COMMUNICATION CONNECTION

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Questions, Comments, Suggestions?
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Amanda Tinaphong is an Excelsior Service Fellow with the New York State Division of the Budget. She serves as the primary fiscal advisor to the Governor and is responsible for developing, negotiating and implementing one of the largest government budgets in the country.

Fiscal matters were a concern of Tinaphong when she was applying for colleges. “I choose UAlbany for its wide range of academic offerings at an affordable cost. I was accepted to UAlbany through the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), which allowed me to pursue a world-class education despite personal financial constraints,” said Tinaphong, who received a B.A in Communication in 2014 and a Master of Public Administration in 2016. “The education offered at UAlbany along with the support from the EOP really set me up for future success during both my undergraduate and graduate career.”

Tinaphong’s tenure at UAlbany helped to prepare her for her future career. She cites a mass media course that she took as an undergraduate as the catalyst that helped her to identify what she wanted to do in the future. The course required her to write news stories for the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy. “I realized how I could tie both my interest in research and seeking out information and my passion for effecting change and making a difference,” she states. This experience led her to pursuing her graduate degree in Public Administration, which allowed her to keep up with her interest in key issues while also learning how to make policy changes.

The communication skills she learned as an undergraduate proved to be helpful tools when she was in graduate school. “Having a strong foundation in both written and verbal communication, quantitative and qualitative research, public speaking, problem solving and knowing how to engage your audience are all skills that are necessary for success in the public policy arena,” Tinaphong shares.

Tinaphong went on to say, “In my current career, I am constantly faced with analyzing complicated policy changes occurring at both the State and Federal level. I need to be able to synthesize the proposed policy change to decision-makers in a way that is easy to understand, lines out key impacts and fiscal implications, and provides recommendations for next steps. Having effective communication and ensuring the message is accurate, clear and informative is crucial.”

The Excelsior Service Fellowship Program was launched by Governor Cuomo in 2013. It is designed to bring recent graduates from diverse backgrounds into New York State government.

Tinaphong finds her current position to be very rewarding because she plays a part in the development and implementation of public policy that will shape the future of the government in New York.

She plans on continuing to work in the office of the NYS Division of the Budget at the end of her fellowship term. She is preparing for several health-related policy changes that she is excited to develop and implement in the future. Tinaphong emphasizes that the guidance she received from EOP along with her undergraduate and graduate experiences will continue to be beneficial to her continued success.
Nora Lum, who graduated with her B.A in Journalism in 2011, is in not one, but two of the hottest movies of 2018. *Crazy Rich Asians* opened in mid-August to positive reviews. The film is groundbreaking because it is the first feature film by a major Hollywood studio to include a cast that is almost exclusively composed of Asian Americans. Lum, who is credited under her stage name Awkwafina, plays the best friend of the main character.

Lum told *W Magazine* that the film was a gamble. She states, “This movie will set a precedent for all movies that will feature a minority lead. You don’t know what’s going to happen, but I can only hope that it does well and influences more movies like that to be made. If you are a person of color, any movie that features groups that are marginalized, it lifts us all up. It helps all of us. We’re moving in the right direction.”

The other film she starred in this summer, *Ocean’s 8*, premiered in June and is a spinoff of the *Ocean’s* trilogy. Lum stars alongside Academy Award winning actors, Cate Blanchett and Sandra Bullock as well as Rihanna and other notable Hollywood A-listers.

Lum began her career in entertainment in the music industry. She was first passionate about writing rap music and beats when she was a teenager. Her first hit video, “My Vag,” has over three million views on YouTube. The song is a response to rapper Mickey Avalon’s song entitled “My Dick.”

Her song “Green Tea,” which is a collaboration with comedian Margaret Cho, mocks Asian stereotypes. Cho was one of Lum’s childhood idols. Her shamelessness, individuality and non-conformist attitude inspired Lum. She was thrilled when Cho recognized her comedic capabilities and wanted to work with her on the song.

Lum takes pride in being blunt and direct. She doesn’t want to filter herself or present a dishonest portrayal of who she is and what she believes. Her authenticity has catapulted her into stardom this year.

Lum came back to campus in Fall 2017 to speak at the New York State Writer’s Institute. She spoke to her former journalism professor, Steve Barnes, about her experiences, life and career. He called her “an extraordinarily gifted young writer, one capable of packing moods, scenes, emotion, insight and intelligent wit into essays of four to five pages.” Barnes had in her in four journalism classes during her academic career at UAlbany.

Barnes interviewed Lum for *UAlbany Magazine* in Spring 2017. She states, “I wanted to learn from all of these professors I was so intrigued by. I don’t think I would have been able to be Awkwafina if I didn’t go to SUNY.”

It is clear that Lum made an indelible mark during her time at UAlbany where she graduated Magna Cum Laude. The department looks forward to following her future projects.
Commencement weekend was held from May 18-20 this year. The departmental ceremony took place the morning of May 18. Thirty-four Journalism and 145 Communication students received their Bachelor of Arts degrees in addition to Summer and Fall 2017 graduates who returned to campus to attend the ceremony. Doug Mortman ‘01 (r.), a vice president at SiriusXM Radio, gave the keynote address.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Give GENEROUSLY!! We use donations to the department for:

- Our annual undergraduate Wilkie Award for Academic Excellence
- Our annual Graduate Student Research Award
- Supporting guest speakers at Commencement, Professional Development events and Special Research events.

We could do much more to expand and enhance the student experience with your generous support!

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Questions? 518-591-8628

COMMENCEMENT

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COMMUNICATION

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Thank you to our alumni and friends for their generous donations.
Samantha Cardona is the 2018 winner of the Richard W. Wilkie Award for the Outstanding Undergraduate in Communication. The award is named after emeritus Communication faculty Dr. Wilkie. Winners are selected based on academic achievement, effective delivery of a speech and critical thinking abilities. “I was so humbled and honored to receive an award like this one and it was an amazing experience to have the opportunity to speak at commencement,” said Cardona. She addressed her peers at the departmental commencement ceremony on May 18, 2018 in SEFCU Arena. Her speech discussed the difficulty of leaving her home for the past four years, but emphasized the beauty of starting a new chapter in her life. Cardona, who minored in Journalism, graduated summa cum laude.

Claudie Joassaint is the 2018 winner of the William E. Rowley Award for Journalistic Writing. The award is given each year for distinguished and outstanding writing. Joassaint wrote a thought-provoking and elegant piece about colorism’s impact on race and gender. She is now working as a residential counselor for troubled youth. In addition, she is pursuing music under the name “Cloetree.” You can check out her first rap project titled #ABodyofWork on Soundcloud.

Ryan Maestre was one of 10 University at Albany students who won the Chancellor’s Award for Student Excellence, which is the highest student honor given by SUNY. The award recognizes students who combine academic excellence with leadership, athletics, community service and performing arts or career achievement. Maestre graduated magna cum laude and double majored in Communication and Journalism.
Throughout the spring 2018 semester, twenty junior and senior communication majors participated in a course that offered them the opportunity to develop a communication campaign.

The students developed the campaign for the Center for Donation and Transplant (www.cdtnty.org) in an effort to raise awareness about organ and tissue donations. A key component of their efforts included organizing events on campus to educate and inform students on the topic and encourage them to become registered donors.

Oscar Gomez, who graduated in the summer, said the class offered him unique experiences that he didn’t get in his other courses. He believes the hands-on experience of creating and executing a marketing campaign will be helpful in his career. He enjoyed not only creating the plan for a client, but also increasing the number of donors in the state of New York. In addition, he is thankful he can add the experiences he learned to his resume and build his professional profile. Gomez stated, “Just simply learning to professionally communicate with others is something that is so vital in the real world.” The class offered him many opportunities to improve his communication skills.

Kenny Adrien, another graduating senior, also emphasized how applicable the experience will be to his future career goals. “I gained a lot of real life experience that will surely be beneficial for my career field,” said Adrien. Students in the course gained valuable experience in public relations by putting all of the communication theories that they studied into practice. The students worked together to implement the campaign and each developed a Communication Campaign Portfolio, which will be valuable when meeting with future employers.

It was my first class that gave me experience in a real life occupation.

-Kirstin Borrel, junior
Professor Emerita Anita Pomerantz is widely acknowledged to be one of the pivotal figures in the development of the research field of conversation analysis, having written many of what are regarded as “true classics” in contemporary CA research.

Recently, the International Society for Conversation Analysis (ISCA) chose to present Professor Pomerantz with their Lifetime Achievement Award. She accepted the award at the annual conference of the ISCA in July 2018 in Loughborough, England.

This is Professor Pomerantz's second lifetime achievement award in one year, the prior one having been awarded by the Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analytic Section of the American Sociological Association in 2017.

Ph.D. students Xin Zhou and Bryanna Hebenstreit who were named co-winners of the 2018 Graduate Research Award for excellence in academic research. The yearly award recognizes deserving students based on significant scholarly achievements.

Zhou’s recent scholarly work includes papers presented at the 2017 NCA Conference as well as the American Public Health Association. She also published a paper in the Journal of Health Communication. Last, she has a co-authored publication in the proceedings of the 23rd Americas Conference on Information Systems.

Hebenstreit has presented three papers in the past year. The venues include International Pragmatics Association Conference (2017) and the International Association for Communication and Sport Conference (2018). She also has secured three book chapters which are in preparation; significantly, two of these are invited chapters. Last, she has also had been invited to give a talk on her research at TELUQ University & University of Montreal.
Chang Sup Park joined the department as an assistant professor in Fall 2018. His research interests include digital journalism, social media, political communication, freedom of press and speech and online citizen journalism. Last year, Park was awarded first place and granted the Top Paper Award from ICA Mobile Communication Interest Group Division. He also recently published several articles on the topic of social and mobile media communication in publications such as the International Journal of Mobile Communications and Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly. Park comes to the department from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania where he served as an assistant Professor. He will be teaching courses on data and digital journalism, and media law and ethics.

Fan Yang received her Ph.D. in Mass Communications with a graduate minor in statistics from The Pennsylvania State University in 2017. Her research interests include psychology of communication technology, strategic communication, social network analysis and advanced research methods. Yang’s research has won awards from the Public Relations Society of America and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication among others. This year she was awarded an external research grant from The Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communications from Penn State. Yang joined the department in September 2017.

Rukhsana Ahmed joined the department in Fall 2018. She received her Ph.D. in Communication Studies from Ohio University in 2007. Her primary research interests include health, interpersonal and intercultural communication. Last year, she received two awards for top paper at the National Communication Association annual convention. In addition, she was awarded an external research grant for a project titled Staying in Touch, Connecting, Integrating: Social Media Use of Newly Arrived Syrian Refugee Youth In Canada. She served as principal investigator on the project. She brings a great deal of expertise and experience to the department. Ahmed comes to the department from the University of Ottawa where she was an Associate Professor with tenure.