The College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin is proud to bring you the first issue of Backstories, the newsletter for Senior Fellows alumni, students, and friends. After nearly 25 years as a program, we’ve got a lot of stories to tell. We hope you enjoy those presented here and get inspired to share your own. Welcome back to the great conversation that is Senior Fellows!

Letter From the Founder
Page 2

Fundamental Questions
Jensen is a professor in UT’s School of Journalism. He served as director of the Senior Fellows program from the fall of 2003 through the spring of 2010. He spoke with Backstories about his time leading the program and some of his favorite moments.
Continued on page 3

Student and Alumni Spotlights
Jordon Humphreys
Rhea Somaney
David Rivera
Marsha Jones
Will Potter
Heather Zoller
Stefani Carter
Paul Adrian
Teresa Boehm, M.D.
Page 5

Letter From the Director
Page 2

New Research from Senior Fellows Faculty
Citizens may become both more divided and more politically engaged as a result of partisan news, according to a new book by Senior Fellows faculty member Natalie Jomini Stroud.
Continued on page 3

Filmmaker Don Howard Wins Guggenheim Fellowship
Senior Fellow faculty member Don Howard has won a Fellowship Award from the Guggenheim Foundation as part of its 2011 competition.
Continued on page 5
Letter from the Founder

Time passes. Ain't that the truth. It seems like only yesterday that I started the Senior Fellows Program (in 1988) and here we are, almost 25 years later. Now I'm a dean, trying to hang onto my hair, and some of the original Senior Fellows are themselves graying (or getting their hair “highlighted”). But some things have remained the same: the program continues to thrive, with gobs of wonderful students applying for admission each year. They continue to enroll in ever-fresh seminars taught by faculty members who feel honored to teach the best of the best. We continue to bring exciting guest speakers to campus and to ask our students to think improbable thoughts and take on imaginative projects.

Senior Fellows. A program that makes this College proud. But, hey, where did the 25 years go?!! After my eight years as director, Janet Staiger and America Rodriguez took over the program for a while, and then our own, very-special renegade, Bob Jensen, performed yeoman service by heading up the program for a gazillion years. Now, Dave Junker runs the program and has somehow managed to channel Bob, bringing the same kind of passion and imagination to the task. How lucky we are to have such leaders on our faculty.

But then there's you. What are you doing these days? What makes you get up and stretch each morning? What are your memories of the program? What questions might you have about our current activities? By sending out this newsletter, we hope to create a forum for great conversations, the same kind of conversations that have always characterized Senior Fellows. We're also trying to figure out how to celebrate the program's upcoming 25th anniversary, so please get in touch. Time passes but ties bind. Let's bind them anew.

Sincerely,
Roderick P. Hart

Letter from the Director

It’s no exaggeration to say that being Senior Fellows director is my dream job. Though I’d be lying if I said “poet laureate” or “gold medalist” never crossed my mind, as far as the real world goes, Senior Fellows director is it.

If anyone asked me why I like being the new Senior Fellows director so much, I would tell them about a single class period last September when students remained in their seats for an hour-and-a-half after class was dismissed.

They stayed for the amazing discussion we were having with a special panel I had arranged on the topic of war and popular music.

Thomas Palaima, distinguished professor of classics at UT-Austin, was there to give us the long view, explaining war passages from Homer’s Odyssey as examples of an oral poetic tradition dependent on communal rituals of music and song.

Craig Werner, professor from The University of Wisconsin and prolific author on popular music and society, was there to bring us into the 20th century, analyzing the central role of popular music in our collective memory of the Vietnam War and in the lives of Vietnam veterans themselves.

And Bruce Robison, country musician and songwriter, was there to make it real, singing his song “Travelin’ Soldier” (a No.1 hit for the Dixie Chicks in 2003) and talking about the public backlash the group experienced after criticizing the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Finally, our deeply engaged students were there, absorbing these lessons of the past and filtering them through the soundtracks of war in their own new-media age. Provocative and fundamental questions were raised. Tears were shed. Special bonds were formed. It comes as no surprise that current student Jordan Humphries, in his Backstories interview, recalls this as his favorite Symposium class.

While classroom magic like this can't be conjured every day, I've experienced more of it in Senior Fellows than anywhere else. Best of all, as director, I get to help make it happen. And being there when it does makes it the best job I can imagine.
Citizens may become both more divided and more politically polarized and have different ideas of which issues facing the nation are most important,” Stroud said. “On the other hand, likeminded media use may encourage political participation.”

“Niche News” uses analyses of various news formats as well as surveys and experiments to examine the extent to which partisanship influences media selections.


This research was a main focus in her Senior Fellows course, “Politics and Public Opinion,” which she taught in the spring of 2011. She also teaches courses in public opinion, media effects and politics, and quantitative research methods.

Stroud’s research on the dynamic between the media and political behaviors and attitudes has earned several awards, including the K. Kyoon Hur Award from the International Communication Association.

She is the assistant director of UT’s Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation.

**New Research from Senior Fellows Faculty Member Natalie Jomini Stroud**

Citizens may become both more divided and more politically engaged as a result of partisan news, according to a new book by Senior Fellows faculty member Natalie Jomini Stroud.

Stroud, an assistant professor in the Communication Studies Department, investigates the political effects of people selecting news sources that match their own views in “Niche News: The Politics of News Choice,” published May 2011 by Oxford University Press.

“On one hand, those using likeminded media are

more politically polarized and have different ideas of which issues facing the nation are most important,” Stroud said. “On the other hand, likeminded media use may encourage political participation.”

“Niche News” uses analyses of various news formats as well as surveys and experiments to examine the extent to which partisanship influences media selections.


This research was a main focus in her Senior Fellows course, “Politics and Public Opinion,” which she taught in the spring of 2011. She also teaches courses in public opinion, media effects and politics, and quantitative research methods.

Stroud’s research on the dynamic between the media and political behaviors and attitudes has earned several awards, including the K. Kyoon Hur Award from the International Communication Association.

She is the assistant director of UT’s Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation.

**Fundamental Questions: A Conversation with Former Director Robert Jensen**

By Nick Hundley

Robert Jensen is a professor in UT’s School of Journalism. He served as director of the Senior Fellows program from the fall of 2003 through the spring of 2010. He spoke with Backstories about his time leading the program and some of his favorite moments.

What originally interested you about being director for the Senior Fellows program?
I was never bound for administration – such as a department chair or dean, where there are too many bureaucratic headaches for me – but I always thought that directing a program like Senior Fellows would be satisfying. I found out that this is the best job in the College. There are several attractive things. One is you get to teach the introductory course, which you design yourself. The symposium, which is a course all the incoming students take, is great fun, because it is interdisciplinary. And the course is geared toward my own interest – more philosophical in nature as opposed to applied knowledge.

**Who were some of your favorite guest speakers?**

Although I sometimes brought in academics to speak, I focused more on journalists, filmmakers, people involved in political activity, broadly defined. So we had a lot of fun with people out in the trenches more so than academics.

**How did your term differ from previous directors?**

Every director brings a different focus, and mine was on political questions of the day beyond elections. I tend to focus on fundamental questions about how power and wealth are distributed in the country. In the symposium, for example, we walked through a series of questions presented in point/counterpoint readings offering very different views of how the political process should be structured. I was always trying to engage with contemporary issues that dealt with power.

**You’ve taught in various honors programs at UT – including Plan II and the Liberal Arts honors programs. How does teaching in the Senior Fellows program differ?**

I found the Communication honor students much more down to Earth and engaged in the world around them. All the honors programs are great, but the greatest is Senior Fellows.

**What types of students are drawn to the Senior Fellows program?**

A lot of the courses in this College are technical in nature. And the students who are drawn to Senior Fellows are those who want to develop those skills, but who also want more of an intellectual life. They apply to Senior Fellows quite specifically to find that. In the interview process, I talked to I-don’t-know-how-many hundreds of Senior Fellows applicants over the years. And they would say, “I want to go deeper, further. I want to push myself intellectually.” They don’t have complaints about the majors. It’s just they want something else. And that’s what drove all of them.

**What were some of your favorite Senior Fellows moments?**

I’m known around the College for being very loud. I’m public. I speak and I write a lot. But that’s not who I am in the classroom necessarily. About halfway through a class, a student said: “I finally get it. You don’t tell us what you think. You’re always just poking and probing. And I just realized I don’t even know what you think about these questions.” It was one of those moments where you feel good about teaching. What I was trying to get them to do was stop talking to me and start talking to each other. And the best classes are those in which they did that.

**What’s next for you now?**

The reason I stopped being director was not because I didn't like it. It was really a delight. I got to teach a class I really liked. I got to deal with other faculty in planning the other courses. I got to plan guest speakers. But I had been doing it for eight years, and it didn’t seem fair to hold on to it forever. And no matter how well one thinks he is doing at a job, there’s a point at which somebody else should try it and see if that works better. I took it at the right time, when I was young and energetic, and it seemed the right time to turn it over to someone else and turn my attention to other things, which quite frankly aren't as much fun. Actually, the most fun I’ve had at the College was doing this program.
Senior Fellows Faculty Member Don Howard Wins Guggenheim Fellowship

Senior Fellows faculty member Don Howard has won a Fellowship Award from the Guggenheim Foundation as part of its 2011 competition. Howard, an assistant professor in UT’s Radio-Television-Film Department, was among 179 artists, scholars and scientists selected from nearly 3,000 applicants for the award, which recognizes past achievement and promise for future accomplishment.

Howard has directed and edited a wide variety of material for film and television, with an emphasis on documentary work. He was co-editor on Margaret Brown’s Townes Van Zandt documentary, “Be Here to Love Me.”

He has written and directed several of his own films, including “Letter from Waco” and “Nuclear Family,” a documentary produced in conjunction with KLRU-TV and ITVS that examines rituals of gender and family in Texas through the lens of football and weddings. Since 2008, Howard has regularly taught the course “Film Style from the Inside” for the Senior Fellows program.

The grant will help underwrite production for his next film, “Say Hello to Mr. Go: An Elegy for South Louisiana.” The documentary, which he is developing with writing partner Jim Shelton, will trace the growing threats to the Louisiana wetlands and the musical culture of South Louisiana.

In the future he hopes to make a feature-length narrative titled “Police and Thieves,” a political coming-of-age film set in the Reagan-era 1980s.

The Guggenheim Fellowships are designed to encourage advanced professionals in the fields of natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and the creative arts to take time from steady appointments, such as teaching, and focus on personal creative projects.

Student and Alumni Spotlights

Student Profile: Jordan Humphreys

Vitals: Senior from Taylor, Texas, majoring in journalism and government

Plans after Graduation: Move to D.C. for Archer Fellowship

Eye-opening Senior Fellows Moment: Matt Eastin’s guest lecture on the psychological effects of video game use. It inspired Jordan to develop a student-led course called “Communication in Multiplayer Video Games” (UGS 122)

By Dave Junker, Senior Fellows director

Though Jordan Humphries was quiet in my Symposium last fall, he impressed me as a careful listener who only talked when he was sure he had something good to say. As the following interview will attest, that’s probably more often than he realizes.

Dave: As a second-year Senior Fellow, what do you think you’ve gotten from Senior Fellows that you couldn’t have gotten without it?

Jordan: Senior Fellows classes have given me such a different perspective on so many issues, from gentrification in East Austin to the way we consume news media, to the way we think about the world.

Dave: We had a lot of great classes in Symposium last fall. Does one stand out as a favorite?

Jordan: The panel on war and popular music. It was so cool to see how the theme linked so many eras, from ancient Greece, to Vietnam, to post-9/11 America.
It was such a unique class. [Thomas] Palaima talked about the “Iliad” and ancient Mediterranean war hymns; the professor from Wisconsin [Craig Werner] extracted meaning from songs I’d heard so many times before and connected them with a war my grandpa was in. We heard the feeling and meaning behind “Travelin’ Soldier” [sung in class by Bruce Robison] and connected it to soldiers in the Middle East. It was one of the most fascinating classes I’ve had.

Dave: That was one of my favorites, too. Now let’s get down to brass tax: You’re graduating in the spring. What do you want to do with your life?

Jordan: I’m interested in improving the way Americans think about mental health, to de-stigmatize mental illnesses and increase the likelihood that people in need will seek care. I could help make this happen by analyzing and improving public health campaigns that focus on mental illnesses, or by advocating to legislators and educating people about mental-health issues.

Dave: I know that Dr. Stroud recruited you, Leilani Kelley and Sameer Bhuchar from her Politics and Public Opinion seminar to help her with a summer research project. What did you learn from that that might help you pursue those interests?

Jordan: Her class was great. She was so passionate you couldn’t help but be interested. We learned all kinds of principles of public opinion, and our research, which will soon be published, opened my eyes to everything that goes into using survey methods for public opinion research: pretesting, picking news stories as samples, what you sometimes have to do to help people take the surveys. It helped me think about the logistics of how to test real people.

At the end of our conversation, Jordan told me that he and his roommate don’t see eye-to-eye when it comes to politics. When I asked him if it’s hard to maintain a friendship across the political aisle, he gave me the thoughtful answer I’ve come to expect from him: “I like people who have a framework for talking about politics other than their own,” he said.

That’s the kind of wisdom that comes from doing one’s share of careful listening. And that’s something I’ve come to expect from all our Senior Fellows.
Novel Writing Month, and Rhea says she's preparing for a second try.

“I didn't get anywhere near the goal of 50,000 words,” she says about her attempt last year. But the exercise “helps you develop a skeleton and prove to yourself that you can do it.”

Knowing that being a novelist takes more than learning how to write one, Rhea is majoring in public relations, hoping to work for a media technology company like Google or Blizzard Entertainment.

With a laugh, she says she’s a “big nerd” for playing “World of War Craft,” Blizzard’s signature product.

Knowing Rhea Somaney, one can forgive her such indulgences.

Alumni Profile: David Rivera

Vitals: Producer for the Oprah Winfrey Network, Chicago, Ill.
UT Degree: Journalism, 1997

Most challenging part of his job: “Coming up with fresh ideas to put on television is a never-ending challenge. We constantly reinvent ourselves in order to stay relevant for our audience without sacrificing the familiarity they look for when they watch Oprah.”

By Shanna Oatman

When David Rivera was in Rod Hart’s Senior Fellows seminar reading “The Book of Virtues,” William J. Bennett’s collection of morality tales that includes biblical tracts and political speeches, he probably wasn't thinking about mingling with celebrities.

But working as a producer for Oprah Winfrey the past eight years has given him time to get used to it.

After graduating from UT with a bachelor’s in journalism in 1997, Rivera worked in New York for “NBC Nightly News” before settling in Chicago with a position at “Dateline NBC.” Five years later, he started working as a field producer for the “Oprah Winfrey Show” and recently moved with her to the new OWN Network.

The title “producer” is slightly ambiguous, but in Rivera’s case it involves coming up with story ideas and helping to plan and execute the show.

“We take a nugget of an idea from inception, until it is the polished product you see on television,” Rivera says.

His responsibilities include researching, scouting, booking guests and crews, directing field shoots, writing, editing, and handling post-production. He says constantly working to generate new ideas is one of the hardest parts of his job, considering the next great idea can quickly become a fad.

Spend five minutes talking with Rivera about his work, and it becomes clear that he could provide enough material for a biography.

But some moments definitely stand out: filming in Zurich with Tina Turner, meeting Bono (twice), producing Michael Jackson’s first-ever family interview, and traveling to Edinburgh to meet J.K. Rowling.

Rivera says he has seen some dramatic changes in the field of communication, and believes the democratization of media provides endless possibilities to ambitious people.

He says the Senior Fellows program helped him enhance his résumé right out of college, be more sensible than brave (unless the occasion calls for it), befriend some of the brightest students on campus and make invaluable connections.

Rivera’s latest project is “Oprah’s Next Chapter,” a traveling interview show scheduled to premiere January 2012 on the OWN network.

Alumni Profile: Marsha Jones

Vitals: Lobbyist at HillCo Partners in Austin, Texas
UT Degree: Communication Studies, 1990

Valuable Senior Fellows Lesson: “It taught me the value of surrounding myself with people who had a different perspective, had a different experience, and who might have been more talented than me. If you’re not afraid of surrounding yourself with people who are more talented than yourself, it brings out the best in you.”

By Nick Hundley

Marsha Jones has politics in her blood. A life-long Austinite, she grew up in the shadow of the Texas
Capitol. She got her first internship with the legislature in high school and never looked back.

While attending UT, she continued to intern at the Capitol, even taking a semester off to work as a full-time staffer for a legislative session.

Now a lobbyist at HillCo Partners, she has lobbied the Texas legislature on behalf of clients on issues ranging from healthcare policy, arts and entertainment, education finance and even the Dallas Cowboys.

From her offices at Ninth and Congress in downtown Austin, she shared experiences from her storied career in government, and lessons from the Senior Fellows program.

How did you start working as a lobbyist?

My first internship was unpaid for a gentleman named Kae Patrick. I was only there half a day – and I knew that there was a lot more that happened behind the veil. I was very interested in being a part of that and understanding not only what happened, but why it happened. And I wanted to be a part of it. After that first paid staff position, I really was hooked. Because it was a privilege to walk into the Capitol every single day and know that you are part of something that mattered.

What did you do before joining HillCo Partners?

I did a number of jobs within the Capitol, staffing members of the legislature, both on the House and the Senate side. I worked for the Texas Hospital Association, leading their government relations program, advocating on behalf of hospitals and patients. I worked for a pharmaceutical company, and also the Texas Chamber of Commerce, and then came to HillCo [Partners] 10 years ago. I started at the Capitol in 1985 and haven't really left.

What is the need for advocacy and lobbying in state government?

I think the need is that the process is only as good as the people willing to be involved. So having talented people committed to ideals fills a very important need. And the debate about politics and issues and about the future of our state and nation is only as robust as those who are willing to advocate positions and be involved.

How did the College help prepare you for this career?

I think that communication is the basis for just about every daily transaction. Whether a personal relationship or even doing strategic thinking on how to solve a difficult problem regarding a piece of legislation. It’s all about whether you can communicate your ideas and whether you can communicate respect for an institution or a process, whatever your business is.

What were some of your favorite Senior Fellows classes?

There was a nonverbal class – we did some really interesting projects analyzing ads and the messages that were being delivered, not only about the products, but about culture and society, and even interactions between people. That was very interesting and something I translate often in my work, because people tell you, without telling you, a lot of how they feel and what they intend to do. And if you’re paying attention, that can be extremely valuable.

What’s a typical day like for a lobbyist?

The great thing about being a lobbyist is that no day is typical. I do everything from working with clients on strategy and messaging in order to impact an agency or legislative decision involving their business, to analyzing proposed regulations or legislation to determine client opportunity or harm. I do what looks like just standing around at the Capitol, but what is really the process of counting votes.

But the important thing I would say about advocacy today is that the “smoke-filled back-room deal” is a myth. Admittedly, advocacy can be about the relationships you have that get you in the door. But any proposal, law or deal that gets done without the scrutiny of being debated publicly – in the media, inside hearing rooms on the record and on the Senate or House floor – doesn't last and ultimately isn't worth making.
By Sinead Hultman

In 2006, Senior Fellow alumnus Will Potter had become an expert on the animal rights and environmental movements through his freelance work for The Chicago Tribune and Dallas Morning News. That's why he was chosen to testify before Congress against the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act.

Although the bill became law, giving government greater authority to prosecute animal rights protesters, Potter reflects on his experience like a true Senior Fellow.

“I viewed testifying as an honor,” Potter says. “[I see it as] both a recognition of my work and an opportunity for it to help shape public discourse.”

In 2011, Potter put his knowledge and passion for these topics into the book “Green is the New Red: An Insider’s Account of a Social Movement Under Siege,” a critical account of efforts to limit environmental activism.

Potter graduated summa cum laude with a degree in journalism in 2002, and says Senior Fellows gave him a richer educational experience.

“The program offered an important complement to the nuts-and-bolts nature of other journalism courses and an opportunity to critically examine the influence—both negative and positive—of media on our culture,” he says.

As a student in Karen Wilkins’ seminar, Potter remembers the content analysis he did of mainstream American media coverage of the bombing of Vieques, Puerto Rico. He says Wilkins and former Senior Fellows director Bob Jensen were among his favorite Senior Fellows professors.

“[They] both offered an opportunity to look at media, and the importance of free media in a democracy, in a critical and systemic way,” he said.

Since graduating, Potter has returned to Austin as part of his book tour, as well as to give a lecture co-sponsored by the Senior Fellows program.

He has simple advice for the students who are currently enrolled in the program: Be obsessed.

“If you are a writer, a reporter, a filmmaker, you have to be consumed by your work,” he says. “You’re going to see a lot of your fellow students stray from their paths because they can’t find a job, they really weren’t passionate enough, or any number of reasons. Don’t let that discourage you. If you’re going to do this, you have to be obsessed with mastering your craft.”

Alumni Profile: Heather Zoller

Vitals: Associate Professor of Communication, University of Cincinnati

Degrees: Speech Communication, 1993; M.A., Texas A&M University; Ph.D., Purdue University

Favorite Senior Fellows Assignment: Studying the policies that affect poverty in Marvin Olasky’s “The Story of Poverty” class.

By Sinead Hultman

As she walked across the stage in 1993 to accept her Senior Fellows medal and a degree in speech communications, Heather Hank, now Professor Heather Zoller, probably wasn’t thinking that she would soon be the one conferring the honors on students like herself.

“I was the director of our departmental honors program here at the University of Cincinnati, which gave me the opportunity to mentor and challenge some of our brightest students,” she reflects. “That experience definitely made me think of the Senior Fellows program.”

Zoller is now an associate professor of communication at the University of Cincinnati, where she studies organizational and health communications. She earned her doctorate from Purdue University in
2000.
Zoller feels fortunate to be part of an “academically strong” and “collegial” department at Cincinnati, but admits that “it took quite a while to get used to living in the Midwest.”
“I definitely miss Austin,” she says.
Her time as a Senior Fellow definitely has something to do with it. Zoller says that the unique format of “Symposium,” the introductory course taught at that time by Rod Hart, enriched her learning experience in lasting ways.
“We didn’t get traditional ‘grades’ in that class, but I do, indeed, still have the paper that received all ‘excellents’ from Hart,” she says.
She also remembers the impressive company she kept in that class. But it is not Hart, now Dean of the College and a major figure in political communication, whom Zoller says she gets more mileage out of name dropping.
“Matthew McConaughey was in that class,” she says. “My students are jealous when I tell them about that.”
Yet it was books, not would-be movie stars, that would shape the course of her life.
One of the books she read for Hart’s class, “Habits of Heart,” led her to pursue graduate school to study doctor-patient communication, even though her focus shifted slightly through her course of study.
“Themes from that book really stuck with me, [though] I became far more interested in the role that public health can play in preventing illness,” she says.
“Today my research continues to focus on how our definitions of health reinforce or challenge individual lifestyle explanations for illness and address the political, economic and environmental roots of health status.”
As an academic researcher, Zoller has an extensive publication record, including numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed articles, and she co-edited the book “Emerging Perspectives in Health Communication: Meaning, Culture, and Power” (Routledge 2008).
In addition to her career, Zoller is proud of her family. She has been married to her husband, Jayson, since 1998 and is the mother of Zoe, 8, and Jameson, 5.
She assures me that they wear Longhorn clothing when her husband doesn’t have them in Boilermaker attire.

Alumni Profile: Stefani Carter
Vitals: Texas State Representative, District 102
UT Degrees: Journalism and Government, 2001
Favorite Senior Fellows Moment: “I had a lot of fun writing papers in Professor Larry Browning’s class.”

By Nick Hundley
To some, the pace of government might seem a bit slow. This is especially true for Texas Rep. Stefani Carter.
Since being elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 2010, Carter admits being frustrated by the brief legislative session, which meets for about five months every other year.
“The most challenging part of being a state representative has been finding enough time to make all of the policy changes I desire in 140 days,” she says.
If this sounds like campaign rhetoric, consider what Carter has accomplished since graduating from UT as a Senior Fellow in 2001.
In less than 10 years, Carter earned graduate degrees from both Harvard Law School and Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. She served as a prosecutor in Collin County, Texas, and became the first Republican African-American woman elected to the Texas House.
Despite the brief legislative session, Carter has proven to be one of the most driven representatives at the Capitol.
In her first term as the representative of district 102 – which includes parts of North Dallas, Richardson and Garland – she served on both the Criminal Jurisprudence and the Energy Resources committees.
Speaker Joe Straus appointed her to the National Conference of State Legislatures’ Agriculture & Energy Committee, and Gov. Rick Perry appointed her to the Crime Victims’ Institute Advisory Council.
“The most rewarding thing about being a policymaker has been the ability to effect change and improve laws so that people can be better protected and served by their government,” she says.
Carter says her time in the College of Communication has helped prepare her to work as a legislator.

“The Senior Fellows program taught me how to think independently and identify viable solutions that work for everyone,” she says.

Carter will be running for reelection in the fall of 2012 for a chance to accomplish even more in the Texas House.

Alumni Profile: Paul Adrian

Vitals: CEO of latakoo, from Austin, Texas

Degrees: Broadcast Journalism, 1989; Master’s in Public Administration, Harvard Kennedy School for Government

Favorite Senior Fellows class: “Dr. Hart’s class certainly got us to think outside the box about a great variety of topics.”

By Nick Hundley

As a student during Senior Fellows’ inaugural year in 1988, Paul Adrian was one of the lucky few to experience Walter Cronkite in the classroom. The storied newscaster was a guest teacher for three Senior Fellows classes, inspiring Adrian’s career in journalism.

For over 18 years, Adrian worked as a television reporter for stations in Texas, Ohio and Connecticut. In 2008, he left reporting to earn a master’s from Harvard’s Kennedy School for Government and co-founded an Austin-based business that makes it easier for journalists and others to share video online.

Below, the journalist-turned-businessman fills us in on his new venture and reflects on how Senior Fellows and his encounter with Cronkite shaped his life.

What are your job title and duties?

I’m the CEO of a startup called latakoo. What this means is that I’m an entrepreneur who co-founded a media technology company. We help people quickly send high-quality video through the Internet. This empowers anybody who enthusiastically uses video, including television station groups, video production companies, freelance photographers and anybody who loves video.

How long have you been in this position?

We officially formed the company in June 2009, but I’ve been working on the project since June 2008.

What has been the most challenging thing about your position?

We are creating something from the ground up that is entirely new. Every step is an exciting challenge. Some of that challenge is creating the actual product. Another challenge is creating the company that sells the product. (We have about 14 employees and many others who are participating.) Still another challenge is raising money. (We’ve raised about $1.4 million so far and still need more.)

It is all a challenge, but is also the most consistently exciting and rewarding work that I’ve ever done. As a group, we are enthusiastically carried toward our goal by our core mission - which is to find a way to sustain and promote quality journalism in the belief that good journalism helps create a better democracy.

Are there other experiences - professional or otherwise - you’ve had since leaving UT that you’re proud of?

Sure, I was a television reporter for nearly two decades, and I spent most of that time as an investigative reporter. (I spent the last seven years of my career working at KDFW-TV in Dallas.) Journalism is often an extremely rewarding career because your work can actually help change the world for the better.

What was your favorite Senior Fellows memory or assignment?

That’s easy. Walter Cronkite lectured to our class for three days. Hearing him speak literally changed my life’s direction.

He spoke about ethics in journalism. It made me realize how important and powerful journalism could be at strengthening democracy and enhancing lives throughout the world. Cronkite literally helped negotiate peace between Egypt and Israel in one of the
first uses of satellite technology when he conducted separate interviews with Sadat and Begin and got them to commit to meet.

We heard Cronkite tell that story and many others live to us - just a small little group of UT college students. Wow. How could you not be excited about the prospect of spending a life in journalism! I sure was...

**How has the Senior Fellows program helped you or your career?**

Getting to meet Walter Cronkite sealed the deal. Instead of going to graduate school - as I had intended - I went straight to work in television. My goal was to become an old journalist some day with as many stories to tell to others as Walter Cronkite had told to us. His message to us about the importance of doing it right made me very conscious about every word that I wrote throughout my career. I never took my job lightly because I knew I wanted to live up to Walter Cronkite's standard. I was even lucky enough to keep in touch with him for a number of years following my participation in the program, including the opportunity to once visit with him personally at his home in the United Nations building. What an outstanding opportunity that I had in my career because I was part of the Senior Fellows program.

**How have you seen your communications field change since you began your career?**

Well, needless to say, television and journalism in general are completely different. The business model for mass market journalism is in market failure. There's no two ways about it. Mass media advertising does not attract the customers or generate the revenue stream necessary for a robust journalism business. So, television and print news organization have cut costs in massive ways - meaning many, many reporters have lost their jobs and meaning that the industry does not do the job it should at properly covering the news.

Our entrepreneurial journey is a direct response to the changes in the journalism business. We seek to find a way to sustain and grow quality journalism in the future. We hope (and believe) that our company, latakoo, will be an important part of the answer to today’s problem.

**Do you have any advice for current Senior Fellow students?**

Dive in. It will all pass so incredibly quickly. Get to know the other members of your class as well as you possibly can and hang onto them in the future. They will be important people in your lives in many ways. As an example, one of my Senior Fellow classmates recently introduced me to a friend of his that invested in our company.

**Alumni Profile: Teresa Boehm, M.D.**

**Vitals:** Emergency medicine and bariatric physician in Austin, Texas

**UT Degree:** Speech Communication, 1991

**Favorite Senior Fellows classes:** “Images of Women” by L.C. Miller, “Theory and Persuasion” and “Symposium” by Rod Hart

By Nick Hundley

For many, communication is a science, and Senior Fellow Teresa Boehm has taken this to heart.

After graduating from UT in 1991, she used her degree in speech communication as a foundation for a career in medicine.

“At age 9, I decided I wanted to become a doctor,” Boehm says. “I never wavered from that decision. I chose to major in communication – while also taking the required pre-med classes – knowing that communication skills would be beneficial as a physician, and to diminish my fear of public speaking.”

In 1995, Boehm – formerly Cole – graduated from UT Southwestern Medical School and has practiced emergency medicine for 16 years.

Along the way, she was named “Outstanding Senior Medical Student in Emergency Medicine” by the Texas College of Emergency Medicine in 1995 and completed her residency at UT Houston Medical School in 1998.

Since returning to Austin in 2005, she has been a doctor at Westlake Emergency Physicians. She also co-founded Austin Bariatric Clinic, which provides weight loss programs for adults and children.
While communication might not be a typical path for a medical career, she insists it has helped her become a better doctor.

“It may sound cliché,” she says, “but I truly believe that I am better able to communicate with patients and their families and with other physicians and healthcare providers.”

She says living in Austin with her husband and two children affords her the opportunity to attend a few football games and men’s and women’s basketball games each year.

She recently walked through the UT campus last summer with her nephew, who is now a freshman.

Looking back, she says that her favorite Senior Fellows moment was when Dean Rod Hart invited all the students to a gathering at his home.

“It was a nice opportunity to visit with and get to know fellow students in a relaxed environment,” Boehm says. “I was impressed by how diverse yet intelligent, thoughtful and ambitious these individuals were.”