

# CONNECTION

FALL 2021

## FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

We have a lot of stories to tell as we move forward and return to campus in Fall 2021.

Dean Emeritus Larry Dennis returned to the faculty of the School of Information in August, 2021. A constant innovator, Larry continues to lead projects while building partnerships across campus and in the community. Our college and university continue to benefit from his experience, ideas, and commitment to public service. The team of faculty, staff, and leaders Larry has built are working to ensure that we continue to advance the work of the College.

Dr. Chanta Haywood has been leading the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion initiative in the College, beginning in Fall 2020 with the formation of five thematic working groups. This past summer she prepared a summary of these discussions and strategic goals, and in Fall 2021 we are working with students, staff, faculty, and alumni to advance specific projects. This work is getting positive attention and questions from across campus. We plan to report each year on specific goals and projects, and set priorities for the next year.

I am writing from the airport in Atlanta, returning after a visit with alumni and donors organized by Mafé Brooks, our College Development Officer. We also attended the reception in Atlanta hosted by our new University President, Dr. Richard McCullough. It was a great opportunity to meet with alumni and friends, to witness the warm welcome President McCullough and First Lady Dr. Jai Vartikar received from alumni, and to see the great connections and excitement they are generating.

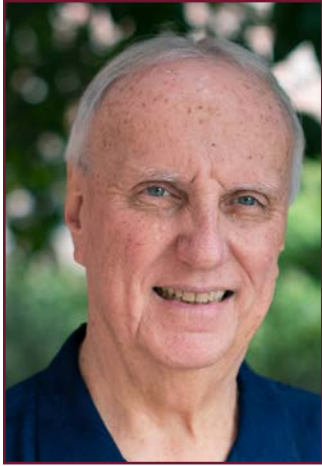
Talks with alumni are very moving and confirm the important role of the College in providing educational and experiential learning opportunities for our students that change their lives. It also allows us to see the value of our efforts to address crucial societal needs in our research and service. We also recognize the importance of our alumni in leveraging these efforts for great impact. The stories you will see in this newsletter provide snapshots of alumni, students, and faculty who make up our community.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve as Interim Dean of CCI during this time of transition as we search for a new Dean, and thank all of you for your contributions to your communities, and for your support of our College.



*Stephen McDowell*  
Interim Dean

## FSU CCI ESTABLISHES PROFESSORSHIP HONORING DR. JAY RAYBURN



The Florida State University College of Communication and Information announced the creation of a new professorship in honor of the late Dr. Jay D. Rayburn II, who passed away on Monday, July 12th. Serving as a lasting tribute to his devotion for advancement in the public relations industry, the College seeks to raise \$250,000 for the [Dr. Jay D. Rayburn Endowed Professorship](#). The endowed professorship will allow the

College to recruit and retain a scholar with an exemplary background in public relations-focused research and teaching. Additionally, it will provide supplemental funding pertinent for the exploration of creative activities and innovative academic research within the field.

## ASSISTANT PROFESSOR SELECTED FOR MCKNIGHT JUNIOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP

School of Communication Assistant Professor Arienne Ferchaud, PhD, was awarded a McKnight Junior Faculty Development Fellowship for the 2021–2022 academic year. The Florida Education Fund (FEF) has selected over 230 historically underrepresented individuals for Faculty Development Fellowships since the program was created in 1984. “I am so humbled to be selected for this fellowship,” Ferchaud said. “It is really an honor for the selection committee to not only recognize the importance of my work but to offer their support. Additionally, I am so grateful that my colleagues thought highly enough of me and my work to write strong letters of recommendation. All in all, I’m just beyond stoked.” Ferchaud’s work has been published in multiple articles, and her research has been presented at both national and international conferences.



## FSU STUDENT NI’A LANDON SELECTED FOR EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS COMMENTARY SCHOLARSHIP

The Executive Leadership Council (ELC) has awarded Ni’A Landon, an inspiring senior at Florida State, with a scholarship recognizing her excellence in Business Commentary. Sponsored by the Coca-Cola Foundation, this award will provide Landon with resources to further her interests in strategic marketing and corporate communications, focusing on community, culture, and storytelling. The ELC is an organization focused on the development of Black leaders around the world. “Our mission is to increase the number of successful Black executives, domestically and internationally, by adding value to their development, leadership and philanthropic endeavors across the life-cycle of their careers,” shares the ELC. By partnering with the Coca-Cola Foundation, participants can gather mentorship from this hugely successful company as well. Landon is currently studying Public Relations with a minor in Business Administration. She was recognized earlier this year as a 2021 Most Promising Multicultural Student by the American Advertising Federation.



## PROFESSOR CONNECTS STUDENTS THROUGH VIRTUAL REALITY

While most students taking remote classes are meeting via Zoom, a professor in Florida State University’s School of Communication has been using virtual reality (VR) to simulate a classroom space. Professor Andrew Opel developed the Immersive Media Production class four years ago, and the technology has advanced exponentially since then. When faced with having to teach the hands-on class online, Opel successfully secured enough Oculus Quest 2 headsets for all students enrolled in the course. “The students are learning 360 video production and immersive time-based media,” Opel said. The 20 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the course use the headset for every class. Using the spatial.io software, students scanned photos of themselves to create a virtual avatar that moves and travels as they do during each class meeting. The result is a class that allows students to travel anywhere and see anything.

## SCSD GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDED F31 PREDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

Graduate student Austin Thompson has been awarded an F31 predoctoral fellowship from the National Institutes of Health. Thompson is optimistic that this fellowship will not only support him during his studies, but allow him to make a difference in the lives of people affected by neurological disorders post-grad. "This fellowship will support my studies during the final two years of my Ph.D. program as I complete my dissertation," said Austin. "More importantly, I hope my dissertation project will serve as the groundwork for a career-long research line examining motor speech disorders in clinical populations, like Parkinson's disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. As a speech-language pathologist, I recognize that there is still much to be learned about how best to treat speech disturbances in individuals with progressive neuro-genetic disorders."



## SCSD DOCTORAL STUDENT AWARDED MCKNIGHT DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

Shaylyn King, FSU School of Communication Science & Disorders (SCSD) doctoral student, is a recipient of the Florida Education Fund (FEF) McKnight Doctoral Fellowship for the 2021-2022 academic year. For King, the Fellowship will provide annual tuition of up to \$5,000 for three academic years as well as an annual stipend of \$12,000 to help her in her doctoral studies. "Being selected for this fellowship is very humbling and I feel blessed to receive such an honor. I'm an FSU legacy student and received my bachelor's degree in 2013," said King. "I can remember feeling isolated by the lack of diversity in my program. I hope that I can be a mirror that helps other underrepresented students realize their potential in academia."



## CARLA WOOD STARTS AS DIRECTOR OF THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCE AND DISORDERS

Carla Wood, Ph.D., recently began her position as the Director of the School of Communication Science and Disorders (SCSD) at Florida State. She started as a professor and now succeeds Dr. Hugh Catts to assist the SCSD. Wood attended the University of Kansas and studied Speech-Language Pathology, ultimately earning her Ph.D. in that field. She now conducts research surrounding language accessibility for children from a range of backgrounds. These studies stress how different cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds can affect literacy and education in the youth. "It is a privilege to serve the school in this role," shares Wood. "It is an honor to partner with outstanding faculty and staff in SCSD who engage in innovative collaborative research, implement high-quality training for students, and disseminate evidence-based practice to improve communication outcomes and quality of life for individuals from diverse ability, socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds."



## SCSD ASSISTANT PROFESSOR RECEIVES NEW GRANT WITH UF TO STUDY EARLY INTERVENTION

Assistant Professor Dr. Mollie Romano, along with Drs. Juliann Woods (SCSD) and Patrice Iatarola (College of Education) worked with a committee of UF researchers to study the effects of home-based early intervention. The four-year study, titled, "Initial Efficacy Trial of Florida Embedded Practices and Intervention with Caregivers," was recently awarded over \$3.6 million from the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

## SCSD FACULTY MEMBER WINS EDITORS' KATHARINE G. BUTLER TRAILBLAZER AWARD

Associate Professor Dr. Kelly Farquharson has been recognized for her recent publication, co-authored by researchers Marie Ireland, Sharyanne McLeod, and Kathryn Crowe. The publication, titled, "Evaluating Children in U.S. Public Schools with Speech Sound Disorders Considering Federal and State Laws, Guidance, and Research," was recently published in the journal "Topics in Language Disorders".

## LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES PROGRAMS RANK TOP IN THE NATION

According to the latest rankings by the U.S. News and World Report (USNWR), FSU's Library and Information Studies program, housed in the College of Communication and Information's School of Information, placed No. 11 nationally and No. 10 among public universities. FSU's School Library Media specialty maintained its No. 1 status, and Services for Children and Youth rose four spots to No. 3 in the nation.

"The faculty and staff in the School of Information have worked hard to provide an outstanding graduate program in Library Studies," said Larry Dennis, Dean Emeritus of the College of Communication and Information. "These national rankings are a testament to their hard work and commitment to excellence."

"This improvement of the USNWR ranking of our MSI program demonstrates what we already know: that our faculty and staff are world class, caring, and committed to promoting student success," said Dr. Kathleen Burnett, Director of the School of Information.

## CCI FACULTY MEMBER DR. ZHE HE RECOGNIZED AS FELLOW OF AMIA

iSchool Associate Professor Dr. Zhe He was recognized as a Fellow of the American Medical Informatics Association (FAMIA) on October 5th, 2021. The FAMIA Applied Recognition program was established in 2018 and recognizes professionals who have made significant contributions to the field of biomedical informatics and demonstrate an interdisciplinary understanding of the field. "As Informatics Lead of UF-FSU Clinical and Translational Science Award, I have been leading a team to provide consulting services on informatics, biostatistics, epidemiology, and research design to the FSU community," said Dr. He. "This allowed me to gain valuable leadership experience and make strong connections with other researchers."



## ALUMNA RECOGNIZED AS HAZEL HARVEY PEACE ENDOWED PROFESSOR OF CHILDREN'S LIBRARY SERVICES

FSU iSchool Alumna Dr. Daniella Smith has been awarded the Hazel Harvey Peace Endowed Professorship by the University of North Texas. Dr. Smith credits the FSU School of Information with giving her the tools needed for a successful career in Information Science. "The FSU



iSchool provided the educational foundation that I needed to begin and sustain my career in the Library and Information Science field." said Dr. Smith. "By the time I finished my doctoral education, I had the experience that I needed to pursue a career in academia."

## CCI ALUMNA APPOINTED ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE INVISIBLE HISTORIES PROJECT

CCI alumna Dr. Dawn Betts-Green has been appointed as the Assistant Director of the Invisible Histories Project (IHP). IHP was created in February of 2018 in order to locate and preserve historical artifacts relating to the LGBTQ+ community in the Southern United States. "My goal has always been to stay in the South and support the queer community," said Dawn. "As a queer youth in central Alabama, I desperately needed this history."



## MATERNAL HEALTHCARE APPLICATION FOR HAITIAN WOMEN RECEIVES BEST PAPER AWARD



iSchool Assistant Professor Dr. Yolanda Rankin and her team received the Best Paper Award in the Analytics track for the 2021 IEEE International Conference on Healthcare Informatics (ICHI 2021). The paper, titled, "Implementing community-based participatory design and mixed methods to capture and analyze mental models of no/low literate users" is a joint research effort with Auburn University Associate Professor Dr. Jakita Thomas and Ph.D. student Akolade Asipade. "This work demonstrates the need to apply inclusive design techniques which go beyond what we traditionally think of as user-centered design research," said Dr. Rankin.

**BUILDING LIFELONG AND ENGAGED DONORS AND ALUMNI**

*A note from Mafé Brooks, Director of Development*

Happy Fall! I am finally back on the road this semester after almost two years of visits with our donors and alumni through the Zoom “travel” network. I’ve missed face to face visits and I’m thankful that you have continued to stay connected with us through the power of technology during the pandemic. It was great to reconnect with many of you in Atlanta at the FSU President’s Reception at the end of October.

One of the upsides of working in development is that I get to develop relationships with our faculty, staff, alumni, and donors, many of which have become lifelong friends and mentors. A perfect example was Dr. Jay Rayburn, a beloved CCI faculty member who taught a course in public relations for almost 30 years. Sadly, he lost his brave battle with cancer this summer. He would usually drop by my office, check-in on me and ask about my family and my work. He would tell jokes, share a story or two and then, more importantly, ask how he could help in our philanthropic efforts. He understood the importance of building relationships and connected me with many of his former students to engage them back with CCI and share their FSU stories and career paths. I had a conversation with him shortly before he passed away not knowing that it would be my last. We talked about the endowed scholarship established in his name by several of his former students and how the fund can continue to support students in the PR program. We also talked about how we can raise support for faculty and the importance of a professorship. We agreed to meet for lunch and continue our discussion but because of his untimely passing, we never got to enjoy lunch together. However, his idea of establishing an endowed professorship became a reality when his former students approached me on how Jay’s legacy can continue to make an impact at the College. Through a lead gift from the Moore Agency and the support of many of his beloved students, the Dr. Jay Rayburn Endowed Professorship in Public Relations was established in his memory. I know he is looking down from his heavenly perch, bourbon in hand and happy to know his PR legacy will continue in perpetuity through this endowment.



*From left to right: Lingani Matiwane, FSU First Lady Jai Vartikar, FSU President Richard McCullough, and Mafé Brooks.*



*Dr. Larry Dennis (left) featured with student Landon Thaler (right).*

When Dean Emeritus Larry Dennis stepped down in August, our CCI Leadership Board asked how they could honor his leadership at the College and his commitment to student success. After several conversations, the board decided to create the Dr. Lawrence C. Dennis Endowment for Student Success. Making the lead gift to kick-off the endowment was Linda Alexionok, FSU alumna and longtime board member. “While Larry’s list of accomplishments at FSU is significant, I believe that the common thread of all his achievements is his dedication to providing real-world work and service-learning experiences for students,” says Linda. “Dr. Dennis’s commitment to student success is the inspiration for the establishment of this endowment.”

These relationships that have been built and strengthened over the years have been instrumental to the continued success of our students, faculty, and programs. Our donors are essential members of our CCI family and I am humbled by their generosity. I continue to be inspired by their philanthropic commitment and during this month of giving thanks, I would like to say THANK YOU a million times over for your passion for CCI and FSU. Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays!

If you would like to make a year end charitable gift to CCI, please contact me:

**[mafe.brooks@cci.fsu.edu](mailto:mafe.brooks@cci.fsu.edu)**  
**(850)645-8312**

or give online:

**[bit.ly/3BTgG22](https://bit.ly/3BTgG22)**

*Thank you!*

**FSU's Great Give**

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**March 9th, 2022**

@FSUGREATGIVE



*Marilyn Young (left) and Mafé Brooks (right) at the Spanx Headquarters in Atlanta, GA.*

# CLASS NOTES & COLLEGE HAPPENINGS

**Kristin Bass-Peterson** ('10 M.A.) helped organize the sixth annual Florida Animation Festival (FAF).

**Dawn Betts-Green** ('14 M.S. & '19 Ph.D.) appointed as the Assistant Director of the Invisible Histories Project.

**Dara Cohen** ('14 B.S.) was recognized by the FSU Alumni Association as a Notable Nole.

**Pablo Correa** ('14 M.S. & '18 Ph.D.) served as an instructor for the Sunflower County Filmmaker's Academy (SCFA) filmmaker's workshop.

**Ashavaree Das** ('13 Ph.D.) helped organize the inaugural online Digital Literacy Leadership Forum.

**Joseph Gaccione** ('09 B.A.) is the new Associate Director of Communications at UNLV School of Nursing.

**Jeff Hipsher** ('20 M.S.) presented at the Panhandle Libraries Access Network's (PLAN) Panhandle Academic Libraries Conference.

**Stephanie Johnson** ('16 M.S.) presented at the Panhandle Libraries Access Network's (PLAN) Panhandle Academic Libraries Conference.

**Kyle Jones** ('17 B.S.) served as an instructor for the Sunflower County Filmmaker's Academy (SCFA) filmmaker's workshop.

**Renaine Julian** ('14 M.S.) presented at the Panhandle Libraries Access Network's (PLAN) Panhandle Academic Libraries Conference.

**Shirin Khambalia** ('21 B.S.) awarded the 2021-2022 iThink Financial Community Foundation Scholarship.

**Hannah Menendez** ('21 M.S.) presented at the Panhandle Libraries Access Network's (PLAN) Panhandle Academic Libraries Conference.

**Mike Mitchell** ('19 M.S.) recognized by the FSU Alumni Association as a Notable Nole.

**Lisa Primiani** ('10 B.S.) recognized by the FSU Alumni Association as a Notable Nole.



*Members of FSU's Advertising Club traveled to Miami, where they visited four agencies for an opportunity to network with professionals in the communication field.*



*The CCI traveling gnome (Betsy Crawford) visited college campuses across sunny Florida and Georgia.*



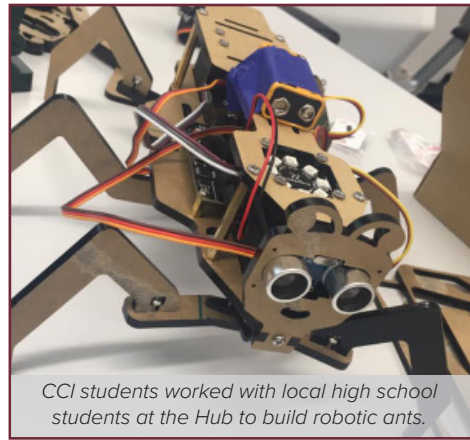
*The Center for Hispanic Marketing hosted its annual Gala. The virtual event raised over \$100,000 toward the Center.*



*Over 225 students, alumni, local employers, and industry professionals gathered together at the annual TalTech Conference on November 2, 2021.*



IT students presented at the Florida Technology Student Association's Leadership Conference



CCI students worked with local high school students at the Hub to build robotic ants.



The Fall Headshot event was a success! We look forward to providing more students with free headshots in the Spring.



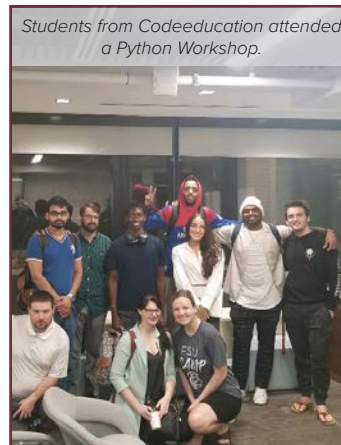
Connecting Girls to STEM hosted a Space Camp.



CCI treated students to some tasty pastries.



Students on the CCI Student Leadership Board walked in the FSU Homecoming Parade.



Students from Codeeducation attended a Python Workshop.

**Mallary Rawls** ('21 M.S.) presented at the Panhandle Libraries Access Network's (PLAN) Panhandle Academic Libraries Conference.

**John G. Rivest** ('79 M.S.) has retired after 42 years in academic librarianship, including 30 years as Music Librarian and Cataloger at Shorter University.

**Ashley Rutstein** ('12 B.S. & '14 M.A.) featured on AdWeek's Creative 100 list.

**Daniella Smith** ('01 M.S. & '09 Ph.D.) awarded the Hazel Harvey Peace Endowed Professorship by the University of North Texas.

**Bethany Swanson** ('13 B.S.) awarded the Reuben O'D Askew Young Alumni Award.

**Rheannah Wynter** ('21 B.S.) received an award for her documentary in the 26th Annual Palm Beach Student Showcase of Films (SSOF).

**Marilyn Young** ('64 B.A.) received the Circle of Gold award from the FSU Alumni Association.

**SHARE YOUR CLASS NOTE**

Send your update, class year and degree to:  
**hello@cci.fsu.edu**

Please note not all updates may be printed.



The PLAY Team provided speech/language screenings to children ages 5 and younger.

**FOLLOW US!**

 /CCIFSU

 @FSUCCI

 @FSU\_CCI

**CONTACT:**

info@cci.fsu.edu



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
College of Communication & Information  
P.O. Box 3062651  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2651

Nonprofit Org  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
TALLAHASSEE, FL  
PERMIT NO. 55

## STAY CONNECTED WITH CCI

Help us brag about you! Complete our Keep In Touch form using the QR code so we can share your success.



## KEEP YOUR INFORMATION UP TO DATE

Moving to a new address? Want to receive electronic copies of the newsletter instead? Use the QR code to update your current information in our records.

## MEET THE LEADERSHIP BOARD - VICTORIA ZEPP

As an Information Technology and Public Affairs executive, I fit CCI's graduate profile yet my invitation to CCI's Leadership Board came from a commitment to the School of Communication Disorders' focus on Autism and Related Disorders (ASD). I joined the Board when my son was diagnosed with ASD as a toddler; today, 20 years later, my son is college educated with a successful career within a state agency. FSU CCI graduate students and professors, plus access to their labs and evidence-based programs were integral to his development and our ability to access services. Their research and graduate work have resulted in tools, awareness, and research that offer individuals and families hope, instruction, and behavior development support which we experienced firsthand. It's critical that we help support graduate students and the Assistive Communication Lab, which focuses on augmentative and alternative communication needs of people with severe communication disorders. Graduate students and experts help to develop or restore an individual's ability to express themselves and increase independence for those with severe communication



*Victoria Zepp*  
CCI Leadership Board

disorders including cerebral palsy, autism, stroke, traumatic brain injury, or neuromuscular disorders such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy. Many graduate students, families and individuals receive scholarships and grants as well. Please contact me at [Victoria4FSUCCI@team180.com](mailto:Victoria4FSUCCI@team180.com) if you were a recipient of such support and want to join me in paying it forward and/or sharing your story with others who can.



*Victoria with her son, Zach Zepp.*

**Victoria V. Zepp, DPL**