Letter from the Director: 2013 a Year of Big Milestones, Small Love Notes

Fall 2013 was a big year for Senior Fellows and the Moody College of Communication, from the 25th anniversary of Moody College’s honors program to the historic $50 million gift from the Moody Foundation. What greater validation that communication matters, whether it be the epic stories or, as our guest, the writer Luis Alberto Urrea reminded us, the small “love notes” we pass through the fence.

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Luis Alberto Urrea Highlights Fall 2013 Lecture Series

Acclaimed Mexican-American author Luis Alberto Urrea connected with students from diverse backgrounds by examining the borders that defined his past.

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Donna DeCesare wins Maria Moors Cabot Prize in Journalism

Senior Fellows Professor Donna DeCesare won the oldest international award in journalism for her work in telling the story of violence in Central America through photography.

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Moody Foundation Invests $50M in College

The Moody College of Communication will aim to become one of the nation’s leading institutions in research and teaching through this gracious gift from the Moody Foundation.

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Graduating Senior Spotlights

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Letter from the Director: 2013, a Year of Big Milestones, Small Love Notes

By Dave Junker, Director of Senior Fellows

In reflecting on the year’s headlines, it’s easy to lose sight of all the time we spend in the margins, between the lines and in the editing room.

For us, no story was bigger than the generous $50 million gift by the Moody Foundation and the grand dedication ceremony on Nov. 7 renaming us the Moody College of Communication. Nor could there have been a better way to celebrate the 25th year of the Senior Fellows program.

What can get lost in the margins of such a big story, however, are the many daily toils, quiet revelations and moments of inspiration that happen here everyday and testify to the value of studying communication.

As director of Senior Fellows, I saw evidence of this every day in Symposium. What a life-affirming thing it is to share a classroom with such smart, dynamic, open-minded and curious students, and to be able to witness their commitment to intellectual discovery.

The job of writers, said our guest, the award-winning author Luis Alberto Urrea, is to write “love notes and pass them through knot holes in the fence.”

As a Senior Fellows teacher, this experience renews my belief in our mission of fostering critical thinking through speaking and writing.

One of our guest speakers, the writer Luis Alberto Urrea, said it best in a short interview prior to his public talk on Oct. 15 in the Belo Auditorium. The job of writers, he said, is to write “love notes and pass them through knotholes in the fence.”

Any Senior Fellows student knows he’s not talking about the love letters of a grade school romance, though those are important, too. What we’re talking about here are acts of communication that penetrate the walls that divide us. Those walls are everywhere, and they only get bigger and more numerous when we get out into the “real” world.

We were especially fortunate this year to have brilliant and passionate note passers, such as Journalism Professor Donna DeCesare and Dean Hart himself, fostering a love for critical inquiry in our classrooms.

Professor DeCesare taught a fantastic class called “Archive Detectives: Telling Stories about the Past Through Archival Research,” and Dean Hart taught the highly regarded “American Voices,” a look at American character and values through the ways we communicate.

You can see some great photos of our seminars in this issue of Backstories, as well as some photos and video-clips of our guest speakers and special events from this semester.

In addition to Urrea’s hilarious and poignant lecture about his personal battle with borders of all kinds, we hosted two other well-attended, insightful events.

To supplement DeCesare's seminar, archival filmmaker Trisha Ziff was flown in from her home in Mexico City for a special screening of her award-
Donna DeCesare Wins Award for Outstanding PhotoJournalism Reporting on Latin American Violence

By Marc Speir

After more than 20 years of professional photography with a focus on Latin American issues, and more than 10 years of teaching in the Moody College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin, Donna DeCesare has traveled the world as a documentary photographer and freelance writer. She was recently honored for her lifetime of work on Sept. 5 after being notified that she will receive one of only four Maria Moors Cabot gold medal prizes granted by Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism this year. DeCesare received her medal and $5,000 at a ceremony at Columbia University on Oct. 21.

Founded in 1938 and celebrating its 75th anniversary, the Maria Moors Cabot Prize is the oldest international award in journalism and celebrates outstanding reporting by journalists who’ve covered the Western Hemisphere and fostered inter-American understanding through their reporting.

Professor DeCesare taught a Senior Fellows seminar this fall titled “Archive Detectives: Telling Stories about the Past Through Archival Research.” In a special appearance for Symposium students, she shared some of the work for which she was recognized.

“The Cabot Prize has long held a special place in our mission because it recognizes courageous reporting about Latin America, often in countries where freedom of the press is far from a given and exercised at great personal risk,” said Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University.

DeCesare’s images have told the story of violence in Central America for years, highlighting major issues such as gang violence.

Her work appears in traditional publications and on the web in her compelling bilingual website “Destiny’s Children,” where she bears witness to everyday violence and social inequality both south and north of the border.

Her recent book, “Unsettled/Desasosiego,” was released in April 2013. The New York Times described it as “a look back on lives that were lost, and some who triumphed, during her many years in the region.”

Other 2013 gold medalists include Jon Lee Anderson, USA, staff writer, The New Yorker; Mauri König, Brazil, special reporter, Gazeta do Povo, Curitiba; and Alejandro Santos Rubino, Colombia, editor-in-chief, Revista Semana.
Luis Alberto Urrea Highlights Fall 2013 Lecture Series

By Allison Bohanan, with additional material by Chelsea Sandlin, Will Shirey, Allison Kelsoe and Adrian Guillen

On Oct. 15, as part of the Fall 2013 Senior Fellows lecture series, Luis Alberto Urrea recounted his ascent from growing up poor in Tijuana, Mexico, to his success as a writer of 15 books, winner of numerous literary awards, and teaching gigs at Harvard University and the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Urrea’s lecture, “Universal Border: From Tijuana to the World,” conveyed a message that students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences could identify with: make your background, no matter what it is, a source of strength.

“As both a writer and speaker, Urrea has a special ability to breathe life into the abstract terms of our public debates,” said Senior Fellows Program Director Dave Junker. “His prolific body of work crosses borders of all kinds.”

With the current focus on immigration reform, Urrea’s lecture was a timely opportunity for students to get a first-person perspective on the issue from a great storyteller rather than a policy analyst or political figure.

“I identify with a lot of his experience, even as a Mexican who was born in the United States,” said Fernando Morales, junior public relations major who attended the event.

With humor and humility, Urrea shed light on both sides of the border, highlighting his personal experience as an immigrant born to an American mother and Mexican father. He detailed how his challenging upbringing in Tijuana and his subsequent move to San Diego, Calif., after becoming ill with tuberculosis, changed his perspective on life and drove him to become who he is today.

Urrea discussed how his mother was ashamed of their Mexican identity and worked hard to suppress it. Although he was racially white and could blend in with the white majority by his appearance, he explained that being a white Mexican with a Tijuana accent made him a very odd outsider.

“That’s something all immigrants can identify with.”

Related to his story of growing up as an immigrant, Urrea also discussed the borders he faced in writing his most famous work, “The Devil’s Highway,” selected as finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2005 and winner of the Lannan Literary Award in 2004. The book documents the experience of 26 men who crossed the U.S. border illegally and faced unparalleled hardships in the deserts of southern Arizona, with 14 of them ending up dead.

Urrea said he approached the case with a personal bias against the Border Patrol, as they had been the enemies of friends and family for much of his life. It wasn’t until he actually spent time learning their jobs and getting to know some of them personally that he began to see possibilities to go beyond prevailing assumptions and examine more complex realities of the border.

“It was the greatest writing gift of my life,” Urrea said regarding his encounter with a border patrol officer named Kenny, who became his confidant and friend.

“It’s thanks to him, really, that the book was good.”

Urrea faced many trials during his life, both in
Moody Foundation Invests $50 Million in UT Austin College of Communication

In fall 2013, The Moody Foundation announced a $50 million commitment to establish the Moody College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin, resulting in the largest endowment for the study of communication of any public university in the nation.

The gift, among the largest ever awarded by the Moody Foundation, will support projects across the Moody College and is aimed to help position it as the nation's leading institution for research and teaching in new and convergent media.

“By making this gift, the Moody Foundation seeks to increase the presence of the university on a national and international basis and improve the quality of its education by recruiting the best professors, the best administration and in turn having the best students coming out of the Moody College of Communication,” said Ross Moody, a UT Austin alumnus and trustee of the Moody Foundation. “It’s a huge honor to have the Moody name attached to a college that is so well known around the state and nation.”

The broad-based gift is composed largely of endowments that will support the following initiatives in the Moody College of Communication:

- Innovation Fund ($10 million) — To establish an “idea fund” that will invest in new curricula, courses, online education, research and student activities.
- Department Endowments ($5 million) — To provide a $1 million endowment for each of the college's five departments to support departmental leaders and course and curricular development.
- Graduate Student Recruitment ($13 million) — To provide additional teaching and research fellowships for master's and doctoral students, more than doubling the amount of funding available for graduate students.
- Undergraduate Curricular and Cocurricular Work ($7 million) — To support learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom, including student media projects, undergraduate research and student leadership organizations, and to create the Moody Scholars Program, an honors program for first- and second-year students.
- Research and Outreach Centers ($10 million) — To create 10 $1 million endowments for the Moody College's research and community outreach centers: the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life; the Denius-Sams Gaming Academy; a new Health Communication Center; the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas; the Office of Survey Research; Reporting Texas; the Speech and Hearing Center; the Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute; the Texas Program in Sports and Media; and the UT Film Institute.

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• Classroom Space and Facilities ($5 million)
  — To refurbish portions of the Jesse H. Jones Communication Complex, create three new lecture halls in the Communication B (CMB) Building, conference space and a new pedestrian bridge between the Belo Center for New Media and the Jesse H. Jones Complex. The university will provide an additional $5 million for this project.

“The Moody Foundation has made a transformative gift to The University of Texas at Austin,” said Bill Powers, president of The University of Texas at Austin. “As the Moody College of Communication, this venerable and accomplished college is poised to become the nation’s leading institution for communication scholarship and education. It is an honor to welcome this great Texas family into the pantheon of the university’s most historically important donors.”

A celebration took place on campus Nov. 7 with speakers including Moody, Powers and Roderick P. Hart, dean of the Moody College of Communication.

“The college is tremendously grateful for this investment from the Moody Foundation,” Hart said. “The Moody name provides instant credibility to the college by providing a brand that’s powerful and sustaining. This is truly a legacy gift that will transform all areas of the Moody College and continue to serve the people of Texas.”

The Moody Foundation is a charitable organization that makes grants primarily in Austin, Galveston and Dallas, with an emphasis on education, social services, children’s needs and community development. The Moody Foundation was created by Mr. and Mrs. W.L. Moody Jr. to benefit in perpetuity present and future generations of Texans.

Graduating Senior Spotlights

Mary Ellen Knewtson

From: Sugar Land, Texas
Major: Journalism
Favorite Class: “Creative Nonfiction for Magazines and Books” by Bill Minutaglio

Senior Mary Ellen Knewtson may have majored in journalism, but after graduation she is branching out and taking her talents to another area of communications: public relations. An advocate for telling the story behind every news piece, Mary Ellen plans to use her experience writing informative and in-depth stories to take the PR world by storm.

Interviewed by Dave Junker

Dave: What are your plans for after graduation?

Mary Ellen: I am moving to Oklahoma City to work at Gooden Group, a public relations firm where I interned this summer. I start in January.

Dave: That’s great news on getting a job at a public relations firm. It used to be, back in the old days, that a lot of PR talent came from journalism and the liberal arts. But today I’m not sure people, especially students, understand just how closely related they are. While a student, did you ever imagine going into public relations? Do you know what you’ll be doing there?

Mary Ellen: You know, I’ve had it in my mind since I started at UT that I might go into public relations. In the Moody College of Communication, they keep the programs fairly separated. I understand that they want to create specialists which has its merits — I appreciate how deep into journalism I was able to go. But with this arrangement, it’s easy to forget how much crossover there can be. It wasn’t until my first PR internship at
Texas CASA in summer of 2011 that I began to believe I could take my skill set into the PR world.

That said, I still have a lot to learn, because I am fresh out of undergrad and also because I missed out on some PR classes — I’ve heard UT’s are excellent. The plan has been, and still is, to pay very close attention to how my mentors, bosses and co-workers do their jobs while using my journalism major as an asset wherever I can. At Gooden Group I will be a Junior Account Executive under several account executives whom I admire professionally and personally, so I think this puts me in a great position to keep learning.

Dave: You say that Bill Minutaglio’s creative nonfiction class was your favorite at UT. That must mean you wrote some stuff that was pretty interesting to do. What were your favorite pieces? Can you share some of Bill’s wisdom?

Mary Ellen: The class was my favorite because it gave me permission to write a piece of journalism as if I were writing a short story. Everyone in the college of communication says we are the college of storytellers, but Minutaglio gave me the blueprint for how to be a storyteller. It’s as simple and as complicated as choosing your favorite book and understanding why you love it.

A piece of nonfiction can be as good as fiction, if the writer researches thoroughly enough and employs the same tricks great authors have used forever. This means it’s crucial to elevate your story with those universal themes of literature we learned in English class: coming-of-age, clash between civilization and the wilderness, impact of the past on the present, struggle for equality and others, etc.

I’ll give you an example of this in a story I did. The assignment was “write about a place” and my place was Hillside Farmacy on East 11th Street, a hip farm-to-table restaurant in a building that was formerly the storefront of Austin’s first black pharmacist, Doc Young. The subject was this building, but my story wasn’t about a building. It was about the gentrification of East Austin. It turned out not to be a negative story because the new restaurateurs were respectful of the building’s history and maintained a relationship with Doc Young’s family. It was simply an honest (I hope) look at one instance of gentrification and what it meant to Doc Young’s daughter, Yvetta Turner, and to the current restaurant owners. Universal theme: impact of the past on the present.

Other lessons from Bill: Never lose your humanity and when an editor asks how the story is progressing say, “It’s building with quiet intensity.”

Dave: Glad to hear you liked Dean Hart’s class. I’m often jealous of my students for all the cool seminars you get to take from great faculty. It’s been pretty special having him teach a class for us this fall. He’s always shown great dedication to Senior Fellows, and given all the heavy lifting he’s done administratively, I imagine that he enjoyed himself in the classroom. How would you characterize him as a teacher?

Mary Ellen: I was impressed with how much he prioritized our class, despite his many other obligations. He personally edited all of our papers, which made me nervous, but I appreciated it. His lectures were some of the most thoughtful I’ve heard, and though the class was more lecture-based than other Senior Fellows classes I’ve taken, I didn’t mind. It was a class that I hated to miss.

Dave: Did you have a Senior Fellows moment? Did you have a eureka moment? Or a class period or reading that changed your perspective on something?

Dean Hart got me to think differently about Jon Stewart. In his lecture about cynicism, he revealed his disapproval of Jon Stewart on the grounds that he turns young Americans into political cynics, leading to their disengagement in the political system. He argued that this disengagement was bad because no matter how imperfect our political system may be, it is the best tool we have to fix our society. His point was that to give up on politics can mean we are giving up on improving our country.

After hearing the lecture, I checked my own cynicism. As a journalism major, we are taught to be suspicious, which I still believe is important. I have met many journalists who are cynical, however, and Dean Hart highlighted the distinction. I think I was so affected because I realized the relative rarity of someone his age having hope for our government and country.
Before heading to graduate school in the fall, senior Brenna Robinson is eager to travel the globe and learn as much as she can. After learning about the challenges associated with deafness, Brenna was inspired to earn her interpreting certification and help people to appreciate the differences of those with disabilities.

Interviewed by Dave Junker

Dave: What was your favorite Senior Fellows class?

Brenna: “American Voices,” taught by Dean Hart, was my favorite Senior Fellows class. Dean Hart’s lectures were extremely engaging and opened my eyes to valuable lessons and social issues beyond the classroom.

Dave: Did you have any Senior Fellows “moments”?

Brenna: I will never forget having lunch in Dean Hart’s office with an incredible view of the 40 acres and memorable conversation.

Dave: That sounds cool. Was the whole class there? I wish I could have taken that class myself.

Brenna: My lunch with Dean Hart was for class, but for the purpose of getting to know students in the class better. There were about 5-6 of us in each lunch section.

Dave: What are your plans for after graduation?

Brenna: I plan to travel the world next semester and am moving to Chicago next fall, where I will be getting my National Interpreting Certification and attending graduate school.

Brenna Robinson

From: Omaha, Nebraska
Major: Deaf Education
Favorite Class: “The History of The Black Power Movement” and “American Voices”

Dave: Congratulations on graduating! And traveling the world! Where are you going?

Brenna: As far as this semester goes, I am currently trying to set up an internship in London at a school for the deaf to get an experience of British Sign Language and what the education system is like there. I am also traveling to Italy in March. I have been interning for the National Association for the Deaf (NAD), and on March 13th I will be in Los Angeles helping with the NAD Gala in Hollywood co-hosted by Academy Award actress Marlee Matlin and the Winklers (Henry Winkler and his wife Stacey Furstman Weitzman). The gala is recognizing and presenting awards to famed individuals that have brought awareness to the deaf/hard of hearing community. It should be a great experience.

Dave: Sorry we weren’t able to offer any courses taught by CSD instructors while you were a student in Senior Fellows. If you want to come back next year, we’ll save a spot for you in Craig Champlin’s class. He’s doing a seminar called “Making Sense of Your Sense of Hearing.” If you could suggest a Senior Fellows course related to your major, what would it be?

Brenna: That course sounds really interesting! I would say if I could suggest a course it would be something that had to deal with “deaf” and “disabled” issues that are current today around the world. I know the NAD always has current issues up on their website and some of them are really amazing. It is hard to empathize with the challenges disabled people face, as a person who does not possess these diabilities. And I feel like so many people, including myself, take for granted what our hearing ears allow us to achieve. So I think that learning about and appreciating differences would be a really neat course of study.

Brittany Reeber

From: Hollywood, Florida
Major: RTF and French
Favorite Class: “16MM Film” by Nancy Schiesari

Being from Hollywood, senior Brittany Reeber has good reason to be interested in filmmaking, even if it’s Hollywood, Florida. Brittany was an experienced filmmaker even before graduation, creating
documentaries and short films in the hopes of sharing her view of the world from behind the camera.

Interviewed by Dave Junker

Dave: What was your favorite Senior Fellows class?

Brittany: I have been crazy about all the Senior Fellows courses I took over the last few years. They were each incredibly different from one another and complemented each other at the same time. “The Immigrant Experience in Austin” with Diana Dawson was particularly awesome. We traveled around the city and explored immigration from multiple angles. I engaged with communities that I might not have ever met otherwise. I also loved Nancy Schiesari’s “Art and Cinema” course and the archival research class I took with Donna DeCesare this past semester. I felt really lucky to be in each of their classrooms.

Dave: What are your plans after graduation?

Brittany: I’m getting ready to apply for some grants for an upcoming film project and will be freelancing around town. I’m also looking to travel anywhere and everywhere!

Dave: What kind of filmmaking do you like to do?

Brittany: I started off school with a focus on documentary because I had gone through an intense broadcast journalism program in high school. I started writing more creatively and after receiving a lot of positive feedback from my peers for a short film I made for school I gained the confidence to pursue narrative filmmaking as well.

I travelled with Students of the World, an organization that allows university students to use creative storytelling for social good, to make short documentaries for the Nature Conservancy. I am really proud of that work and I also have several short narrative films that I’m proud of too. Hopefully I can continue to pursue both genres. Within documentary and narrative, however, there are a lot of different kinds of filmmaking, and I haven’t quite figured out where I fall yet.

Dave: Do you have any favorite films or films that inspired you to want to be a filmmaker? How about directors or writers?

Brittany: That is a really hard question. I definitely go through phases of liking different directors and films depending on what project I am working on at the time. I watched “Rosemary’s Baby” about a thousand times last spring and it is definitely one of my favorite movies. Pedro Almadovar inspires me, as well as Hayao Miyazaki. I really have a lot of films left to see, though, and I’m excited to start re-educating myself now that school is over.

Dave: What did you think of “The Mexican Suitcase” and the talk-back with Trisha Ziff that Senior Fellows sponsored? I hope you got a chance to visit with her. In addition to being a terrific filmmaker, she’s a really nice and interesting person.

Brittany: I loved that screening and talkback. I did a lot of research on Magnum Photography this semester because of Professor DeCesare’s course and “The Mexican Suitcase” story was a really interesting supplement to what I had been studying. Trisha herself had a greater impression on me than the film, though. I really admired the way she talked about her work and stood her ground on some controversial issues regarding the film. There was a lot of debate about what should have been done with all the negatives. She fights for the rights of photographers and she didn’t try to please everyone who talked to her. She was also very honest and steadfast, unafraid to say that being a filmmaker is a constant struggle and regardless of the success that one of your films may have, you will still be struggling to get the next one off the ground. I thought that was insightful and brave.

Dave: Do you have any films floating around in your head that you really want to make someday?

Brittany: I don’t have any synopsis in particular to share, but I do have lots of different kinds of films that I would like to make. I want to make films that entertain people but also provoke them to think about certain issues or reconsider their own perspectives, even make

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Elizabeth Rives

From: Sugar Land, Texas
Major: Speech-Language Pathology
Favorite Class: “Introduction to Fiction Writing”

During her time at The University of Texas at Austin, Senior Elizabeth Rives has developed a passion for speech pathology and the detective work that goes into finding the right diagnosis. A member of Communication Council and recipient of numerous scholarships, Elizabeth has definitely left her mark on UT and hopes to do the same for those with speech disorders one day.

Interviewed by Dave Junker

Dave: What was your favorite Senior Fellows class?

Elizabeth: My favorite class was “American Voices” with Dean Hart. It offered new perspectives on the values that are so ingrained in our culture that we don’t recognize them.

Dave: Did you have any Senior Fellows moments? Something that you will always remember from being in the program?

Elizabeth: I took “Archive Detectives” with Dr. DeCesare and I was writing a paper on Charles Whitman’s brain tumor. I came across some interesting and subtle clues in the archives at the Briscoe Center that supported a lot of my theories about the way his tumor impacted his behaviors. We truly acted as detectives uncovering clues from the past to reach new conclusions, and that was an incredibly empowering feeling.

Dave: Congratulations on graduating. But it seems too soon, doesn’t it? What’s the rush?

Elizabeth: I came into college with a lot of credit from AP courses. I extended my college career as long as I possibly could (too scared of the real world!), but in the end, it just made sense to graduate early and try to gain a little more experience before graduate school. I’m by nature a curious person, and so having a semester off is allowing me time to explore the interests I have that I would not have been able to explore otherwise.

Dave: What are your plans after graduation?

Elizabeth: My plans are to attend grad school in August 2014 and become a medical speech-language pathologist. I want to specialize in stuttering and traumatic brain injury.

Dave: Sounds like you have a good plan. Do you know where you want to go to grad school?

Elizabeth: I’ve applied to a few places in and out of Texas, some more prestigious and competitive than others. But to tell you the truth, an acceptance anywhere would be an honor. CSD Graduate schooling is extremely, EXTREMELY competitive, and many of my older friends didn’t get into even one on their first attempt. So, at this point I’m feeling like whoever wants me can have me.

Dave: Glad to hear you had such a good experience in Senior Fellows, and I’m so glad we were able to get you into Dean’s Hart’s seminar. Sounds like it was a great class. I remember really liking your final paper in my Symposium class and your being an historian in that endeavor, something you also enjoyed doing in DeCesare’s class. If you have a change of heart, and decide that brain trauma is not your cup of tea, you can always go to grad school to become a scholar.

Elizabeth: My final paper in your class compared the legend of Johnny Appleseed to Woody Guthrie and analyzed the similarities and differences. Yes, I was kind of acting the detective by using historical information and analyzing it with a modern frame of mind. I love to put my knowledge to the test and think
outside the box to make hypothetical conclusions.

Dave: Where did your interest in speech and language disorders spring from? How about stuttering and brain trauma?

Elizabeth: I first became interested in speech because of my love for language. I loved to write and have always wanted to be an author, but couldn't see myself doing something that didn't benefit others. So, I combined my love for communication with my love for people and dove headfirst into speech pathology. Haven't looked back since.

I became interested in brain injury because I love the brain and its intrigue. I love playing the detective, using clues about lesions and symptoms to put pieces together and form diagnoses. I guess this quality about me bleeds into every aspect of my life.

Stuttering I honestly just kind of fell into. I wanted to get involved with research as a freshman, and the stuttering lab on campus was accepting undergraduates. After three years of working with, around, and for people who stutter, I’ve fallen in love with the field of fluency. There are so many myths surrounding stuttering, and so many therapists, teachers, and even stutterers themselves that think negatively about it because of these myths. It’s a truly intriguing disorder, and I’m excited to keep researching further into its nature.

Dave: Did you see “The King's Speech?” Do you think it was a good film for raising awareness of speech disorders?

Elizabeth: I did see the “The King's Speech,” and, of course, I loved it. I sure hope it raised awareness. Often you see people with communication disorders cast in a negative light in movies. They’re shown as weak, stupid, or cowardly. It’s a sneaky trick filmmakers use to help create the “character” of a character without the huge back story. If you want people to believe a character is weak, give them a stutter. They play on stereotypes to develop certain traits, yet this perpetuates false beliefs about people with communication disorders. This was not the case in the “King’s Speech,” so I think it was a really great step.