



DEPARTMENT *of* COMMUNICATION
and PERFORMANCE

College of Arts & Sciences

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

**Spotlight on Scholarship:
AY 2020-2021 Report**

Prepared by

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Presented to

Dr. Amber Kinser, Chair

&

The Communication & Performance Faculty



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December 2, 2021

Dear, Friends:

As you may know, I have been assembling these spotlight reports for over a decade now, giving me an interesting vantage point from which to see the Department of Communication and Performance's scholarly and creative endeavors. It has been humbling and exhilarating observing your continued efforts at producing great works and engaging communities during these transformative times.

Virtually Awesome

Faculty have found ways to engage and serve communities in meaningful ways throughout the pandemic. Dr. Delanna Reed performed stories via Zoom and in person as part of her partnership with Jonesborough Storytellers Guild. Professor Nancy Donoval coordinated the online (and sold out) [Summer Storytelling Institutes](#)ⁱ. She was also the featured performer for The Grapevine Storytelling Series based in Washington, DC and held over Zoom.

Senior Lecturer Laughton Messmer and Dr. Erin Messmer continued guiding the Speech and Debate Team to wins, attending both face-to-face and virtual events. Two of our students (Emily Napier and Brooke Hornberger), in fact, qualified for American Forensics Association-National Speech Tournament, a prestigious event for individual speech competition. This brings me to a quick aside:

Lecturer Donna Paulsen is stepping into the role of Assistant Director for the debate team as Erin takes on the hefty responsibility of leading our Learning Support initiative (and that's on top of Dr. Erin B. Messmer's successful completion of her dissertation, as you'll read below).

In July, Dr. Amber Kinser participated in an entertaining and informative conversation about holiday gatherings on the National Communication Association's podcast, [Communication Matters](#)ⁱⁱ, and Dr. Kelly Dorgan had her essay "Custodian of Our Story" featured on a community radio station based in New England.

Dr. Wesley Buerkle took his performative fathering research to an online popular culture conference. Dr. Christine Anzur spoke with the ETSU Expedition Leader Student Organization. Additionally, Christine, Laughton, Donna, and Senior Lecturer Jamie Sproles gave virtual presentations to several Appalachian high schools. Continue reading about these, and more, virtual outreach events.

Socially Significant

Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, Department Chair Amber Kinser oversaw our responses to troubling but socially relevant events. She worked with faculty to draft, revise, and issue several written statements. Read more about those statements [here](#)ⁱⁱⁱ and later in the report.

In and out of the classroom, Amber remains committed to the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion, explaining why the department co-sponsored an ETSU virtual event with queer Latinx author and activist [Gabby Rivera](#)^{iv}. Continue reading about her other contributions to social-justice movements, including her classroom activities and requirements.

Jamie and Christine introduced new scholarly works and assignments in their courses, bridging research and instruction about social justice, privilege, and oppression. Dr. Andrew Herrmann and Kelly both shared essays about race, racism, and racial communication off campus.

Adding to his heavy schedule, Wesley joined the [ETSU Equity and Inclusion Council](#)^v while continuing his work on sexual and consent education.

Resoundingly Recognized

An academic year doesn't go by without awards being bestowed on our hardworking faculty.

Nancy's co-authored book received a major award. Published last year, *The Emotional Arc and Point of View: A Handbook for Writers and Storytellers* received a [Storytelling World Award](#)^{vi}, "Special Storytelling Resources" category. Kelly's essay, "The Making of Crazy Fred" received top distinction for nonfiction at the 2021 Tennessee Mountain Writers Association.

And, according to rumor, Andrew has received several awards. It will be exciting news to share soon!

Of course, much more has happened in the department. Thomas Townsend now manages our department's Facebook site. Additionally, Thomas has undertaken an initiative to create videos about the work we do in Communication Studies; those videos will serve various communities for years to come. Adriane Flanary continues auditing our majors' progress toward graduation and communicating her findings with them and their advisors, a time-consuming responsibility. And Dallas Honeycutt joined the faculty, so we'll hear more later about his management of the department website.

Read below to discover some of the many activities and endeavors taking place in our department.

Sincerely,

Kelly A. Dorgan

Kelly A. Dorgan, PhD
Research Coordinator
Department of Communication & Performance

Thank you, Lori Ann Manis.

You support our scholarly and creative activities in profound and often invisible ways. Thanks for navigating us through the hoops and over the hurdles, quietly pointing us in the right direction—and, sometimes, away from the wrong directions.

And, certainly, thank you for your help with producing this annual report.

Shout Out!

Faculty Activities

~Selected~

Christine Anzur

Publications:

Weiss, J. K., & **Anzur, C. K.** (Under Review). “Sometimes, During Deployment, It Seems Like We Won’t Make It”: Applying the Relational Turbulence Model to Couples Experiencing Military Deployment.

Anzur, C.K. (Accepted). A Risk Worth Concealing. In Donna McCart Sharkey (Ed.). *Don’t Tell: What Families Hide*. Demeter Press.

Virtual Presentations:

Anzur, C.K. (2020, Fall). Introduction to Interpersonal Communication. Presented at Johnson County High School, TN.

Wesley Buerkle

Publications:

Buerkle, W. (Forthcoming). “Dad Bros: Performing Fatherhood in a Social Media Group” In *Communicating Fatherhood: New Directions in Theory, Research, and Education*. Eds. Vincent Waldron and Thomas Socha. Peter Lang: New York City, 2022.

Virtual Presentation:

“Dad Bros: Performing Fatherhood in a Social Media Group” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Online, May 2021.

Nancy Donoval

Award:

Niemi, L., & Donoval, N. (2020). [Award Recipient] *Point of View and the Emotional Arc of Stories: A Handbook for Writers and Storytellers*. [Storytelling World Award](#), “Special Storytelling Resources” Category.

Virtual Presentation:

Donoval, N. (2020, September 28). *Telling the Story of Your Research*, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

Kelly A. Dorgan

Publications:

Dorgan, K.A. (Forthcoming). Pandemic Professor. *The Reckoning: Tennessee Writers On 2020*.

Dorgan, K.A. (2020). Custodian of Our Story. *Delmarva Review*, 13, pp. 40-47.

Digital Reprints:

Dorgan, K.A. (Accepted). Under the Rhododendrons. *The Bookends Review* [Reprint].

Dorgan, K.A. (2021, March). Custodian of Our Story.

[Talbot Spy](#) [Reprint]^{vii}

[Chestertown Spy](#) [Reprint]^{viii}

[Cambridge Spy](#) [Reprint]^{ix}

Virtual Presentation:

Dorgan, K.A. (2021, March 11). White Space. Presented at the Appalachian Studies Association Conference. Online. March 2021.

Virtual Reading:

Dorgan, K.A. (2021, April 14). Custodian of Our Story. *Cambridge Community Radio [MidShore MidDay]*. Available on [SoundCloud](#)^x

VIRTUALLY AWESOME

Responding to community and departmental needs during the pandemic, **Nancy Donoval** held the sold-out [Summer Storytelling Institutes](#) online. Master classes featured Janice Del Negro and Kevin Kling and focused on reimagining folk and fairy tales, as well as writing and telling healing stories. Nancy was also the featured performer via Zoom for The Grapevine Storytelling Series based in Washington, DC.

Of course, Nancy continued serving students. For example, she crafted and submitted a proposal to the new Mary B. Martin School of the Arts fund to support the creation and implementation of a multi-day intensive Digital Storytelling Workshop for Fall 2021. Additionally, she designed and taught a Zoom workshop on storytelling concepts and techniques for the students participating in ETSU's 3MT, a competition that helps young scholars develop research-presentation skills (You'll recall that our own [Donna Paulsen won it in 2019](#), and I hear there's more good news to come in 2021).

In July, **Amber Kinser** participated in a (virtual) conversation about holiday gatherings on the podcast, [Communication Matters](#). Adding her voice to the episode, she talks about how we can't really examine food without examining gender, and she explores the gendered performances of meal preparation for the Fourth of July. It's a great conversation; take a listen (click the hyperlink [here](#) or find the link at the end of this report).

After publishing her essay, "Custodian of Our Story," **Kelly Dorgan** was invited to have it digitally reprinted by three news outlets in New England, including *The Talbot Spy*, with each site having over 10 thousand subscribers. Following the essay's reprint, it caught the attention of the Founder and General Manager of Cambridge Community Radio who wanted to feature an audio reading during drive-time. The recording has now been made available on [SoundCloud](#).

Several of our faculty took time to speak with students about what we do and teach in our department. **Christine Anzur** taught "Intro to Interpersonal" to a remote class at Johnson County High School. She also spoke (virtually) with ETSU Expedition Leader Student Organization about how students can enhance interpersonal connection while giving tours, wearing masks, and practicing social distancing.

Laughton Messmer presented his virtual talk, "Being a Better Arguer and Debater," to an English class at Hardin Valley Academy. As if he isn't busy enough with our debate team, he also spoke by invitation to the Interfraternity Council about the importance of ethical communication.

Both **Laughton and Wesley Buerkle** attended virtual conferences. Laughton presented at the 2021 Tennessee Communication Association virtual annual conference. In a timely talk, Laughton discussed how to help debate and forensics programs thrive during the pandemic. Wesley continued his scholarly work on fathering and masculinity studies, this time focusing on social media; he presented at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association annual meeting held online.

As usual, **Jamie Sproles** had a busy year. She presented "Your Self Concept: Why it Matters Personally and Professionally" at Murray County School, Northwest Georgia. This was in addition to her important work to coordinate and host alumni virtual talks by Rachel Stiltner, Community Engagement Specialist with Ballad Health.

Donna Paulsen spoke with students in Murray County School in Georgia, talking with them about nonverbal communication and impression management. As you'll recall, Donna also developed a one-woman show based on her award-winning thesis, *Sing, O Barren One: An Original Storytelling Concert Exploring Christian Women's Experiences with Infertility and Pregnancy Loss*. Performing it live locally, Donna made a recording of the show available on [YouTube](#)^{xi}, ensuring that other audiences will be able to watch it. To date, *Sing O Barren One* has nearly 100 views, and that is on top of her original live performance.

A special thanks to our faculty who are finding ways to reach across communities and audiences.

Andrew Herrmann

Publications:

Bochner, A. P., & **Herrmann, A. F.** (2020). Practicing Narrative Inquiry II: Making Meanings Move. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry*, 2nd ed (pp. 285-328). Oxford University Press.

Dunn, R. A., & **Herrmann, A. F.** (2020). Comic Con Communion: Gender, Cosplay, and Media Fandom. In R. A. Dunn (Ed.), *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Media Fandom* (pp. 37-52). IGI Global.

Herrmann, A. F. & Herbig, A. (2021). An Autoethnography of Working, Failing, and Reworking Public Scholarship. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Popularizing Scholarly Research: Research Methods and Practices* (pp. 104-131). Oxford University Press.

Herrmann, A. F., & Adams, T. E. (2021). [Learning to be Editors](#). *Journal of Autoethnography*, 2, 1-4.^{xii}

Herbig, A., **Herrmann, A. F.**, Watson, A., Tyma, A. W., Miller, J. (2020). Critical Rhetoric as Collaboration. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 885-898.

Herrmann, A. F. (2021). [Forum Introduction: Frailty and Strength During COVID-19](#). *Journal of Autoethnography*, 2, 217-220.^{xiii}

Herrmann, A. F. (2020). Purity, Nationalism, and Whiteness: The Fracturing of Fundamentalist Evangelicalism. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 13, 414-332.

Amber Kinser

Virtual Presentation:

Kinser, A.K. (2021, March 10). Women, Gender, and Communication. Sponsored by the ETSU School of Graduate Studies, Johnson City, TN.

Podcast:

Kinser, A.K. (2021, July 1). [Guest]. [The Fourth of July](#). *Communication Matters*.

Erin B. Messmer

Dissertation:

Messmer, E. (2021). [First-Generation Women's Perceptions of Support While Enrolled in College: A Phenomenological Study](#) [Dissertation]. East Tennessee State University.^{xiv}

Virtual Presentation:

Messmer, E. (2021, March 26). Debate/Forensics During the Pandemic: Overcoming Challenges to Sustain Programs. Presented at the 2021 Tennessee Communication Association Convention. Online. March, 2021.

Dissertation Research in the Pandemic

Dr. Erin B. Messmer concluded her dissertation research after a successful defense in the Spring 2021 semester.

You may recall that she had to redesign her dissertation when the pandemic hit, requiring that she adapt to remote data collection.

Recruiting 11 females from undergraduate and graduate programs across the United States, Erin interviewed participants via Zoom. She explored participants' perceptions of support they received, and wanted to receive, from family, friends, and members of their college/university.

Erin's findings reveal the importance of mentorship and emotional support. Also, her work highlights the need for financial assistance, as well as the critical role of familial support. Discussing intersectional implications, such as race and motherhood, Erin helps illustrate how support is critical during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

When she's not busy in the classroom or in her new role as Director of Learning Support in Reading, she is exploring ways to disseminate her research findings and looks forward to publishing in the future.

Check out her dissertation at <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3877>.

Congratulations, Dr. Erin B. Messmer!

Laughton Messmer

Virtual Presentations:

Messmer, L. (2021, March 26). Debate/Forensics During the Pandemic: Overcoming Challenges to Sustain Programs. Presented at the 2021 Tennessee Communication Association Convention. Online. March, 2021.

Messmer, L. (2021, March 8). Being a Better Arguer and Debater. Presented at Hardin Valley Academy, Knox County, TN.

Donna Paulsen

Publication:

Paulsen, D. (2021). Barren Voices. *The Mockingbird*, 48, pp. 89-97.^{xv}

Performance:

Paulsen, D. (2020, September 25). Sing, O Barren One: An Original Storytelling Concert Exploring Christian Women's Experiences with Infertility and Pregnancy Loss. Presented at Christ Community Church, Johnson City, TN.

Virtual Performance:

Paulsen, D. (2020, November 18). Sing, O Barren One [Video]. [YouTube](#).^{xvi}

Virtual Presentation:

Paulsen, D. (2021, March 30). Let Me Hear Your Body Talk. Presented at Murray County School, Northwest Georgia.

Delanna Reed

Performance:

Reed, D. (2020, October). [Performance] Appalachian Tales and Ghost Stories. Vance Birthplace Historic Site, Weaverville, NC.

Reed, D. (2020, October). [Performance] Ghost Stories. Historic Rugby Ghostly Gathering, Rugby, TN.

Reed, D. (2020, October). [Performance] Ghost Stories. Rocky Fork State Park, Flag Pond, TN.

Reed, D. (2021, August 7 & 8). [Performance] Jonesborough Storytellers Guild Graveyard Tales, at Rocky Mount Historic Site, TN.

Reed, D. (2021, July 3). [Performance] Jonesborough Days, Jonesborough, TN.

Jamie Sproles

Virtual Presentation:

Sproles, J. (2021, April 16). Your Self Concept: Why It Matters Personally and Professionally. Presented at Murray County School, Northwest Georgia.

SOCIALLY SIGNIFICANT

Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, Department Chair **Amber Kinser** spearheaded our responses to socially relevant events. She collaborated with faculty to draft, revise, and issue several statements, including about the January 6th attempted insurrection at the US Capitol and the ETSU Men's Basketball team taking a knee. Read those statements, as well as the one about the Atlanta hate crimes, [here](#).

A noteworthy endeavor, Amber took her own social justice work into her Speaking for Social Change class. She infused the course with antiracism readings and assignments, including requiring students to develop and present a racial autobiography speech and create a policy change podcast.

Similarly, **Jamie Sproles** and **Christine Anzur** introduced new scholarly works and assignments in their courses. **Adriane Flanary** and Jamie introduced a cultural privilege assignment to foster student dialogue about antiracism, and both attended workshops to learn more about teaching diverse student populations. Christine incorporated peer-reviewed research articles into her undergraduate classes to help students consider and reflect upon standpoints of BIPOC communities.

Outside the classroom, faculty took their work into various academic communities to continue the discussion about antiracism and privilege. **Andrew Herrmann** published his essay, "Purity, Nationalism, and Whiteness: The Fracturing of Fundamentalist Evangelicalism" in the *International Review of Qualitative Research*. **Kelly Dorgan** presented her personal narrative "White Space" at the 2021 Appalachian Studies Association annual conference which focused on antiracism measures and activism throughout the region.

In addition to joining the ETSU Equity and Inclusion Council, **Wesley Buerkle** continues his significant work on sexual and consent education. Working through the [APS Research Discovery program](#)^{xvii}, he secured funding for an undergraduate research assistant to review existing literature and videos on consent. During NIA, Kelly Dorgan worked with undergraduate major Brittini Akers during an independent study to review literature related to “good girl” communication scripting as part of a larger book project. More to come on these initiatives later.

Year after year, our faculty continue to recommit themselves to engaging diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives inside and outside the classroom, as well as on and off campus.

~Selected~

Graduate & Undergraduate Work:

Theses:

Lewis, Abby N. (2020). [A Poetic Ethnodrama: Discussing the Impact of the Pressure to Publish on Creative Writers' Production](#) [Thesis Advisor, Dr. Andrew Herrmann]^{xviii}.

Garrison, Debora (2021). "We're Sinking and We're Sinking Quick": Family and Feeding Work During COVID-19 for Single, White, Middle-Class Mothers [Thesis Advisor, Dr. Amber E. Kinser].

Selleck, Cassie Dandridge (2021). Strategies of Stigmatized Grief Management [Thesis Advisor, Dr. Amber E. Kinser].

Walonski, Chris (2021). [Skin Deep: Body Modification and Agentic Identities among Individuals with Skin Conditions](#) [Thesis Advisor, Dr. Amber E. Kinser]^{xix}.

Capstones:

Duff, Megan (2021). Sewage Runoff: The Stories and Experiences of Unmarried Women in Rural Appalachia [Capstone Advisor, Professor Nancy Donoval].

Githinji, Lydia (2021). Women-Run Businesses: How Small Businesses Coped with the COVID-19 Pandemic [Capstone Advisor, Dr. Delanna Reed]

Menon, Tejaswini (2021). Embodied Storytelling: A Curriculum for Ages 4 to 12 Combining Yoga and Story to Enhance Focus [Capstone Advisor, Professor Nancy Donoval].

Publications:

Duff, Megan (2021). [A Town Neglected: Living in Harland, KY During COVID-19](#). *Journal of Autoethnography*, 2 (2), 221-225^{xx}.

Various Student Authors (2021). [The Mockingbird](#)^{xxi}

Norris, Rhea (2021). Lying in Plain Sight: Deception Through an Eating Disorder Lens, pp. 56-61.

Pizzino, Leticia (2021). Unlocking Hearts, pp. 17-20.

Selleck, Cassie (2021). Past Time, p. 54.

Walonski, Chris (2021). Superstition, pp. 13-14.

**Thank you, Laughton Messmer, Erin B. Messmer,
& Donna Paulsen**

Your hard work resulted in the Speech and Debate Team having numerous accomplishments in 2020-2021. Here are only a few:

Cyber Falcon Tournament, Bowling Green State University

Emily Napier- 1st Place Research Paper Presentation & 4th Place After Dinner Speaking
Tessa Cavender- 5th Place Media Broadcasting

Off-Broadway Tournament, Hofstra University and Nassau State Community College

Carson Frizzell- 2nd Place in IPDA Debate & 3rd Place Speaker
Brooke Hornberger- 3rd Place Persuasive Speaking
Sylvia Meredith & Jared Grosvenor- 2nd Place Parliamentary Debate
1st Place Debate Team Sweepstakes
2nd Place Overall Team Sweepstakes

Gorlok Gala, Webster University

Brooke Hornberger- 3rd Place Persuasive Speaking
Nathaniel Vernon- 2nd Place Novice Speaker in Parliamentary Debate
Charles Pratt- 3rd Place Novice Speaker in Parliamentary Debate

Tennessee Interstate Forensic Association State Tournament-

Brook Hornberger- State Champion in Persuasive Speaking

Virtual Valentine/Todd Lewis Memorial Tournament Swing, University of Oklahoma & Biola University-

Brooke Hornberger- 1st Place Persuasive Speaking

2021 American Forensics Association-National Speech Tournament

Brooke Hornberger, Persuasive Speaking
Emily Napier, After Dinner Speech

Interstate Oratory Association Tournament

Brooke Hornberger, Persuasive Speaking

Funding Opportunities



**ETSU Internal Funding
Overview**

https://www.etsu.edu/research/orspa/funding_opps/internal.php



ETSU Elevates (team-based service grant)

General Information

<https://www.etsu.edu/etsuelevates/>



ETSU Research Development Committee

Small Research Grants

<https://www.etsu.edu/research/rdc/smallgrant/default.php>

Major Research Grants

<https://www.etsu.edu/research/rdc/major/default.php>

Interdisciplinary Research Grants

<https://www.etsu.edu/research/rdc/interdisciplinary/default.php>



ETSU Instructional Development Committee

General Information

<http://www.etsu.edu/academicaffairs/instructional-grants.php>



ETSU Internationalization Faculty Grant Program

General Information

https://www.etsu.edu/research/orspa/funding_opps/internal.php#Internationalization



ETSU PGIA

General Information

https://www.etsu.edu/research/orspa/funding_opps/internal.php#PGIA



ETSU Travel Award for Arts & Sciences Faculty

General Information

https://www.etsu.edu/research/orspa/funding_opps/internal.php#TAASF



ETSU Student Opportunities

ETSU Student/Faculty Collaborative Research Grant

https://www.etsu.edu/research/orspa/funding_opps/internal.php#Collaborative

ETSU Undergraduate Travel Grants (Undergraduate)

http://www.etsu.edu/honors/ug_research/funding/travel.php

Links to Select Works & Projects

i https://www.etsu.edu/cas/comm_perform/academics/storytelling.php

ii <https://www.natcom.org/ncapodcast>

iii https://www.etsu.edu/cas/comm_perform/dept_news.php

iv <https://gabbyrivera.com/>

v <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/art-sciences-inclusion/council.php>

vi <http://storytellingworld.com/2021/>

vii <https://talbotspy.org/delmarva-review-custodian-of-our-story-by-kelly-a-dorgan/>

viii <https://chestertownspy.org/2021/03/27/delmarva-review-custodian-of-our-story-by-kelly-a-dorgan/>

ix <https://cambridgespy.org/2021/03/27/delmarva-review-custodian-of-our-story-by-kelly-a-dorgan/>

x <https://soundcloud.com/whcp-radio/custodian-of-our-story-kelly-a-dorgan-april-2021>

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- xi <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEy0AibmKUg>
- xii <https://online.ucpress.edu/joae/issue/1/1>
- xiii <https://online.ucpress.edu/joae/article/2/2/217/116626/Forum-IntroductionFrailty-and-Strength-During>
- xiv <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3877/>
- xv <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/litlang/mockingbird/documents/mockingbird2021.pdf>
- xvi <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEy0AibmKUg>
- xvii https://www.etsu.edu/honors/ug_research/funding/discovery.php
- xviii <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3690/>
- xix <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3906/>
- xx <https://online.ucpress.edu/joae/article/2/2/221/116630/A-Town-NeglectedLiving-in-Harlan-Kentucky-during>
- xxi <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/litlang/mockingbird/documents/mockingbird2021.pdf>