For me personally, one of the most important things is the way we value each other, no matter how different our field — and communications is an extraordinary diverse discipline — and no matter how that translates into a synergy that produces new initiatives like the trip to South Africa, the books, CommTracks, the radio station, professional-level PR packages and more,” said Connell. “There are always new ideas popping up in our meetings and planning sessions and we help each other make them happen. It’s a very rewarding environment to work in and that makes it a great one for students to learn in.”

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How did you get into photography?

One course in basic photography was a requirement in graphic design graduate school when I was a student. I’d never taken a picture before in my life. (I was 18 years old then.) My mother was a keen amateur photographer and took pictures if they were needed. Since I was simultaneously taking a City Planning degree and a Graphic Design degree, I decided to have my graduation thesis in design relate to both. At the time I was working in the New York City Sanitation Department as a program analyst, putting myself through school and thus had access to all the sanitation facilities in New York. The timing was ideal; it was just after the garbage crisis of 1968, which I remembered well because it fell on my birthday and I was living in Manhattan.

How do you engage with your subjects?

When I was young I loved to do the jitterbug. I was quite good at crossing my hands over my knees as they flipped in the air. I also loved the twist and could do it for hours. And there were many summers when I spent a couple of nights planning a costume to wear and keep in style.

What does that mean?

It might be like to become a photographer. How unobtrusive as a photographer is it possible to be — in a way that is helpful to the photographer?

If I think of taking up modern dance again for the exercise. When I was young I loved to do the Charleston and was quite good at crossing my hands over my knees as they flipped in the air. I also loved the twist, and could do it for hours. And there were many summers when I spent a couple of nights planning a costume to wear and keep in style.

How unobtrusive as a photographer is it possible to be — in a way that is helpful to the photographic?

I think that I couldn’t afford, knowing I’d return to my book or video when I’m finished. I like to read, wash videos and garden, but I also adore making things, so I seem to spend most of my free time repairing things around the house. Thinking I’d get to my book or video when I’m finished. I have built all the furniture I’ve ever had, even the basement storage shelf. I’ve first lived in England. It took me a year. The hardware store sales people in England up, suggesting I send my husband in when I’d bought things like circular saws and jig saws. (They were going to happen. I have also been seeing since I was about 5 years old. I remember often staying up the whole night in high school to finish an outfit. When I was in college, I sewed for many of my friends including making lots of curtains and bedspreads. I have purchased fashionably终 that I couldn’t afford, knowing I’d return to the shop so that I could copy them to wear and keep in style.

What else do you do in your downtime?

I photographed the Boston Opera Company director, an unusual and imposing woman named Sarah Caldwell. When I moved to England a year later, again I worked as a designer, but I was able to go to the Sunday Telegraph with a couple of commissions in my portfolio and my photo archive from Awa. As I mention in the foreword to Likenesses, the editor said, “I’ll give you a try as long as you don’t mention you live in Cambridgehire.” The paper wanted photographers close at hand and didn’t want to pay extra travel money.

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Often I find that while I’m setting up my equipment, the picture I want is right before me, the sitter can see that I haven’t got everything ready and so isn’t posing. Frankly I start shooting often without even choosing the right settings, hoping that I might capture the sitter unaware. After that I know that once I actually set up the camera, the first half hour or so will be useless because the sitter can’t help but pose even if I say not to. So I think of this time as the warming up period — or you might say, wearing the sitter down. On many occasions I bring my husband along just to talk to my subjects so that they are engaged but not looking at me. I prefer the pictures where the sitter is looking at someone else. So back to your question, yes, in these cases I am quite unobtrusive.

You describe the text in your book having “their own texture and color, not black and white but shades of grey”. What does that mean?

This has a double meaning for me. The area of design that I specialize in is typography. The first assignment I give my students in the Type class is to help them see that type has color and texture. They make two self-portraits, one with hand cut type from a magazine and one with computer type. All in black and white. They are told to think of type like a paint brush and to make shades of grey whatever way they can. I later we talk about the fact that all type when viewed without reading it, has its own shade of grey determined by its size, typeface, style, and spacing between the letters, words, and lines — the negative space. The words in Likenesses also illuminate the photographs by giving extra layers of meaning to what one is looking at in the picture, usually a person or persons — this shades of grey.

Do you have a favorite photo in the book and why?

No. I really don’t. I love the Michael Tanner photo with all his books, the William and Hetta Empson with the back lighting. Annette Kellerman painting her finger at Yeats’ house in front of the fire with red and white, Keith Simpson riding his grandfather’s bike, Rosanna and her mother.

We heard you like to dance. What is your signature move?

I don’t think I have a signature move. I love to dance, but my partner of 36 years (my husband) doesn’t, so I hardly ever dance now. Pity. I’m thinking of taking up modern dance again for the exercise. When I was young I loved to do the Charleston and was quite good at crossing my hands over my knees as they flipped in the air. I also loved the twist, and could do it for hours. And there were many summers when I spent a couple of nights planning a costume to wear and keep in style.

Photographs on facing page provided by Judith Aronson. Rolleiflex Camera image courtesy of Jim Eckberg and The Casual Camera Collector.
Erica Moura

I am the one man band...I am living the dream and life is good.

I have always been a journalist. Growing up I read The New York Times comic strips. My dad subscribed to that, and I used to read those comics. My mother is a teacher and I was always reading books. So it’s a part of me. I have always been a news junkie and I have always been passionate about politics as well. I have always loved the juxtaposition of new and old. I love the evolution of things. I love the way things change and how people react to it. I think that’s what makes journalism so interesting.

This led her to her current job as a Multi-media Reporter for the Boston Herald. This is a position the Herald actually created directly for her due to the demand for web-based videos and stories. “I am the one man band — I shoot, I’m in front of the camera, I edit, I do voiceovers, and I write

Erica graduated in 2010 with a degree in Communications, and a focus on writing and PR. During her time at Simmons (where she lived in Smith dorm) she was heavily involved with SCA; the radio station and her internship at WGBH. She also completed a radio-centered independent study with Len Malloux. “Len taught me the business and how to survive in it,” she said. “And Jim Corcoran taught me how to go after a story.”

After reminiscing on Simmons communications memories she tells me her favorite parts. “My favorite class was Broadcast Writing, and the greatest thing about the department was the professors. Each one has such unique qualities.”

“I put my heart and soul into the radio station. It propelled my career and made me fall in love with journalism.” This passion and influence paved the way for her future. Erica ended up at Emerson College, where she received her Masters (in Broadcast Journalism) in 2012.

Most recently, she covered the Mayor’s Against Illegal Guns meeting in Boston hosted by Mayor Thomas Menino. She also covered a powerful story about homelessness in the streets of Boston. She tells me, “I also covered the Sandy Hook shooting in Connecticut right after it happened, which was really hard... it stays with you.”

Bryn Adler

A great example of the kind of graduates the Communications Department produces well-rounded and successful. Despite graduating just two years ago, Bryn is already making her mark in the professional world, obtaining a position as an internet marketing associate at RainCastle Communications right after graduation and then being promoted to marketing program manager at the same firm a little less than a year later.

She has recently taken a new job for a startup in Boston.

While she was at Simmons, Bryn was active with several organizations, a member of the Simmons Cinematic Society and a features editor for The Simmons Voice. She was a member of Academy, the Honors Society of Simmons, a member of the National Communication Honor Society and after four years of excellence, graduated summa cum laude.

Bryn’s experiences in the department helped to prepare her as much as her natural talent. “In interviewing for my first post-grad job as an internet marketing associate at a web design and marketing firm” she said, “I was competing against students from Tufts, Emerson, BU, and BC. But what landed me the job was my ability to communicate and present ideas at a higher level than the others. This, I believe, is solely due to my internship course training with Andy Porter, and the support and preparation I received throughout my four years at Simmons from the entire Communications Department.”

She also found that the single-sex environment of Simmons played a role in her development. “I recently read a study that found that women educated in single-sex academic environments are better trained in terms of leadership and analytical skills than our co-ed counterparts. I believe that down to my bone.” At Simmons, I was never treated like a student, but always as a valuable member of the team. Using that kind of lens in academia forces you to be more responsible, responsive, and proactive as a student.”

She shared other lessons Simmons taught her. “Simmons taught me that there’s no end to education, but that with the right tools and attitude, following the path of further learning will get you to your goals,” she said. “It also taught me to never be afraid. Most of the time it’s fear that inhibits you from achieving the things you want in life. As Simmons women, we simply don’t have time for that kind of nonsense.”

She stayed connected to Simmons in a variety of ways, from using LinkedIn, to keeping in touch with former classmates and professors, so following the college and the Alumni Association through social media.


dirty dancing soundtrack

Dirty Dancing Soundtrack.

Dirty Dancing Soundtrack.

The Simmons Voice.


closer to fine

"Closer to Fine" – Indigo Girls

"Let the River Run" – Carly Simon

"Road to Nowhere" – Release the Sunbird

"Keep Your Eyes Open - Needles and Screams

"Fars" – Kings of Leon


currie cair & morgan greener

CURRY CAIR & MORGAN GREENER — Bryn Adler

I recently asked Bryn about her advice for seniors. “Do you feel like an adult? This is, hands down, the most important aspect of accepting a job.”

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Carmen Baez

From the sandy beaches of Puerto Rico to the unpredictable weather forecasts of Boston, Carmen Baez knows how to adapt to changes. She morphed from a college graduate with a degree in Marketing Communications to the president of the Latin America division of the world’s leading marketing communications company, Omnicom. Whether traveling, going to graduate school or running a company, Baez is authentic and full of humility. As an empowered communicator she keeps up with Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and surrounds herself with people who keep her on her toes. Baez networks with youngish digital natives who keep me on my toes when it comes to everything electronic. She keeps up to date with social media through connections with young people. “I surround myself with youngish digital natives who keep me on my toes when it comes to everything electronic.” She keeps herself technologically savvy.

Baez is in touch with the trends in the communications world and offered this about the future, “I see it every day, we are moving forward digitally and globally.” She noted that consumers are all about what they see in social media. “A tweet of 140 words or less can kill or grow a brand,” she said. She keeps up to date with social media through connections with young people. “I surround myself with youngish digital natives who keep me on my toes when it comes to everything electronic.” She keeps herself technologically savvy.

When asked what advice she would give to graduating seniors she said, “It took me many years to get to where I am. Work hard and be resilient. Personally, live within your means. Professionally, the best advice I can give is network, network, and network. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Treat them nicely on the way up because you’ll see them on the way down.”

Baez received her Bachelor of Arts in Marketing Communications and International Relations. The combination of these majors has led her to success in her current position at Omnicom as President of Latin America within Diversified Agency Services (DAS). This is the largest division of the Omnicom Group; the world’s leading marketing communications company.

Baez took a long and winding road to her current position at Omnicom, but her connections to the company started in the very beginning. The first job Baez landed in 1980 was at The D.R. Group, an ad agency that by 1986 had sold itself to Omnicom. She worked with them for five years before she made another big change in her life, taking a sabbatical for a year that stretched into three. Just like her choice to leave Puerto Rico for Simmons, this change was unbelievable positive. “These years were the most life-changing and most important of both my professional and personal lives.” She traveled the world, visiting 21 countries in five months. Before the global trip, she went to school and opened herself up to courses that would strengthen her as an individual. She explored subjects such as Eastern religions, logic, and philosophy.

The next pieces of her life fell into place with the help of relationships and timing, when she created her own consulting firm, Baez Zahorsky, Inc. in 1997. Omnicom was a client of Baez’s firm, and then they made the offer to acquire her firm and move her to New York. She accepted.

At Omnicom, Baez is responsible for all the marketing communications operations in Latin America. Omnicom serves clients in more than 12 countries and there are dozens of agencies in South America, the Caribbean and Mexico. Her time abroad translated into her international perspective.

At Simmons, Baez also met her husband, with whom she has two sons. “Life is better with family.”

Baez stays connected to the Simmons community as a frequent speaker, both in the Simmons School of Management and in the Department of Communications. She also serves as a Trustee of the Simmons Corporation and as a member of the Simmons Leadership Council. She is also the Vice Chair of Fundraising in the Making Education Work Campaign. Baez has also been connected to the Public Relations Society of America chapter at Simmons College for the past 14 years. Each year, Baez helps to organize a trip for PRSSA, bringing them to New York to meet industry leaders at Omnicom. She believes it’s important to give back.

Anne Karasek — For Carmen Baez, the puzzle of life has fallen into place because of her courage to change. If there is one thing she values and recognizes, it is the importance of change. The first big transition she made in her life was moving from Puerto Rico to Boston to attend Simmons College. When she arrived in 1976, it wasn’t just the geography that was different; it was the culture and language, too. Baez was ready to take on the challenge and pushed herself in academics, work-study jobs and internships.

During her time at Simmons, the content of her courses and the passion of her professors shaped her into the effective communicator she became. From the weather to the sports, Baez has fond memories of Boston, though she now lives in New York. During her first year living in Dix, she would make it all the way out the door without a coat and then have to trek up the four flights of stairs to get it. She also developed a love of the Red Sox. While at Simmons, her father’s secretary in Puerto Rico was the sister of Ed Figueroa, the pitcher for the Yankees. This connection gave Baez tickets to every Yankee vs. Red Sox game at Fenway Park. She still considers the pitcher for the Yankees. This connection gave Baez tickets to every Yankee vs. Red Sox game at Fenway Park. She still considers this one of her favorite memories of Boston. She also developed a love of the Red Sox. While at Simmons, her father’s secretary in Puerto Rico was the sister of Ed Figueroa, the pitcher for the Yankees. This connection gave Baez tickets to every Yankee vs. Red Sox game at Fenway Park. She still considers this one of her favorite memories of Boston.

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The internship program at Simmons expands beyond just internships. When I took the course I was able to learn all-things career from basics in the workplace to discovering my true passion to even negotiating salary at my first real-world job.

A clear advantage to the internship program in the Communications Department is the way it is structured. Typical college internship programs require a certain number of fieldwork hours, possibly an evaluation and the occasional meeting with an Internship Director.

At Simmons, an internship experience benefits the student on a deeper level. Simmons requires that students take an internship course while completing their internship, ensuring that students are getting the most out of their experience and that they have access to support. Even before students land an internship, they are required to meet with the department’s internship director to review skills and potential internships.

In the Internship course, students have a roundtable-style meeting once a week with Andy Porter, Communications Department Internship Director, and fellow communications interns to discuss how their internships are going. They have Skype chats with Human Resource specialists, lectures about salary negotiation, and discuss the benefits of career networking sites like LinkedIn.

“I like the way the Communications Department pairs the internship with a class because you can talk about things you like or problems you have. It also teaches you important skills for internships, like how to negotiate salary and to always ask questions at the end of an interview,” said Micayla Roati, a senior pursuing the Graphic Design track.

As the course approaches its end, students build a personal marketing plan. The personal marketing plan organizes everything that is taken away from the internship experience while helping students understand how to differentiate themselves from others. Final personal marketing plans include portfolio pieces of work done at the site, finalized cover letters and resumes, personal branding statements, LinkedIn profiles, career objectives, and a final presentation. It is not only a summary of the experience, but an essential interview piece to carry.

Many students often reflect back to their senior year post-graduation and realize how crucial and beneficial their internship experiences in the Communications Department were. “The internship program at Simmons expands beyond just internships. When I took the course I was able to learn all things career from basics in the workplace to discovering my true passion to even negotiating salary at my first real-world job. Through Simmons internship program, I was able to intern at some of the best companies in the greater Boston area. By putting in that work during school, I was able to land a job that I love after graduation,” said Victoria Solomon from the class of 2011.

And on the other end of the spectrum, Internship sponsors and organizations as a whole benefit from hosting Simmons students. “We have had much success with our interns from Simmons. We are confident that we can find motivated, self-assured and self-directed candidates from the Simmons program,” said Andrea Naddaff of Corey McPherson Nash.

A valuable internship experience is not one in which a student simply gathers names to network in the field, or build a portfolio of design pieces. It must also encompass an aspect of self-understanding and self-reflection in relation to the internship experience. Ultimately, this will build a strong character as well as a well-rounded communicator. And that is exactly what students get from the Simmons Communications Department internship experience.
Design has no single definition. Paul Rand once said, “Design is the method of putting form and content together. Design, just as art, has multiple definitions; there is no single definition. Design can be art. Design can be aesthetics. Design is so simple, that’s why it is so complicated.” His quote is not only thought provoking but gives a real insight into how design varies from person to person and subject to subject.