



# COMMUNITY

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION



## Opening Message

### Chair Avery Holton

As we wrap up a year unlike any other, we're taking a moment to reflect on all we've accomplished together—and there's so much to celebrate.

In a time of challenge and change, our department has not only persevered but thrived. We welcomed nearly 1,000 majors, filled over 7,500 course seats, and continued our rise in national rankings—now standing among the top 20 programs in the country. With over \$85 million in grant funding and consistent recognition for research excellence, our impact is growing stronger by the day.

But beyond the numbers, it's our people who define us. From award-winning debate performances to dynamic community partnerships and groundbreaking new initiatives, our students, staff, and faculty have led with heart and purpose.

We're proud of where we are—and even more excited for where we're going. Thank you for being part of this incredible journey.

Here's to a year of progress, connection, and care—and to everything ahead.



# DEPARTMENT NEWS

THE END OF A SEMESTER!

## College of Humanities Faculty Awards

The Distinguished Faculty Service Award in the College of Humanities goes to Andy King, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication with a joint appointment in Population Sciences at the Huntsman Cancer Institute. In his time on the faculty in the College of Humanities, King has established an impressive service record on departmental, collegiate, university, and community levels, ranging from service on numerous planning committees to the Chair of the Utah Cancer Coalition, a statewide organization that oversees efforts related to the Utah State Cancer Plan.



The College is pleased to recognize Jakob D. Jensen, Professor of Communication and Associate Vice President for Research for the University, as the Distinguished Scholar in the Humanities. As Chair Avery Holton notes, "Dr. Jensen is a truly exceptional scholar and our department and college are fortunate to have him as a faculty member."



**Dr. Kimberly Kaphingst**  
Distinguished Professor

## Dr. Kaphingst Named Distinguished Professor

One faculty member in the College of Humanities has been appointed with the University of Utah's prestigious designation of Distinguished Professor. Kimberly Kaphingst, professor of communication, associate chair of the department, and researcher at the Huntsman Cancer Institute, was recommended by the Distinguished Professor Advisory Committee and approved by the U's Board of Trustees, Mitzi Montoya, senior vice president for academic affairs, and President Taylor Randall. Kaphingst will be formally recognized for this honor at both the university-wide commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 1 and the College's convocation on Friday, May 2.

[READ MORE](#)



## Honoring Students

### Spring Scholarship and Awards Celebration

The Department of Communication is incredibly proud to celebrate the accomplishments of our Undergraduate and Graduate students. On Reading Day, our Department joined together with students, faculty, staff, and donors to award the 2025-26 academic year scholarship recipients.

At this celebration, this year's Kappa Tau Alpha cohort was inducted. Kappa Tau Alpha (KTA) is a national honor society that recognizes academic excellence in journalism and mass communication.

This year's inductees exemplify the highest standards of scholarship and professionalism in communication. Please join us in celebrating their hard work, dedication, and well-earned success.

We are incredibly proud of all these students and their accomplishments and look forward to the impact they will make in the field.



**Craig Wirth**

Adjunct Associate Professor Emeritus

## Celebrating Craig Wirth's Retirement

After more than three decades of shaping aspiring journalists and video producers at the University of Utah, Adjunct Associate Professor Craig Wirth is retiring this spring and will be awarded with Emeritus status.

Craig has taught in the Department of Communication since 1992, sharing a wealth of experience from his remarkable career spanning over 55 years in journalism. A four-time Emmy Award winner, Craig worked as a network correspondent and reporter in major markets like New York and Los Angeles, and became a beloved voice in Utah television with his signature features and historical storytelling. He's taught up to 11 classes a year, inspired countless students, and produced documentaries that sparked meaningful social change.

[READ MORE](#)



## In Brief

Assistant Professor LaRisa Anderson has been selected for the 2025–26 cohort of the DISCO Network (Digital Inquiry, Speculation, Collaboration, and Optimism), we are so excited for her!

Professor Kevin Coe and an incredible team of scholars have published a new open-access paper making the case that political communication research must center on identity.

Undergraduate student Wen Lee presented her research, "InterSEXuality: Analyzing Media Representation of Feminine Stereotypes Among Women of Color in Romantic Comedies," at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research.

Professor Danielle Endres received the Community Engaged Teaching and Scholarship Award! She was awarded due to her excellent mentorship, relationship building, and teaching which has created a culture that embodies the University's mission.



### A message for **Student Journalists**

There is now a new place where your work can be featured! Visit [journalism.utah.edu](http://journalism.utah.edu) to read student work and learn more about our journalism class offerings. We hope to see you there!

Special thanks to Clinical Associate Professor Marcie Young Cancio for spearheading this effort!

## Upcoming Events

### May 1st

Commencement! Join us in the Huntsman Center at 6:00 pm and see graduates across the University honored as well as hear from the Department of Communication's own, Commencement Speaker, Holly Rowe.

### May 2nd

College of Humanities Convocation in the Huntsman Center at 8 am. Walk and receive your diploma and join us in the LNCO lobby for a reception to follow.

### May 3rd – August 17th

Summer! Relax, unwind, and enjoy... see you next semester!