



SPRING 2025



COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION
& INFORMATION

34TH EDITION

THE CONNECTOR

STUDENT NEWSLETTER



We are pleased to present the Spring 2025 edition of *The Connector*, the College of Communication and Information's student newsletter. This spring semester, our students proactively learned as researchers, volunteers, and leaders who overcame countless challenges. We are honored to highlight these students and their amazing accomplishments in the 34th edition of *The Connector*. We hope you enjoy reflecting on their achievements as much as we did!

Isabelle Krukoski and Emily Montarroyos



Table of Contents

Unconquered	2
College Happenings	3
CCI News and Events	7
School of Communication	13
School of Information	18
School of Communication Science and Disorders	22
Ways to get Involved with CCI	24

UNCONQUERED

“Despite the tragic event that took place this spring semester, we are incredibly proud to be part of such a resilient, supportive, and compassionate university. Go Noles ♥️” -The Editors



COLLEGE HAPPENINGS



Students enjoyed historic Tallahassee snowfall



SCSD students participated in the annual Best Buddies Friendship Walk



CCI students volunteered at the Challenger Learning Center's 2025 Celebration of Women and Girls in STEM Day



CCI traveled to Atlanta for the CCI Alumni Mixer and Leadership Board Meeting



SCSD students made some new friends at the Warren building thanks to the FSU Speech and Hearing Clinic

COLLEGE HAPPENINGS



CCI welcomed the first spring undergraduate cohort in FSU Communication Science and Disorders



CCI students presented at the 25th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium



STARS and Wakulla Springs Lab students attended the National High Magnetic Field Lab's Open House



CCI took free headshots for students at CCI Club Day



CCI helped students connect with employers at the CCI Career Fair

COLLEGE HAPPENINGS



CCI sponsored the TEDxFSU 2025 Conference,
“Impressions”



SCOM participated in the 11th Annual South Asian Media and Cultural Studies Conference,
“Celebrating Voices”



CCI students were welcomed back to campus
with donuts



CCI students attended FSU Day at the Capitol



CCI seniors graduated from FSU in the
2025 Spring Commencement Ceremony

COLLEGE HAPPENINGS



CCI students were recognized at the CCI Honors & Awards Recognition Ceremony



CCI students attended the Spring 2025 Graduation Celebration



CCI spent spring break making global connections with our students and alumni in Florence, Italy



CCI students celebrated 75 Years of Debate at the FSU Speech and Debate Reunion



Students traveled to New York City with the Center For Hispanic Marketing Communication

CCI students recognized at FSU Leadership Awards Night

On April 12, 2025, FSU hosted its Leadership Awards, an annual recognition of students, organizations, and employees who have demonstrated a commitment to student success and giving back to the community. The awards were hosted by the Office of Student Organizations and Involvement with a focus on leadership through achievement, service, or organizational involvement. Among the CCI awardees were **Elizabeth Lavitman, Malena Romero, Snaley Dol, Sophia Ferraro, Paige Elkin**, and the STARS Alliance.



JD Doughney Serves as 2025 Seminole 100 Keynote Speaker

John (JD) Doughney, an accomplished alumnus of the College of Communication and Information (CCI), was selected as the keynote speaker for the prestigious Seminole 100 ceremony on February 22, 2025. As a successful business leader, he spoke about what the Seminole 100 recognizes and values, celebrating 100 of the fastest-growing alumni-led or alumni-owned businesses. Doughney graduated from FSU with a dual Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies and Political Science, followed by a Master's in Integrated Marketing Communication. He currently serves as Vice President of Marketing for Inspire Aesthetics, and also teaches marketing at the Coles College of Business at Kennesaw State University. During his speech, Doughney made sure to highlight his experiences at FSU and who helped him get to where he is today.





Paige Elkin Named CCI's 2025 Humanitarian of the Year Honoree

CCI has named **Paige Elkin** as its 2025 nominee for Humanitarian of the Year. FSU's Undergraduate Humanitarian of the Year Award is a prestigious honor recognizing students who demonstrate exceptional commitment to service. This award, launched in 1988, reflects FSU's mission to contribute meaningfully to the public. Each academic college selects one student who embodies this dedication, with one overall recipient chosen from the college nominees. Elkin, an undergraduate researcher, has dedicated herself to studying the impact and effectiveness of artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT and CoPilot in academic settings.

2025 Seminole 100 Recognizes Eight CCI Alumni as Honorees

The Seminole 100 is a yearly celebration that recognizes 100 of the fastest-growing businesses led and owned by FSU alumni. This year, the ceremony was held on February 22, 2025, where honorees across multiple fields gathered to celebrate their achievements. This year, eight CCI alumni were recognized: **Aaron T. Rich** (Aaron Rich Marketing), **Luis A. Montanez** (Blind Tiger Enterprises), **Damon Steffens** (Canpoy Management Consulting Group), **Brian R. Dooley** (Independence Digital), **Stephen A. Smith** (Law Offices of Stephen A. Smith, LLC), **Brian F. McKenna** (Social Catering & Events), **Matthew J. Thompson** (Social Catering & Events), and **Drew Piers** (Piers Property Group).



HiGSA, CHMC, and MMSA Present 2025 HiGSA Talks: Thriving in Our Identities and in the Academy

The Hispanic Graduate Student Association (HiGSA), in collaboration with the Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication (CHMC) and the Multicultural Marketing Student Association (MMSA) at FSU, proudly hosted its signature annual event, HiGSA Talks, on April 12, 2025, in the FSU Student Union Senate Chambers. The event brought together graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and professionals for a vibrant day of academic presentations, dialogue, and community-building centered on the theme “Thriving in Our Identities and in the Academy.” HiGSA Talks has become a cornerstone of FSU’s multicultural and academic calendar. Created to spotlight emerging voices in academia, the event invites students from all backgrounds to share work that either reflects Hispanic identities or addresses issues relevant to the Hispanic community. With a strong commitment to interdisciplinary engagement, this year’s edition will offer a dynamic platform for research that bridges academic insight and lived experience.

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY BEST GRADUATE SCHOOLS *U.S News & World Report 2025*



CCI ranks among top 20 public graduate programs in the 2025 U.S. News & World Report

This year, two of CCI’s graduate programs ranked among the top 20 public graduate school programs in the 2025 U.S. News & World Report rankings. The iSchool’s Library and Information Studies program placed No. 12 nationally and No. 10 among public universities. The School of Communication Science and Disorders’s speech-language pathology graduate program ranked No. 14 among publics and No. 18 overall. Both of these programs were ranked as the best in Florida. These rankings were based solely on opinions of each program’s quality as rated by academic experts at peer institutions.



HiGSA

Hispanic Graduate Student Association

TALKS 2025

**Join us at HIGSA Talks to explore research and
presentations on Hispanic and Latino
communities, languages, and cultures**

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION EVENTS

CCI Students Bring Hands-On STEM Activities to Middle School STEM Night

For the third year in a row, CCI students partnered with the SciGirls at Montford Middle School's annual STEM night to continue their commitment to STEM outreach in K-12. The 14-person team of Students in Technology, Academics, Research, and Service (STARS) members, led by Associate Dean Ebe Randeree, presented five engaging, hands-on stations for students to interact with. The event attracted over 150 students and their families. This event is just one of many supported by STARS as they work to broaden initiatives to engage K-12 students in STEM.



12 CCI Projects Featured in FSU's Great Give 2025

FSU's Great Give is a university-wide day of giving that supports our exemplary students, faculty, and groups across campus. FSU's Great Give began on March 5, 2025, at midnight and continued for 24 hours. Between the 12 CCI projects featured this year, CCI obtained over 475 donors, 550 gifts, and \$422,484.35 in donations. Among the 12 CCI projects that contributed to FSU's Great Give were Arrowhead Advertising, Cybersecurity Club Fund, Help Guatemala Hear Service Trip, Intensive Comprehensive Aphasia Program, iSchool Innovation Fund, School of Communication, School of Communication Student Excellence Fund, Spotlight on Student Success at The Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication, STARS - Student Leadership Corps, Support Students in Communication & Information (Dean's Excellence Fund), Voices of Tomorrow: FSU Speech & Debate Society, and WVFS Tallahassee 89.7FM.



COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION EVENTS



CCI Steps Up for a Cause: Relay For Life 2025

On April 12, 2025, FSU held its annual Relay for Life philanthropy event in support of the American Cancer Society. This was the first Relay for Life that the College of Communication and Information participated in as a team, making CCI the only college team at the event. Members from various majors, years, involvements, and schools within the college came together to fundraise and support the team at the 12-hour, all-day philanthropy event held in the student union ballrooms. The team raised over \$1,800 and ranked #15 out of 68 total teams across the Tallahassee-wide philanthropy event in its first year.

Students travel to FSU's Panama City Campus to table at STEM Expo

CCI students traveled to FSU's Panama City campus to table at the 2025 Tech Expo. The expo was put on by the Advancing Science and Career Education in New Technologies (ASCENT) group, which works to uplift and amplify the IT crowd on campus and emphasize the T in STEM. Hundreds of K-12 students and parents attended the event, which offered robotic, Minecraft, and other interactive technology-based activities. CCI students planned, set up, and ran six technology and innovation-based stations, with each station representing a different angle of technology.



FSU CCI Students Build Industry Connections During Tampa Networking Trip

This Spring, nine CCI students gained industry insights and career guidance during visits to major tech companies in Florida's growing tech hub of Tampa. Led by CCI Associate Dean Ebe Randeree, the trip provided students with valuable industry exposure and networking opportunities. On this trip, the students toured Reliaquest, Citibank, and A-Lign, where they met with recruiters, experienced each company's culture firsthand, and connected with CCI alumni working at these organizations.

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION EVENTS

Transfer Student Success Class Presents Guest Speaker Series

Betsy Crawford's Transfer Student Success Class, COM3933, hosted five guest speakers this spring. The class was designed to engage students who have transferred to FSU from a community college or other university and were majoring in a program in CCI. Students met weekly with peer mentors to explore resources available on campus and build academic and career networks through alumni guest speakers and attendance at college-wide events. Alumni guest speakers included **Brianna Holmes**, a Strategy Director at BBDO Atlanta; **Brooke Hopfe**, a Digital Media Coordinator with the Jacksonville Jaguars; **Eliana Roselli**, a director of partnerships at The A List; **Brandi Troup**, on-air talent at Cox Media in Miami; and **Kaitlyn Bludau**, a Video Editor at Abercrombie & Fitch in Los Angeles.



College of Communication and Information Hosts 2025 Leadership Conference

CCI hosted its 12th annual Leadership Conference on March 4, 2025, at the FSU Alumni Center, bringing together speakers, volunteers, and attendees of all backgrounds to inspire, learn, and engage. CCI hosted multiple sessions featuring 26 student, faculty, and alumnae speakers. The event left many feeling motivated, connected, and inspired as leaders shared their experiences both personally and professionally.





Media Communication Studies Student Earns Global Citizenship Certificate Program and Speaks at Award Ceremony

Sydney Sherry, a Media Communication Studies student, completed the Global Citizenship Certificate Program (GCC). The program offers a transformative experience by deepening students' understanding of global issues and intercultural communication. With a dual interest in communication studies and social work, the program allowed Sherry to engage with complex global issues while practicing cultural humility and understanding. Sherry is also the 2025 President of Lambda Pi Eta (LPE), the national communication honor society at Florida State University. Under Sherry's leadership, Lambda Pi Eta has improved its professional development offerings—hosting career events with the FSU Career Center and creating academic-focused workshops.

FPRA Student Chapter Travels to Orlando for Networking Trip

FSU's Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA) Student Capital Chapter traveled to Orlando for their semesterly networking trip. During the trip, the group met with public relations (PR) professionals from Universal Orlando Resort, Visit Orlando, the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, and agencies & Barr and Curley & Pynn. FSU's FPRA chapter anticipates future networking trips and continued member engagement through biweekly meetings.



Communication Alumnus Drew Piers Recognized by Seminole 100

This year, alumnus **Drew Piers** (B.S. '14) was recognized in the Seminole 100, which recognizes 100 of the fastest-growing FSU alumni-owned and led businesses. Piers was recognized for his real estate investment and property management company, Piers Property Group, which was established in 2015, and is owned and operated by both Drew and his wife, **Rebecca Piers**, also an FSU alum. Their business is centered around investing in and managing real estate for both residential and commercial properties. For the last decade, the Pierses have made lasting impacts in the community and have enjoyed seeing it unfold right in front of them.





PR Students Present at International Public Relations Research Conference

Public Relations majors **Mitch Krueger** and **Isabella Giles** presented their respective research projects at the 2025 International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC) in Orlando, FL. Krueger's research is his Honors in the Major Project on how the credibility and professional experiences of women in sports journalism have changed since the admitted fabrication of sideline reports by a renowned female sideline reporter in 2023. Based on her passion for nonprofit PR, Giles presented her research on the crisis communication strategies of nonprofits when responding to hurricane disasters.



SCOM Alumna Utilized Undergraduate Experiences to Shape Her Career

For **Sarah Morris**, the versatility of a communication degree was the key to unlocking many career possibilities. As an undergraduate in SCOM, Morris was involved in Ad Club, Arrowhead Advertising, and the Director's Ambassador program—gaining hands-on experience that shaped her career. Morris's passion for media led her to pursue a Master's in Media Communication Studies, where she developed her understanding of marketing and strengthened her relationships with faculty. Now a Junior Account Manager at GRADIENT, a top experiential marketing agency in New York, Morris thrives in the fast-paced world of experiential marketing.

SCOM Students Explore New Possibilities in Filmmaking

This spring semester, students in Dr. Andy Opel's Immersive Media Production class stepped into a new world in the FSU Immersive Media Dome. Acquired through an interdisciplinary Equipment & Infrastructure Enhancement Grant (EIEG), the FSU Immersive Media Dome is a 360° screening space that allows groups of up to twenty people to experience immersive video together without the need for a VR headset. Students took full advantage of the experience, crafting video projects catered to the technology using two 360° cameras, the GoPro Max and the Insta360 RS One. Students in the Immersive Media Production class spent the second half of the semester at the Challenger Learning Center Planetarium, where they viewed their work in a theater setting with a professional projectionist.



SCOM Alumna works under the United Nations (UN) as a Communications Advisor

Dr. Mariam Shaikh, who serves as the United Nations (UN) Communications Advisor to the President of the General Assembly, is also a Florida State University (FSU) School of Communication alumna. Shaikh credits the School with instilling key skills and insights that helped her get to where she is today. Graduating in 2016 with a Ph.D in Philosophy and Emergency Management Communication, Shaikh first came to the US as a Fulbright Scholar from Pakistan, previously working in Pakistan's Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. She attended FSU to bridge the gap between her existing practice and academic theory. Her favorite work at the UN is the advocacy campaigns, where she says she can make a difference by conveying key messages in diverse ways through graphics, media excerpts, and designing logos, while collaborating with her own team, fellow UN member states, and others as they work towards shared global goals.



SCOM Student Utilizes Skills Built in the Classroom Both On and Off Campus

Advertising student **Chloe Evers** demonstrated the benefits of going the extra mile in college. In addition to her studies, Evers held an executive position with Strike Magazine as the Layout Director and acted as a social media intern with the Tallahassee-Leon County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (CSWG). Evers has applied her design and advertising skills to real-world projects through these roles. Most recently, Evers contributed to The Period Poverty initiative by creating a month-long social media campaign to drive community awareness. Her dedication to translating classroom knowledge into professional experiences highlights her commitment to making an impact both on and off campus.





CELebration of Research: CEL's Year of Achievement

The Cognition and Emotion Lab (CEL) at the School of Communication has had an extraordinary year, driven by the exceptional work of the Distinguished and Endowed Provost McKenzie Professor Dr. Russell Clayton and his brilliant team of students. This year, the lab collected psychophysiological data such as heart rate, skin conductance, and facial electromyography responses from over 200 participants. Among Dr. Clayton's team of students are **Junho Park, Md Sazzad Mahmud Shuvo, Kristina Simon, Sherry Rasul, Jessica Weinberg, Catherine Pinkos, and Isabelle Shim.**

SCOM Alumna Credits CCI Classes for Skills She Uses in the Workplace

SCOM alumna **Lauren Pechwasser** is a producer, director of photography, and editor at NBCUniversal. During her time at SCOM, several classes left a lasting impact on her, including an experimental video course and a sports media class with Jim Shaw, which unexpectedly led to an internship with ESPN. She ultimately credits Dr. Andy Opel's documentary class as the most influential. After working for various top media companies and being awarded an Emmy in the process, Pechwasser's journey is a testament to adaptability, passion and seizing every opportunity that comes her way.



SCOM Student Recognized in the 2025 Florida News Award Contest

SCOM student **Kaitlyn Walsh** has been named a finalist in the 2025 Florida News Award Contest. Walsh is a student in the cooperative journalism program between FSU and FAMU. This recognition puts her among the top young journalists in the state. Walsh, who is completing her minor in journalism at FAMU while pursuing a Media and Communication Studies degree at FSU, was recognized for a series of impactful broadcast news packages. Her decision to enroll in the FSU-FAMU cooperative program was strategic; Walsh wanted both the broad communication foundation offered at FSU and the hands-on, industry-focused training she received at FAMU, particularly as part of the FAMU TV-20 Newscast team. As she nears graduation, Walsh's recognition as a Florida News Awards finalist is more than just an honor—it's a launchpad for the career she's long envisioned.





Communication Alumna Michelle B. Griffin Releases New Book

Michelle B. Griffin, an SCOM alumna, launched *Position Yourself: The Four-Step Roadmap to Know, Show, and Grow Your Personal Brand Authority* on January 31, 2025. This is her second book, following the success of *The LinkedIn Branding Book*, which she released in 2022. *Position Yourself* is a personal branding planner and assessment tool designed to help readers build a strong personal brand that will advance their careers and industry recognition. As an Amazon Best-Seller in Global Marketing, the *Position Yourself* planner introduces Griffin's signature four-step L.A.N.E.® personal branding roadmap, which serves as the foundation for her books, podcasts, and training workshops designed to help individuals take charge of their professional presence. With two decades of experience in communications, public relations, and marketing, Griffin has built her career around helping leaders and experts—especially women in business—define and communicate their professional stories.

New SCOM IP Program in Switzerland

SCOM introduced a new study abroad program in Geneva, Switzerland. This program allows students interested in climate change and geography to highlight these issues through journalism and reporting. Students will be abroad for two weeks and have the chance to immerse themselves in the environment and experience the extent of climate change by taking part in mountain treks, glacier excursions, and staying in the Alpine town of Brig to see the region's natural beauty up close. This program is more than just an academic experience—it's a transformative journey that allows students to combine learning, exploration, and impactful storytelling. Students will return with an understanding of climate change and communication skills that will shape their future careers.





iSchool Alumnus Joins Seminole 100 after Company Growth

Damon Steffens (B.S. '04) is a managing partner of Canopy Management Consulting Group. 20 years after graduating, Steffens reflects on how his alma mater played a key role in his development and paved the way for his future success. With Canopy approaching its five-year anniversary, Steffens emphasized how clear communication within the team is crucial to the company's growth and ongoing success.

iSchool eHealth Lab Intern Accepted into MIT

CCI congratulated **Wade Rogers**, a high school student who participated in the FSU Young Scholars Program in the summer of 2024, for his acceptance into the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Rogers credited his acceptance to the time he spent interning under iSchool Professor Dr. Zhe He in the eHealth Lab. Rogers emphasized that his most valuable takeaway from the experience was the insight he gained about teamwork and the collective efforts involved in structuring a research project.



iSchool Doctoral Student Publishes Research

Lateef Ayinde, a PhD candidate in the School of Information (iSchool), had his research published in Business Information Review, a Sage Journal. He was the lead author, with co-authors Ayoola Oluwaseun Ajayi and Ayansewa Adedeji, fellow PhD students in the iSchool. His paper, Reimagining the Roles and Skills of Information Professionals in the 5IR, dives into how the fifth industrial revolution (5IR) is reshaping the role of information professionals (IPs) and outlines crucial strategies for these professionals to not just survive but thrive in this rapidly evolving landscape.

iSchool Alumnus Published in PLOS ONE Journal

The PLOS ONE peer-reviewed journal added a study by iSchool alumnus **Muhamad Prabu Wibowo** and iSchool Associate Professor Lorri Mon. The study, "Investigating the Practices and Preferences of Health Scholars in Sharing Open Research Data," explores how health researchers engage with sharing open research data, their motivations, and the challenges they face. The goal of this study was to examine the attitudes and behaviors of health scholars regarding open research data to further facilitate more accessible and ethical data use.



FSU launches new graduate certificate

FSU's College of Social Sciences and Public Policy and CCI now offer a graduate certificate in Digital Applied Social Science (DASS) to address complex social science questions using cutting-edge digital tools and ethical frameworks. Graduates of the DASS program will be uniquely prepared for impactful careers at the intersection of data science and social science, with opportunities in various fields including social research, public policy, marketing, communications, business intelligence and academia.



iSchool's MSIT Program Ranked #8 by U.S. News & World Report for 2025 Best Online Programs

The FSU iSchool's online Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) program continues to excel as a leader in online education, again earning a spot among the nation's Top 10. Ranked No. 8 overall, No. 6 among public universities, and No. 5 for veterans by U.S. News & World Report. This program exemplifies the iSchool's dedication to academic excellence, innovation, and meeting the evolving needs of today's workforce. The iSchool sustains success by consistently aligning its programs with industry demands.





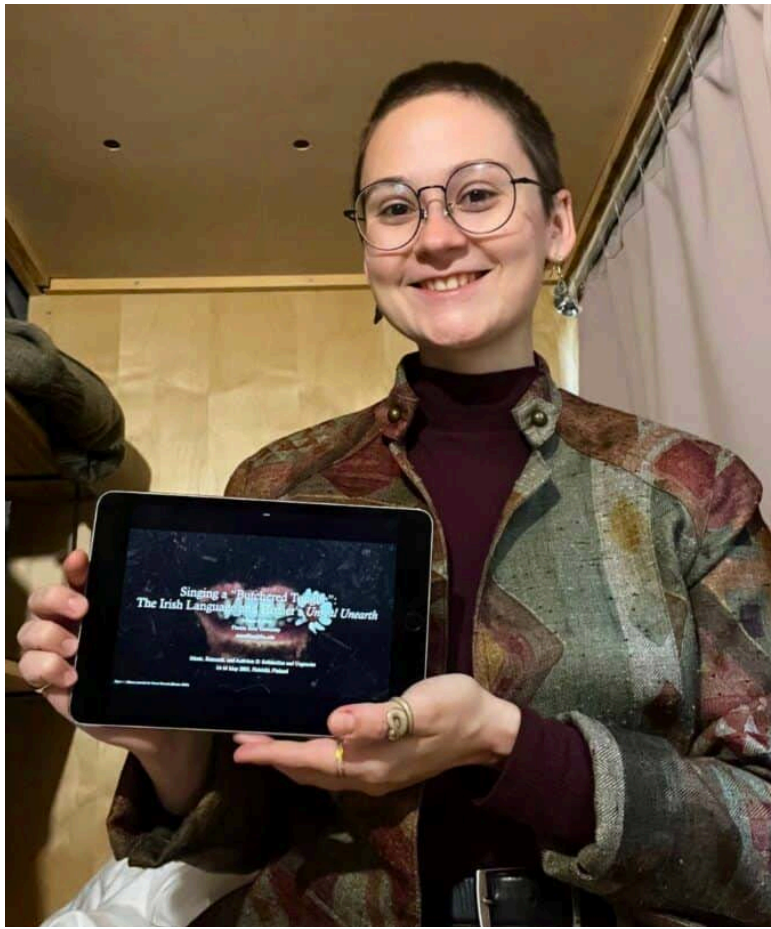
iSchool Doctoral Students Present Research at 27th Annual SAIS Conference

Ghazal Hussain and **Yue Liu**, doctoral students within the iSchool, presented their research at the 27th Annual Conference of the Southern Association for Information Systems (SAIS). Hussain's research paper, *Managing Anxiety and Uncertainty: The Information-Seeking Behaviors of IT Managers in Turbulent Times*, explores how IT managers navigate crises, such as cybersecurity threats, through information-seeking strategies. Inspired by real-world incidents like the 2024 CrowdStrike disruption, Hussain analyzed how managers' ability to access and interpret information impacts their decision-making and stress levels. Liu's research paper, *Explainable AI in Cyber Defense: Research Agenda to Unveil Deepfake Information Manipulation*, tackles one of the most pressing challenges in cybersecurity today: deepfake misinformation. Liu's work focuses on leveraging explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) to create more effective cyber defense systems.

iSchool Alumna Awarded Keeper of the Flame

Natalie Woods (M.S. '14) was recognized with the "Keeper of the Flame" award by the Western Branch Library Support Association on March 18, 2025. Woods served as the Library Manager at the Western Branch Library for eight years before transitioning to her current role as Library Manager at the Parkland Library. Throughout her career, Woods has organized large programs, such as the Western Library Block Party, a community event that connects patrons with resources in the community. She also rebranded the Cotter Cup Storytelling contest, a poetry writing contest for elementary, middle, and high school students in honor of poet and Professor Joseph Seamon Cotter, Sr. Having dedicated more than 35 years to the library profession, Woods credits her expertise to her education.





iSchool Student Attends International Conference

Master's student **Allison Rollins** attended "Music, Research, and Activism II: Solidarities and Urgencies," an international conference held at the University of Helsinki in Helsinki, Finland, from May 14-16, 2025. As an interdisciplinary conference, it was a prime opportunity for Rollins to gain connections in other career fields. Rollins presented her paper, "Singing a 'Butchered Tongue': The Irish Language and Hozier's Unreal Unearth," which explored the impacts of trending and popular music. The presentation discussed the potential for music to work as a teaching element with its socio-political value having a huge potential influence on indigenous/endangered languages. Rollins presented to a collective of scholars from a variety of fields including sociology, translation studies, musicology, psychology, and even cultural studies.

IT Alumnus Lands Tech Role in U.S. Army

After crossing the stage at Spring Commencement, Information Technology (IT) alumnus **Andrew Mance** stepped into the role of Cyber Warfare Officer in the U.S. Army, where he will lead teams in defending critical networks, countering cyber threats, and launching digital offensives to protect national security. Mance is no stranger to the military, having served for three years in the U.S. Army Reserve. During that same period, Mance also worked as a technician here at CCI, assisting faculty and staff with many of their tech needs. We thank Mance for his service to our country, and we are thrilled to share that he will remain a student in the College as he begins the Master's in Information Technology (MSIT) program in Summer 2025.



Doctoral Student Recognized as ILA 30 Under 30 Literacy Champion in Literacy Advocacy

Miguel Garcia-Salas, a doctoral student in the School of Communication Science and Disorders (SCSD) and the Florida Center for Reading Research, has been named one of the International Literacy Association's (ILA) 30 Under 30 Literacy Champions, an honor recognizing rising leaders in literacy education worldwide. Garcia-Salas credits this honor to his collaboration across disciplines and community engagement that defined his academic and professional journey. His road to this recognition was not without its challenges. Closing gaps between disciplines and meeting the needs of underserved populations required innovation and perseverance, inspiring Garcia-Salas to build partnerships and create solutions tailored to each community's strengths and challenges.



SCSD Embarks on 9th Annual Help Guatemala Hear Trip

From February 3-7, SCSD students, faculty, and alumni traveled to Guatemala for the annual Help Guatemala Hear service trip. Led by Dr. Selena Snowden, their initiative targets outreach and training for future professionals by providing hearing services to the community abroad. During the trip, the audiology team contributed over 140 hours of training and service, providing hearing healthcare to 214 patients, including 62 returning individuals. They fit 174 hearing aids, performed ear cleanings, and fit a bone-anchored hearing aid. This year, SCSD received substantial funding from donors, including the FSU Foundation Board of Trustees, which expanded opportunities for students and patients alike. The undergraduate and graduate students who participated were **Anya Chatani, Brooke Self, Hayley Krush, Grace English, Grace Frerking, Blaire Zeiba, Julia Weinberg, Taylor McConnell, Catherine Steele, Annabella Jajuga, Mia Finigan, Katie McGrane, Chloe Molinaro, and Katelyn Peterson.**



SCSD Teams Up with FSU's IMS To Create New V-PACT Program

SCSD is collaborating with the FSU Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences (IMS) program to create the Veterans Peer Assistance & Collaboration Team (V-PACT). V-PACT is a team of students and professionals that will engage with and provide support for veterans diagnosed with communication disorders who are also facing psychosocial challenges related to their impairments. Through small-group settings, peer groups will offer communicative and psychosocial support for veterans, serving as both support networks and opportunities for interactive learning. V-PACT will include five undergraduate IMS students, three SCSD graduate students, and clients within the FSU Speech and Hearing Clinic. Motivated by the increasing awareness of the communication issues veterans face as they age, V-PACT aims to bridge the gaps by empowering participants through peer support and student interaction. It strives to have a long-lasting, positive impact on both the veterans and students involved, enhancing veterans' mental well-being through emotional support, guidance, and resources while providing students with new learning opportunities and experiences.

SCSD Student Awarded 2025 CAPCSD Ph.D. Scholarship

SCSD PhD student **Mary Allison Moody** was awarded the 2025 Council for Academic Programs in Communication Science and Disorders (CAPCSD) PhD Scholarship. CAPCSD is a membership organization with over 350 programs across the world, with the mission of supporting, promoting, and advancing higher education programs in communication sciences and disorders. The organization funds up to ten scholarships to support PhD students in the dissertation phase of their doctoral program. Moody described CAPCSD as an excellent resource for those pursuing a career in academia. The PhD scholarship will help fund a dissertation study, which she feels will form a foundation for her future inquiries as an early career researcher.



WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH CCI

Student Leadership Council

The **CCI Student Leadership Council (SLC)** meets monthly with the Dean of CCI to discuss student affairs and what is going on in the College from a student's perspective. The SLC **hosts events with the College, promotes student involvement, and helps students gain professional experience!**

To learn more and get involved, contact:

Betsy Crawford

Betsy.Crawford@cci.fsu.edu



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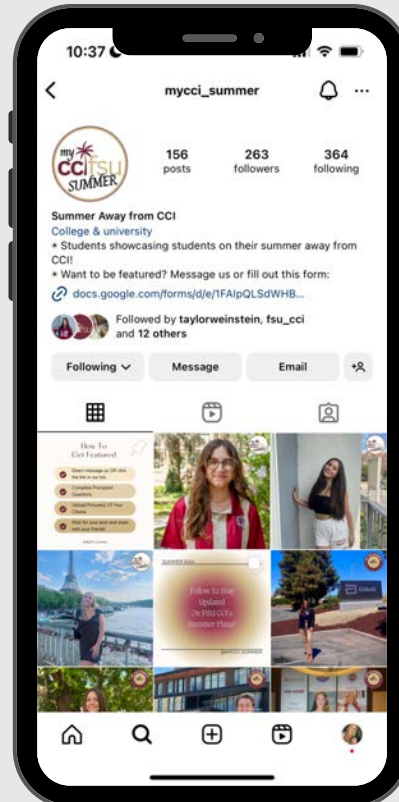
**FSU College of
Communication &
Information**

Recent CCI graduate? Stay connected!

- Sign up for the end-of-semester alumni newsletter, **Connection**.
- Fill out the **Alumni Keep in Touch form** by scanning the QR code to the right and follow the steps.
- If you're looking to join CCI for a master's or doctoral degree, please **reach out to Betsy Crawford** at Betsy.Crawford@cci.fsu.edu for more information.



We want to know what our amazing CCI students are up to this summer!



Want to get more involved with CCI?
Visit our *Get Involved* website to see all 22 student organizations in CCI!



Scan the QR code and fill out the Google Form to get featured on @mycci summer