

## Communication Department Achieves Reaccreditation

The Communication Department was fully reaccredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication ACEJMCSS in February 2014.

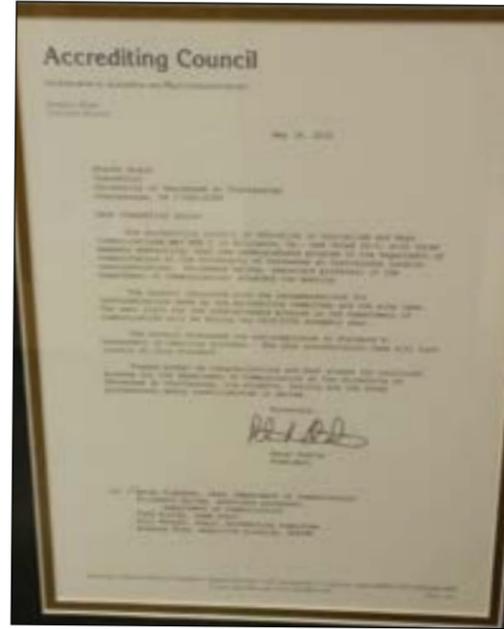
It is one of only 119 programs in the U.S., Puerto Rico and UAE to be accredited by ACEJMC.

“Every six years, we must write an enormous self-study that details everything we do,” Dr. Betsy Alderman, professor and head, said. “They look at all of it – from teaching to academic advising to facilities and equipment to the research faculty are doing.” The self-study also provides details of what graduates are doing and where they are employed.

A site visiting team comprised of academics and professionals spent three days in February 2014 in the department. While they visited, they spoke with faculty, students, alumni and professionals in the community. Dr. Ford Risely of Penn State headed the team.

“The on-site visit is made to confirm what we said in the self-study,” Alderman said.

The site team then makes a recommendation to the accrediting committee. The committee then makes a recommendation to the full council. “The process is quite involved. But it assures majors and alumni that their degrees are professional in nature,” Alderman said.



The letter from the Accrediting Council, formally reaccrediting the Communication Department in 2014.



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# Alumni CONNECTIONS

Department of Communication - The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Fall 2015



'01 Graduate is the voice of Bermuda radio

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# Dear Comm Alumni,



The Communication Department at UTC is a very special place.

I've spent 22 years here, watching it grow and develop into one of the best-accredited programs in the country. It is one of only 119 that is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Educa-

tion in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Your alma mater is thriving. Now with almost 500 majors and 100 minors and nine full-time faculty members and a full-time academic adviser, the Communication Department continues to grow. We will add a tenth full-time faculty member in the fall of 2016.

In my 22 years here, it has been very gratifying to know so many of you personally and professionally and follow your careers, lives and families. As most of you know, I had no children of my own by choice. So I consider my "comm kids" as my children. And I consider you alumni as dear, dear friends and respected professionals.

But it's time -- time for me to move on and do other things. Time to let others lead the program. I will retire from the university June 30, 2016, and wish only the best for the future for this department and a university I have grown to love.

I will miss you and the many connections we made and kept throughout the years. I hope you will continue to send me good



*Betsy Alderman, department head, serves her famous mac n' cheese during one of her Media Writing I class' final exam.*

*"In my 22 years here, it has been very gratifying to know so many of you personally and professionally and follow your careers, lives and families."*

wishes in my next endeavors, whatever they may be. And please, please do stay in touch. You will always be in my thoughts. I wish you health, peace and happiness and all good things in your lives.

Gratefully and with deep respect,

**Betsy Alderman**  
*Professor and Department Head*

## Karen Baker leads marketing for Chattanooga attractions

*Karen Baker ('88)* graduated when the Communication Department was relatively new and remembers when the department got its first Apple computers and laser jet printers.

Baker now works as the Senior Director of Marketing at R&R Marketing, an in-house marketing agency for See Rock City, Inc., and Ruby Falls LLC. She leads the marketing, communication and branding plans for See Rock City, Ruby Falls, Lookout Mountain Attractions, Clumpies, Grandview, and Battles for Chattanooga, as well as the seasonal

special events.

"We have the pleasure of marketing iconic southern brands that our guests enjoy largely during their off-time or while on vacation," Said Baker. "It doesn't get much better than that."

So far, Baker has had to manage a See Rock City barn paint near Chicago, scare radio remote crews at Ruby Falls Haunted Cavern and help field the media frenzy the day Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis arrived at Ruby Falls and Rock City.

"I was coached by a trifecta of communication department superstars,"

said Baker. "The professors were all sources of great inspiration, world views and tough, yet lively classes. I feel very blessed to have had their guidance."



## BJ Coleman calls Chattanooga home

National football star *B.J. Coleman ('11)* resigned mid-season from the Arizona Rattlers to come home to Chattanooga this spring.

Coleman, a former UTC quarterback, decided to settle down in his hometown and focus on his day job as Vice President of sales for Lipsey Logistics.

This marked the end of an outstanding football career for Coleman. In 2012, he became a 7th round pick by the

Greenbay Packers of Greenbay, Wisc. In his brief but exceptional career with the Arizona Rattlers, he was an AFL player of the week with seven touchdowns in two games, as the starting quarterback.

"I feel blessed to have a degree that allows me to go from the football field to the business world, and it be a smooth transition. I can do whatever I want to do," Coleman said.



*Photo contributed and printed with permission by B.J. Coleman. Coleman was the 7th round pick for the Greenbay Packers in 2012.*

# Gloria DeWeese rises to fame with acting, modeling career

Actress, model and long time cat-lover **Gloria DeWeese ('14)** was chosen by top artist Michael Haase to model for Wella Professionals at the 2015 Premiere Orlando Hair Fashion Show.

DeWeese returned to UTC in 2011 after a six-year break from studying civil engineering to pursue a communication degree with a minor in entrepreneurship. She practiced these skills at the UTC Echo as the advertising manager for three years.

She said the skills she learned as a communication student helped her not only become a practice manager for the Chattanooga Cat Clinic, but also succeed as an actress and model for Chi Talent Agency.

She never expected cutting grass for a friend to lead to a modeling career. But when DeWeese found out her friend was involved in modeling, she went out on a limb and asked to be invited to the next talent agency meeting, and the rest is history.

DeWeese also has a successful acting career, appearing in films such as "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2," "Necessary Rough-



*Gloria DeWeese models the Bonne Chance Collection at a fashion show in New York City in February, 2013.*

ness" with John Stamos, "Let's Be Cops" with Daman Wayans and "The Good Lie" with Reese Witherspoon. She has also had roles in two TV shows on BET--"The Game," seasons six and seven, and "Being Mary Jane," season one.

In addition to her promising future as a model and actress, DeWeese also enjoys her work at the Cat Clinic. Motivated by the same passion that led her to rescue two cats

of her own, she said she puts her full energy into moving the cat clinic in a positive direction.

DeWeese said her favorite memories of the Communication Department are the infamous disco ball on the third floor and the lifelong friends she made.

In the future, DeWeese looks forward to combining her connections and skills to open her own modeling agency.

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Connections is produced by the UTC Communication Department. This publication was written by Olivia Dean, communication major and designed by Eve Hermann, communication major. Publication number E041050-002-16. Full-time faculty: Betsy Alderman, Mike Andrews, Elizabeth Gailey, Chad Harriss, Michael McCluskey, Felicia McGhee, David Sachsman, Michael Friedman and Charlene Simmons. Full-time academic communication adviser: Nicole Brown.

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## Justin Dean *thrives* in DC's financial advising market

When **Justin Dean ('05)** graduated from the UTC Communication Department, a career as an Edward Jones financial advisor was not exactly what he had in mind.

Dean moved to Washington D.C. in 2005 to complete his senior internship at the Canadian Embassy.

"I remember Dr. Alderman saying, 'Chattanooga is a great city, but you have to get out of here,'" Dean said. "I was scared to death, but she knew the opportunity was greater than my fear of the unknown."

Dean decided to stay in Washington after graduation and got a job at a nonprofit, The National Council of State Housing Agencies, as a legislative policy coordinator.

"Little did I know, I was nothing more than a glorified administrative assistant and errand-runner," Dean said. "After two years, I was so desperate to get out of that job that I would have been willing to do anything."

Dean was so eager that when a friend from Chattanooga told him about a job opportunity completely outside of his field—financial advising at Edward Jones—he went for it.

Dean shadowed a veteran financial advisor in the firm and built his practice, one person at a time, using the networking skills he learned as a communication student at UTC.

Dean got his AAMS (Accredited Asset Management Specialist) certification in 2010 and became a Certified Financial Planner in 2013. "I never thought I would be compensated so well for something that I love so much," Dean said. "It's been a wild, yet fun, ride."

His favorite part of this job, besides helping people obtain financial stability, are the vacations he qualifies for twice a year by meeting goals. Some memorable experiences from these trips include rappelling 30 meters into the Waitomo Caves in New Zealand and enjoying a week long tour of the Sahara Desert.

He recently became a partner of the firm, was recognized as a part of the top 10 percent at Edward Jones, and now gives back to the company by mentoring new financial advisors.

He is looking forward to improving in every aspect of his job and buying a house in D.C. with his partner of three years, Matt Sipala.



*Justin Dean was able to visit the Sahara Desert because he met his company's goals for the year.*

*"I never thought I would be compensated so well for something that I love so much. It's been a wild yet fun ride."*

## Myletta Lacey *livens* the scenic city promoting "Jam Sessions Chattanooga"



**Myletta Lacey ('05)** returned to the local entertainment scene after appearing as a guest in Lifetime's hit drama "Drop Dead Diva" and acting in several independent films in Atlanta. Lacey said her experiences in the Communication Department played a huge role in jump-starting her career.

*"I had to learn how to be inquisitive and fast on my feet with broadcasting, which translated easily in auditions and job interviews"*

In fact, it was her experience as an anchor for Mocs News and the relationships she built with faculty that landed her a job at WJTT radio Power 94.

"I had to learn how to be inquisitive and think fast on my feet with broadcasting, which translated easily in auditions and job interviews," Lacey said. "UTC's Communication Department teaches you a variety of skills like these that adequately prepares you for all parts of life."

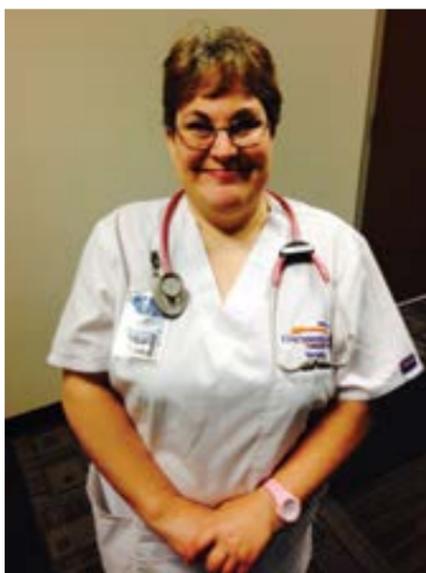
Lacey also received her MBA in human resources from Liberty University in 2014. Lacey is now working alongside

fellow UTC alumni. Gabriel and Comelia Franceschi, to put on a monthly music event called "Jam Session Chattanooga."

Her role in "Jam Session" is to promote the event through marketing and social media. In the spring of 2015, Lacey was the stage manager for Christal Entertainment's "Don't Suffer in Silence," a stage drama about children abused by someone they know and trust.

Lacey also works for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee as a human resource specialist. But, out of all the things she does, Lacey's greatest passion is being a mother to her 4-year-old son.

## Angela Tant *pursues* dream of treating journalists with PTSD



Angela Tant now studies nursing at Chattanooga State Community College. Her plan is to return to UTC for a master's degree in nursing.

Angela Tant ('99) discovered her real passion while writing her master's thesis at the University of Memphis about reporters who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the field: she realized she wanted to become a nurse to help those journalists who battle PTSD daily.

Tant graduated from UTC with her bachelor's degree in com-

*"I will never regret earning my communication degree. It has become a valuable resource to me."*

munication in 1999 and has had many opportunities to apply her degree directly, including both page designing and copy editing for the Birmingham Post-Herald, the former daily newspaper in Birmingham, Ala.

In Chattanooga, she has also been the webmaster of the Chattanooga Times Free Press and worked at the alternative weekly magazine The Pulse. She is currently a freelance writer for Nooga.com, a local online-only news outlet serving the Chattanooga area.

"I will never regret earning my communication degree," Tant said. "It has become a valuable resource to me. Without it, I never would have had the experiences I had or met the people I met, which would make my life a whole lot less enjoyable."

Tant said she uses her communication degree in almost everything she has done in her journalism career, as well as her everyday life.

In fact, without studying

communication at UTC, Tant said she would have never discovered her desire to help fellow journalists who suffer from PTSD, a mental health issue triggered by experiencing or witnessing the terrifying events that reporters deal with on a daily basis.

Tant is currently pursuing this dream as a nursing student at Chattanooga State Community College. Her hope and plan is to return to UTC one day to get her master's degree in nursing.

In her free time, Tant loves to read and take care of her four dogs. She is currently living with her mother to assist her with household chores and to help her cope with the loss of Tant's father last January.

As Tant's father once told her, "You could cure any disease in the world and discover the deepest secrets of the universe, but if you are unable to communicate it to others, it would do little good to accomplish those things."

## Patrina O' Connor is "Power Girl" on Bermuda radio

UTC Communication Department graduate **Patrina O'Connor** ('01) got her start in radio through an internship at Chattanooga radio station, Power 94.

O'Connor, more commonly known by her fans as "Power Girl," decided to leave Bermuda and come to Chattanooga, where she had family, to pursue a communication degree at UTC. Although she wanted to be a news reporter, O'Connor realized early on that she would prefer something less hard-hitting and more "laid back," like radio.

When Dr. Betsy Alderman landed her an internship at hit music station WJTT Power 94, O'Connor said she gave it everything she had.

"From the moment Patrina walked in, she had that spark, that fire," Brewer Media Production Director Jay Holloway said. "She gave 155 percent, and she became part of the family here."

O'Connor said she will never forget her first "big moment," during an event that Brewer Media Group hosted called "Family Affair." Prior to the event, she was stationed at the VIP artists' hotel and told to make sure none of the musicians were late to the event.

"To me, it didn't matter that they were celebrities; I had a job to

do," O'Connor said. "I was calling upstairs, telling them to 'Hurry up' and 'Be downstairs at 5.' That was my first big moment, and I really put myself out there."

After graduating in 2001, O'Connor moved back home to Bermuda and immediately started pursuing a position at Bermuda Broadcasting, a company with three radio stations and two TV stations, CBS and ABC affiliates.

O'Connor told the company she was willing to do whatever it took to get her foot in the door. She gave them the portfolio she had put together while at UTC, and it was only a matter of time before they offered her a job in the sales and marketing department.

When she had an opportunity to go on air at one of Bermuda Broadcasting's radio stations for a promotional segment, O'Connor knew it was her chance to shine. After just one interview, her career as a radio personality exploded.

"I was immediately invited back for the next week," O'Connor said. "People everywhere were saying, 'Who is that girl on the radio?'"

Although O'Connor is a popular radio personality, playing old school reggae every Saturday, however radio is not her only job.

O'Connor is a well-known emcee who maintains a high level of involvement in her community.

After eight years of working for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bermuda, O'Connor was recently promoted to managing director, where she oversees events in the community.

"My favorite thing about the Communication Department was Dr. Alderman's open door policy. I could talk to her at any time about anything," O'Connor said. "Professors are not out to get you and give you Cs and Ds; they are there to help you succeed."



O'Connor hosts the Miss Bermuda contest each year.

# Staying



Brandon Vidrine, 2014

Idris Garcia, 2014

Tomieka Evans, 1998

Tia Kalmon, 2014

## Tia Kalmon (14)

*Producer, WTVCTV News Channel 9, Chattanooga*

“Working at News Channel 9, I get to explore my interests and let my passion flourish. My advice to communication students would be to just be yourself and get out there. Learn everything you can. It’s important for you to have a good work ethic and make connections with people.”

## Brandon Vidrine (14)

*Project Manager, ARS Ecommerce*

“Though I’m not working at a communications job at the moment, I know I never would’ve gotten this job if it hadn’t been for my experience and connection with the communication department. I also wouldn’t have the job I have now if it weren’t for Dr. Betsy Alderman, who has become a lifelong mentor for me.”

## Katrina Craven (96)

*Director of Marketing and Communication, UTC College of Business*

“My job with the new student success center is to get the word out and get students excited about it. The writing and design skills I learned as a communication major allow me to do that very well.”

## Idris Garcia (14)

*Corporate Communications, Mohawk Industries; Prep-school sports contributor, Chattanooga Times Free Press*

“When companies ask what sets me apart, I point to my time at UTC and show that I am a well-rounded communicator with skills and experience in both print and visual media. I laid a foundation that has allowed me to continue to grow and learn, and I am grateful to be able to use my degree on a daily basis as a valued contributor.”

## Amanda Miller (02)

*Support Services Specialist, City of East Ridge*

“I did my internship in the PR department at the Tennessee Aquarium, which helped me get a full-time job there. The courses I took in the Communication Department helped me by giving me a background in public relations, writing skills and speaking skills. Having those tools in my portfolio helped me nail the interviews for any position I applied for. Without the courses and professors I had then, I wouldn’t have the job I have now.”

## Tomieka Evans (98)

*Owner, Film Brew Productions*

“Not only has my degree helped me along in business, but my connections with the staff at UTC have served me well too.”

# Connected



Nicholas Doss, 2011

Laurel Eldridge, 2000

Jouy Thomas, 2010

Patrick Shipley, 1997

## Nicholas Doss (11)

*Airborne Infantry, United States Army*

“My favorite thing about my job is getting to do things most people never get to do, like jumping out of planes. Although I’m not using my degree in the typical way, I still apply critical thinking skills every day as I face new challenges and overcome obstacles that affect the safety of my fellow paratroopers and myself.”

## Patrick Shipley (97)

*Product Marketing Manager, CAS Iberia*

“I didn’t know what I wanted to do when I got my degree. The versatility of communication allowed me to fit into any strata of organizations. My degree refined my skill set. By the time

I was in the job market, I was so malleable that I could be trained for almost any job.”

## Jouy Thomas (10)

*Development and Alumni Specialist, BRIDGES*

“I am grateful for my transition to Memphis after graduation, because it helped me examine what it was I truly wanted to do with my degree. I still use those skills I learned during undergrad for fundraising. In the end, we all use communication in our day to day lives; you’ll just be the expert everyone turns to.”

## Laurel Eldridge (00)

*Corporate Events Planner, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee*

“I am very satisfied with my deci-

sion 15+ years ago to major in communication. It opened up so many doors and provided me with important skills that are transferable to a wide variety of career options.”

## Carrie Sherbesman (05)

*Director of New Student and Family Programs, UTC*

“I recommend internships to all of my students, even if their major doesn’t require one. The UTC Communication Department gave me a lot of opportunities, like the internship program, that I now strive to give to other students. I do have regrets about not being more involved, however it has helped me understand in my job, from a student’s perspective, how hard it is to get connected.”