Reporting with class

by Sarah Junek

Mayborn students worked with reporter Doug Swanson last fall in the first Advanced Reporting class held at The Dallas Morning News. The JOUR 5270 class of 14 students met in the East Wing Conference Room on Monday nights. Their project: investigating Rent-A-Center and the issue of payday lending practices.

Andrew Rogers, a Mayborn scholar, said the best part was physically having class at The Dallas Morning News and being surrounded by the actual professionals.

“It kept it real,” he said, and “put a face on what we’re gonna be doing.”

Students read investigative pieces from writers such as William Langewiesche in The Atlantic Monthly, and Steve Silberman in Wired Magazine. They discussed the types of sources used in Fast Food Nation, and were quizzed on The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook, and the Texas Public Information Act and Freedom of Information Act. Students learned how to dig for and read public records.

Swanson told the class to make the case with numbers, primary sources that uncover a trail to the truth.

Stepping Stones
The Value of an Internship

by Brittany Stroud

The word “internship” has many connotations. Some may picture filing papers or making coffee. At The Mayborn, however, the internship is an integral part of the curriculum, and students continue to discover that it is an integral part of their careers.

Nicole Turner, a December Mayborn graduate, completed an internship last fall with the University Relations, Communications and Marketing department at the University of North Texas. She said it was invaluable in preparing her for her career.

“I think one of the most important benefits for me was that I learned how to work with Adobe Dreamweaver, and I learned a lot about writing for the Web,” said Turner.

“This is such a crucial time to learn those skills because more and more people are turning to the Internet for so many things, especially to get their news.”

Turner not only gained a marketable skills set, she felt that she was mentored by seasoned professionals.

“I had great people who showed they cared about me as a student and my future,” said Turner. “They all had a big hand in helping me prepare for my first job and making sure I was headed down a road for success.”

Casey Conway, a 2007 Mayborn graduate, completed her internship with Southwest Airlines, and she also felt that it pointed her towards success.

“My internship at Southwest Airlines allowed me to learn a lot about the importance of employee communications, public relations and community relations,” said Conway.

“All of the companies I interviewed with were really impressed that I worked there, and the experience has helped me decide what kind of companies I want to be a part of in the future.”

Each semester, students discover that an internship is a critical stepping-stone that launches students into their careers, said Nancy Eanes, career development specialist for The Mayborn. She reminds students to stay updated on new internships by visiting the job databank on The Mayborn Web site.
New Classes for the Spring

International Public Relations

Dr. Eli Avraham will be teaching this course. The goal of the class is to examine the advertising and public relations strategies employed by cities, countries and tourist destinations in order to build positive images throughout the world. After analyzing the elements of a successful campaign, students will create a campaign of their own for the city of Dallas.

Image and Marketing of Israel in the World

Dr. Eli Avraham will also be teaching this course, which takes a new spin on the Public Opinion and Propaganda course. By presenting and analyzing various media campaigns, the course will examine the different strategies employed by Israel to win over public opinion and to create positive and attractive images of the country.

William and Rosalie Schiff came to visit the UNT campus on Nov. 7 to talk about their experience of living through The Holocaust in front of a packed house. They signed copies of their book, William & Rosalie, which was written by Craig Hanley and was the winning manuscript at the 2006 Mayborn Conference.

What I remember most was [Rosalie Schiff’s] sense of humor. I realized as I was standing in the nosebleed section that despite horrific circumstances, humanity is resilient. She not only survived the Holocaust, but kept her soul to share with us.~Candace Carlisle
The legal team looked at legislation being passed nationwide that regulates payday lending. The courts team pored over files of multi-million dollar class action lawsuits, and the business team discussed how the company might be getting into the payday lending industry to balance its shaky profit margin.

In November, the class interviewed representatives from Rent-A-Center, Christopher A. Korst, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, and Gus Whitcomb, Vice President of Public Affairs. Each student prepared and presented questions. Both Korst and Whitcomb were impressed by the thought that had gone into the interview. Students were a bit anxious about the meeting but pleased by the way it all turned out.

The class enjoyed multiple guest speakers, including reporting team Paul Meyer and Stella Cháves. They told the story of proposing and publishing the arduous project, *Yolanda’s Crossing*, about the sexual violence experienced by a young girl in Mexico.

Gromer Matthew Jeffers concluded the class with his experience in political reporting summing it up in two words, “It’s tough.” Time crunch is at its highest in covering political speeches, he said. On covering the campaign trail, Jeffers revealed, “Most of the breaking stories are from reporters back home... we get trapped and are led around.”

Swanson said he was pleased with the class and the level of reporting they were able to achieve. He plans to have the project published this spring in *The Dallas Morning News*. Some students from the class are still working with him on the project.

Sarah Junek is a Mayborn Scholar and news-editorial

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**Spring Calendar**

Mar. 17-21--Spring Break  
Mar. 30--Deadline to apply for Mayborn Scholarship  
Apr. 19--Journalism Banquet 6 p.m. at the Gateway Center (tickets go on sale Mar. 3)  
May 10--Spring Commencement  
July 18-20--Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference (registration begins in February)
David Wachanga graduated in December as the first Mayborn student to complete successfully a doctorate program. He received his Ph.D. in information sciences for his dissertation titled “Sanctioned and Controlled Message Propagation in a Restrictive Information Environment: The Small World of Clandestine Radio Broadcasting.” He has received an assistant professorship at the University of Wisconsin. He is pictured above with his brother, Hillary, and mother, Irene, who flew in from Kenya for his Dec. 14 commencement.

IN MEMORIAM...

Mark J. Wolfe, 51, of Argyle, died, Dec. 18, 2007, in a motorcycle accident in Roanoke. He earned both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in music from the University of North Texas. He was the tuba professor at the University of Texas at Tyler and principal tubist of both the Shreveport and Longview orchestras. His wife Peggy earned her master’s degree from the Mayborn in 2002, and is currently a reporter for the Denton Record-Chronicle. Together, they have three children.

Alumni Updates

Keep us posted on your job, family and location after you graduate. E-mail Nancy Eanes at neanes@unt.edu.

Candace Carlisle (’08) was named a finalist in the Writer’s League of Texas College Horror Short Story competition in December.

Luz Varela (’04) recently moved to New York City for her job with the Fleishman-Hillard public relations agency.

Anna Hemphill (’05) is now employed at PSS Web.

Christina Jancic (’05) is now a traffic coordinator with Cadent Medical Communications.

Steffi Posel-Parkerson (’00) gave birth to her second child, a boy, in October.

Mike Mooney (’07) recently had two of his stories published on the front page of New Times, a Village Voice Media publication in Florida.

Laura Short (’02) gave birth to a baby girl in 2006. Shortly afterwards, she began a blog, written from her daughter’s perspective, to keep relatives in touch with her daily adventures. Little did she know that this blog would turn into a lesson in writing. Here’s what she had to say:

“A conference presenter once told me that writing solely in one-syllable words forces a writer to rethink how to phrase passages. This, in turn, keeps writing fresh and free of clichés. The birth of my daughter was my opportunity to practice the one-syllable writing exercise. It is amazing what you can say with one-syllable words. However, although I keep the words as simple as I can, I have since “cheated” with two-syllable words, and in desperation I even threw in the occasional three-syllable word. Excuses, excuses. :-)

However, every day the exercise allows me to practice creative writing, story ideation, headline writing and blogging. All of this has helped me on the job. Who knew becoming a mother would improve my career!”

Her blog can be accessed at abs06.wordpress.com.