



JOMC CONNECTIONS



SPRING 2025

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Outstanding Seniors

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WORD

FROM THE INTERIM CHAIR



Celebrating Excellence in Journalism and Mass Communication

The Spring 2025 issue of JOMC Connections highlights remarkable advancements in content, design, and creativity, showcasing the dedication and hard work of students, faculty, staff and alumni.

Dr. Ecaterina Stepaniuc and her JOMC 396 (Publication Design and Layout) students played a crucial role in planning, designing and producing this visually appealing and informative issue, offering them invaluable hands-on and real-world experience.

Thanks to the unwavering support of dedicated faculty, staff and partners, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to equipping students with essential theoretical and practical knowledge to navigate the evolving media landscape.

As you explore this engaging and visually appealing issue, you will discover inspiring stories of student accomplishments, alumni successes, faculty achievements and departmental activities that highlight the vibrant community within JOMC and beyond.

As Henry Ford once said: *If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.*

Congratulations and best wishes,
Dr. Yahya R. Kamalipour
Professor and Interim Chair

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JOMC Connections

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Dr. Ecaterina Stepaniuc

From N.C. A&T Crosby to USC Annenberg

Madisyn Williams Shares Career Success and Opportunities

By Shakiya Jones

Madisyn Williams, a proud Crosby alumna, has taken her passion for communication and media to the next level. Now pursuing a Master's degree in Public Relations and Advertising at USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, Williams reflects on how her undergraduate experiences in the JOMC program at N.C. A&T laid the foundation for her graduate studies and professional growth.

Williams credits A&T's hands-on approach to journalism and communication for preparing her for the fast-paced world of PR. Specific professors played a key role in shaping her journey. Dr. Laura Marshall, who taught Intro to PR, was a major influence, inspiring Williams to pursue her dreams and consider USC. Dr. Marshall's experience in a leadership role at Kaiser Permanente motivated Williams, instilling confidence in her when she needed it most.

Dr. Xueying Zhang also had a lasting impact on Williams, introducing her to the Dow Chemical Internship, which became one of her most significant professional experiences. Williams credits Dr. Zhang for encouraging her to apply, which ultimately led to even greater career opportunities.

Williams applies key lessons from N.C. A&T to her graduate studies, particularly the importance of time management, intentionality and self-presentation. She emphasizes the need to make meaningful contributions and take full advantage of available opportunities. "Make sure you're striving to make a positive change, showing up as the person you want to be and fighting for the opportunities presented to you," said Williams.



USC Graduate School Conference

As an ambassador for the program, Williams helps prospective students navigate the admissions process and connect with faculty. She encourages N.C. A&T students to take advantage of this opportunity, as the conference provides a fully funded trip, breakout sessions and networking with faculty and admissions teams. "It's an incredible chance to put your name out there before applications even open, and the networking opportunities are unmatched. This program opens so many doors, and I want others to experience that."

Networking and mentorship played a pivotal role in Williams's success. She attributes much of her confidence and career readiness to the encouragement and support of her professors. "They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. They pushed me, showed me different internship opportunities and encouraged me to apply. With their help — and by the grace of God — I'm here today."

Williams was motivated to pursue a Master's degree at USC Annenberg due to the sense of community she felt when she first stepped on campus and her desire to further her education. She noted that attending the MSI Conference solidified her decision, as it made her realize how much more she wanted to learn in the PR landscape. "Going to the MSI conference made me realize that I still wanted to learn so much more in the landscape of PR, and I just felt a sense of peace on campus. I knew that's where I wanted to be and pursue my master's," said Williams.

Transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI has been a unique experience for Williams. While A&T provided her with incredible opportunities, USC opened even more doors, particularly in terms of industry connections and exposure to DEI initiatives. Being in Los Angeles has given her access to numerous networking events, further expanding her professional reach. "All of those wonderful things — it's just a lot of advantages to that," said Williams.

Williams acknowledges the challenges of graduate school, emphasizing the increased responsibility, rigorous coursework and the necessity of proactive networking. Moving from Atlanta to Los Angeles was a big adjustment, but she has embraced the experience, trusting in faith and determination to navigate this new chapter. One of Williams's most impactful

experiences has been working as a graduate research assistant at USC Annenberg. She works directly under the Dean, planning board meetings with high-level executives in communications and PR. This role has given her firsthand exposure to corporate communication strategies and leadership insights from top industry professionals. "I am learning from the best of the best when it comes to corporate communication, public relations and advertising. Watching their work and taking notes has been invaluable," said Williams.

Faculty and industry connections have also played a key role in her growth. Observing their career paths, networking strategies, and work ethics has helped her refine her own approach to building a successful PR career. "I think the biggest thing is just being very intentional — looking at what successful professionals have done and applying that to myself," said Williams.

Through her role at USC Annenberg's Center for PR Board Meetings, Williams has connected with chief communication executives from major companies such as Nike, Pinterest, Microsoft, and Amazon. One of these connections directly led to her landing an internship at Merck Pharmaceutical, where she was selected as a Health Communications Intern.

Williams is committed to contributing to the PR industry by advocating for greater diversity within the field and being a voice for the voiceless. She hopes to change the landscape of PR by fighting for more opportunities for underrepresented audiences and ensuring that diverse perspectives are recognized and valued.



Future Advice

"Your undergraduate experience is just the beginning, keep pushing forward and seeking new opportunities." Williams acknowledges that while college offers social opportunities, students should remain focused on long-term goals. "College goes by fast. It's easy to get caught up in relationships, parties and fun, but it's crucial to stay intentional about your future."



Photos courtesy of
Madisyn Williams

N.C. A&T Journalism Students Awarded Wieden and Kennedy Scholarships

Two students receive top honors, setting the stage for promising careers in journalism

By Tyler Norman

Journalism students at N.C. A&T are offered a shining opportunity and making waves in the world of advertising, creativity, and diversity. The Wieden+Kennedy Scholarship has not only been a significant source of funding for students pursuing careers in creative fields, but also an emblem of how strategic partnerships can positively impact both the individual and the broader community.

The Wieden+Kennedy Scholarship is a collaborative initiative between N.C. A&T and the globally recognized advertising agency. The scholarship program aims to foster diversity and inclusion within the creative advertising industry by supporting students of color who are passionate about pursuing careers in the field. By targeting individuals from underrepresented communities, the scholarship is committed to nurturing talent and opening doors that might otherwise be inaccessible due to financial or systemic barriers.

One of the core components of the W+K Scholarship is the provision of financial aid, which ensures that students have the resources they need to succeed academically and professionally. Additionally, in this year's cohort, several exceptional students have been named recipients of the prestigious scholarship.

Among them was Chrysta Nichols, a senior multimedia journalism and marketing student who stood out for her innovative approach to digital design and branding. With her passion for storytelling and a keen eye for impactful visuals, Nichols is excited to use her scholarship to further her career in the creative industry.

When asked what the scholarship money was used for, Nichols said, "The money is of course for school, so I'm going to make sure that my tuition is paid off and not having to stress about the burden of paying for school."

For A&T — one of the largest historically Black universities in the nation, the scholarship represents a commitment to nurturing talent and providing access to opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. It is also a testament to the importance of partnerships between academics and industry, ensuring that students are not only prepared for the workforce but are also equipped with the tools, networks and mentorship needed to succeed.



**Chrysta Nichols, 2024
Scholarship Recipient**

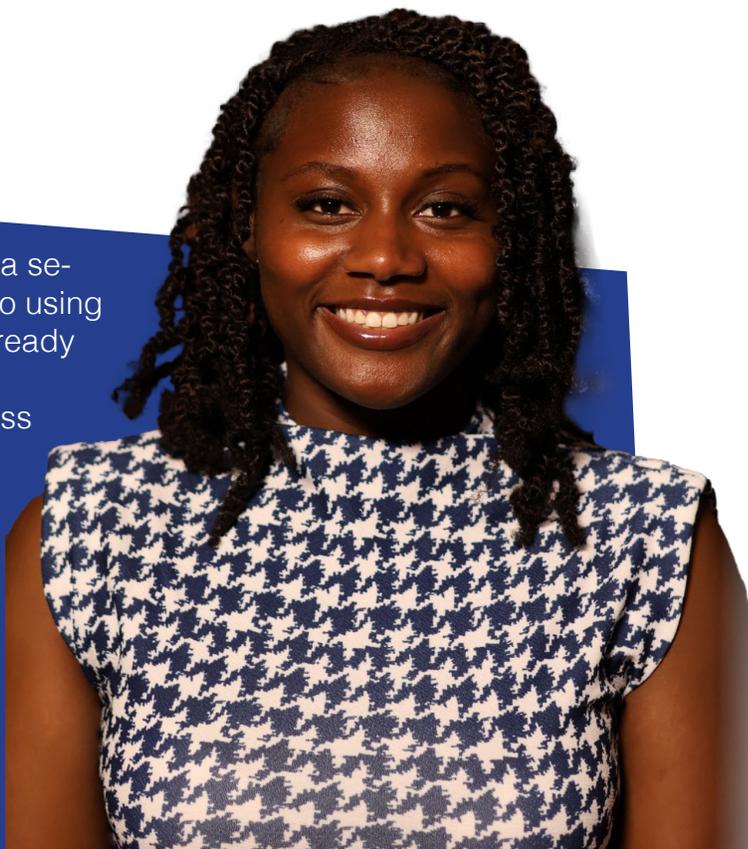
**Photo courtesy of
Chrysta Nichols**

Another standout recipient is Sydney Bryant, a senior public relations student. Her dedication to using advertising as a tool for social change has already made an impact on campus, where her campaigns advocating for mental health awareness have gained widespread attention.

“I think being authentic and real is what got me the scholarship,” said Bryant.

Bryant’s vision aligns perfectly with the W+K mission to create work that has meaning and impact, and she is eager to bring her unique perspective to the broader advertising community.

The Wieden+Kennedy Scholarship is more than just financial support; it’s a catalyst for change. The advertising industry, like many creative sectors, has often lacked diversity, and this scholarship is a step towards rectifying that imbalance. By supporting students from diverse backgrounds, the W+K Scholarship fosters an environment where different voices and perspectives can thrive.



Sydney Bryant, a 2024 Scholarship Recipient

Photo courtesy of Sydney Bryant

The significance of the W+K Scholarship extends beyond the university and its recipients. As these students go on to make their mark in the industry, they will inspire others and continue the cycle of diversity, inclusion and excellence.

In the coming years, the Wieden+Kennedy Scholarship will undoubtedly continue to open doors for talented students at N.C. A&T, providing them with

the resources and guidance they need to navigate the competitive world of advertising. It’s a scholarship that speaks to the heart of community development — helping individuals rise, while also elevating collective creativity and representation in industries that shape our world.

As the 2025 recipients embark on their journeys, we celebrate not only their achievements but the lasting impact

this scholarship will have on the advertising industry and the diverse voices that will help shape its future. Through partnerships like these, we continue to create a more innovative tomorrow.



Entrepreneurs of Crosby Hall

How JOMC Students Balance Books While Building Brands and Businesses on the Side

By Jada White

In the heart of Crosby Hall, a wave of entrepreneurial spirit is taking shape. Students like Haley Pender, Zion Mosley and Jada Tsion are redefining what it means to bet on yourself, balancing the demands of college life with the pursuit of passion-driven ventures.

Zion Mosley has been crafting a rhythm on her own. Becoming a DJ was a childhood dream, but it wasn't until her second year of college that she began taking her craft seriously. "Balancing school and DJing has been challenging. I always remind myself that school comes first, so I make sure to get

my homework done before gigs and use my calendar religiously to stay organized," Mosley said.

Her biggest lesson? Learning to say no. "It's easy to get caught up in every opportunity, but I realized I needed to pace myself to avoid burnout. I only take gigs that align with my schedule and mental well-being," Mosley said. Her time in Crosby Hall and the JOMC program has provided invaluable support. "Dr. Shannon taught me how to promote myself and execute public relations strategies, and

my JOMC family has always had my back," said Mosley.

For Haley Pender, entrepreneurship is more than a journey — it's a statement. Pender's venture, *The Five Two Society*, began as a bold leap into the unknown. "I hope my journey shows people that you don't have to be perfect to start something. The best advice I can give is to just start," she says.

At just 18 years old, Pender embraced the challenges of building a platform centered around Black culture and unsung heroes. "I started with zero followers, but within the first six months, I amassed over 50,000 on TikTok. It wasn't always linear; there were ups and downs, but I improved with every post," said Pender. Now, she hopes her platform will open doors to becoming a national correspondent, advocating for Black voices and reshaping narratives through meaningful conversations.

Then there's Jada Tsion, whose program, 1-800-BET-ON-YRSLF (B.O.Y.), is creating a space for empowerment, self-expression, and connection.



Photo courtesy of Haley Pender



Photo courtesy of Haley Pender

“B.O.Y. was created to build a dynamic campus community centered around self-love and authenticity,” Tsion shares with a smile, her passion for the organization radiating through her words. “We host self-love workshops, speaker series and aim to launch a mentorship initiative to inspire growth while fostering meaningful connections among students,” said Tsion. Her vision goes beyond just providing a platform for personal development; she sees B.O.Y. as a movement that pushes boundaries and encourages students to live unapologetically.

“The idea is to empower students to tap into their creativity and learn to love themselves in the process,” Tsion said. “When we learn to embrace our unique qualities, we unlock our true potential.”

Looking ahead, Tsion envisions expanding the organization while continuing to pursue her academic and professional dreams. As she prepares to transition into her master’s program at the University of Southern California, she

plans to expand B.O.Y. beyond the campus borders.

“My goal is to inspire others to embrace their individuality and chase their dreams, whether it’s through B.O.Y., my future career as a brand manager, or even my own journey in the fashion world,” she says with determination. Tsion believes in the power of connections and plans to establish an alumni network to keep students engaged long after graduation.

They are more than entrepreneurs — they are trailblazers, paving the way for others to embrace their passions without fear. Tsion’s journey is not just about building a brand; it’s about creating an inclusive space for students to build their self-esteem, trust their instincts and pursue their wildest dreams. “You don’t have to be perfect to start. Just start,” says Tsion, echoing the sentiment of her fellow student leaders. This advice resonates across campus,

motivating a new generation of students to take the leap and put their dreams into action.

Whether it’s launching an organization, starting a business, or simply learning to love themselves, the message is clear: trust in yourself, and the world will open up.

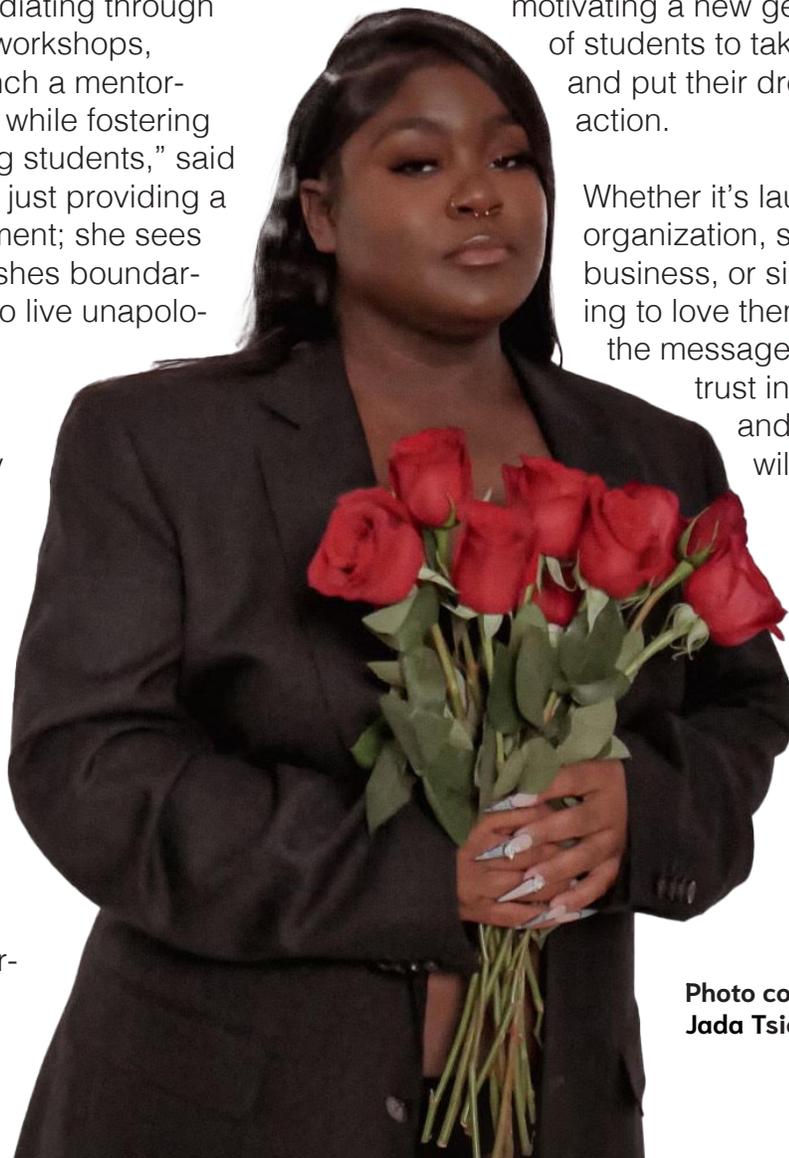


Photo courtesy of Jada Tsion

Voices of the Next Generation

Up and Coming Media Professionals Discuss Their Personal Journey Within JOMC Concentrations

By Kenaiya Fountain

As the next generation of media professionals continue to make an impact, students in the JOMC department at N.C. A&T are paving the way for the next generation of storytellers, visionaries and industry leaders.



Photo courtesy of Nyquese Brown

MASS MEDIA PRODUCTION

Among them is Nyquese Brown, a third-year mass media production student and marketing minor from Washington, N.C., whose passion for media extends beyond the classroom.

“I want to create opportunities for creatives to perfect their craft,” Brown said. “Especially for those in underserved communities who may not have the same access to resources.”

With aspirations of becoming a media and entertainment executive, Brown envisions launching a production company that empowers young creatives.

“We are the change-makers and the chain-breakers,” Brown said. “Implementing creativity into our communities is how we create lasting impact.”

Brown has already taken steps toward leadership by helping establish the JOMC Student Ambassadors Program, which connects students with professional development opportunities. His work exemplifies the department’s commitment to hands-on experience and innovation.

PUBLIC RELATIONS



Photo courtesy of Jada White

As a senior public relations student, Jada White has dedicated her time to mastering the art of storytelling and human connection. This fall, she will take her passion to the next level as

she heads to the University of Southern California to continue her journey.

“PR is about building genuine relationships and creating a network through human connection,” White said.

Through her studies and experiences in the media world, White has honed her ability to think on her feet, articulate messages under pressure and craft narratives that resonate with diverse audiences.

“PR has given me the tools to make meaningful change, both in my life and in the lives of those around me,” she said. People should feel seen, valued and confident in their stories.”

As White prepares for her next chapter at USC, her mission remains clear: to create spaces where authenticity thrives, storytelling heals and individuals feel empowered to bet on themselves.

MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM

For junior multimedia journalism student Dasia Garner, journalism is far more than a career path — it’s a calling rooted in purpose, truth and service to the people. “A journalist’s job is to inform,” Garner said. “We’re the bridge between information and the people who need it most. I learned early that we have the power of the pen — and that power matters,”



Photo courtesy of Dasia Garner

she said. “We don’t just write stories; we connect, relate and help people feel seen. If our work isn’t reaching the community, it’s dead.”

Garner’s ability to relate to her audience is what makes her stand out whether she’s anchoring, reporting or producing. She crafts each story with intention, always asking, “What do I want to know? What do my peers want to know?”

Her drive has led to incredible opportunities. She’s worked with ESPN and ACC Network in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill, covering major sports production. Now, she’s sharpening her skills as a producer at FOX8 WGHP.

“Being well-rounded is everything,” Garner said. “You have to be ready to write, report, shoot, edit, produce — all of it. The industry demands it.”

As a rising voice for the next generation of media professionals, Garner defines leadership as authenticity in action.

“If you’re destined to be a journalist, a changemaker, a truth-teller — own that,” she said. “Stand firm in who you are, tell the facts, connect with people and always be the voice for the voiceless.”

North Carolina A&T Hosts the Black Sportswriters Hall of Fame Induction

By Chris Warren

North Carolina A&T State University recently hosted the first Black Sportswriters Hall of Fame Awards ceremony in the Deese Ballroom. This event, intended to be held annually, honored three prominent black sports journalist in the country.

The inductees include William C. Rhoden, columnist for ESPN's *Andscape*, former New York Times sports columnist and NABJ Hall of Fame member; Claire Smith, the first woman in the writers' wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame, known for her work at The Hartford Courant, The New York Times and The Philadelphia Inquirer; and Mike Wilbon, a former columnist for The Washington Post and co-host of ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption*.

"This will be a great bridge from some of the legendary sports writing figures and the future of journalism," said Rob Parker, creator of the event. "I want students to acknowledge the greatness in the room and the people who came before them — but also learn that they can be in that spot and have a legendary career of their own," said Parker.

In partnership with the JOMC department, the event connected students, industry and community together. Journalism professor and NABJ advisor David Squires has been working with Parker for over two years to realize this vision. Students had the opportunity to connect with award recipients, network and gain professional and personal wisdom.

"This will be an enriching experience for the students who participate," said Squires in the University press release.

The event comes on the heels of the 33rd Annual NABJ Multimedia Short course. The two-day masterclass provides journalism students hands-on opportunities to learn and practice journalism with trained professionals.

Crosby students and alumni led the program, with alum Jalen Gilkey serving as Master of Ceremonies and JOMC students delivering the event welcome,

introduction and biographies of awardees. Students of Professor Squires' Advanced Reporting and Writing course prepared printed biographies while JOMC students spearheaded the video tribute presented during the ceremony.

Parker's decision to partner with A&T stems from his experience teaching a masterclass to JOMC students. Inspired by the participation and curiosity of students, Parker aimed to build on the masterclass experience by bringing other professional writers to encourage students.

"Even if you're doing TV or radio, {writing} is very important," Parker said. "It's your foundation."

The event was not just open to A&T students. Members of the Greensboro community were also invited, encouraged even, to attend. Attendees were able to speak with and take photos with the awardees afterwards. Frequently seeing awardees on *ESPN* and other networks as sports television presenters, community members were excited to connect with folks they've been watching on television for years.

"Sports and community go hand in hand," Parker said. "Community is ultra important. Nothing is on an island by itself. It's my hope that the community will embrace this event and feel proud."

The event not only honored three living legends, but highlighted and honored legends in the sports media industry who have passed. Larry Whiteside, Sam Lacy, Thom Greer, Ralph Wiley, Bryan Burwell and Wendell Smith; dubbed "The Original Six", were honored for their contributions and paving the way for others.

The ceremony was held in Deese Ballroom on Saturday, April 12, at 6 pm. With a little more than 100 people in attendance, event planners have deemed it a success and look forward to hosting the second-annual Black Sportswriters Hall of Fame here at North Carolina A&T State University.



Group photo from the Black Sportswriters Hall of Fame Induction, April 12, 2025.
Photo courtesy of Caroline Jones.



Photo courtesy of Caroline Jones



Photo courtesy of Caroline Jones

Crosby Kid Honors the Legacy of the A&T Four

Jyanne Guide's powerful speech at the 65th Sit-In Anniversary

By Renee Douglas

As the 65th Sit-In Anniversary Celebration unfolded at N.C. A&T, sophomore Jyanne Guide stood at the podium, reflecting on a legacy that has shaped not only her educational journey but her purpose as a changemaker. The theme, "Perseverance: The Power of an Ageless Evolution," resonated deeply with Guide, an Honors student from Baltimore, Maryland, majoring in Journalism and Mass Communication with a concentration in Public Relations and a minor in Political Science.

Guide is a proud Crosby Scholar and a Center of Academic Excellence Power of Four Research Fellow. She's passionate about social justice and is committed to making people's voices heard through storytelling. Her involvement on campus, from writing for *The A&T Register* and *Her Campus* to participating in advocacy initiatives, reflects the spirit of activism that the A&T Four embodied.

The 65th anniversary celebration took place on Friday, January 31, beginning with a breakfast and wreath-laying ceremony at the Alumni Foundation Event Center. The morning featured remarks from retired U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield and honored the courageous ac-

tions of the A&T Four: Maj. Gen. Joseph McNeil, Jibreel Khazan, and the late Franklin McCain Sr. and David Richmond Jr.

Later that morning, Guide was asked to speak at a student-centered program in Harrison Auditorium, which welcomed over 500 Guilford County high schoolers. Her speech, centered around perseverance and advocacy, was followed by a panel discussion moderated by another Crosby kid, Halima Opata.

"I tried to make sure that my speech touched on two key points," Guide said. "Perseverance means pushing forward despite adversity. And being a changemaker doesn't mean you have to be a perfect activist on paper, it means being willing to step up and do the work."

Guide believes the A&T Four's legacy lives on through today's students. "Their spirit of advocacy shows up in so many ways — whether you're running for SGA, writing in JOMC or starting something new, advocacy looks different for everyone, and that's the power in it," she said.



Photo courtesy of Jyanne Guide



Photo courtesy of Jyanne Guide

Her journey at A&T has been one of growth and discovery, much of which she attributes to the support and opportunities offered by the Crosby Hall community and the JOMC department.

“When I came to A&T, I immersed myself in everything the JOMC Department had to offer,” she said. “I found my place in the *Aggie News*, *The A&T Register*, and then eventually *Her Campus* as an editorial writer. Crosby gives you access to so many avenues in journalism, and it’s helped me develop skills that apply far beyond the classroom.”

Outside of writing, Guide has connected deeply with the Office of Leadership and Engagement, which has opened the door to a range of opportunities. Most recently, she was accepted into the prestigious Harvard Du Bois Scholar Program, a highly competitive opportunity that she describes as one of her proudest accomplishments.

Looking ahead, Guide sees herself continuing to use media as a tool for change. “In the next few years, I hope to be working in a space where I can use communications and digital platforms to advocate for my community,” she said. “I’m especially passionate about equity in education because A&T has shown me what’s possible when institutions invest in their students.”

Her advice to fellow Aggies? “Put yourself out there, even if you don’t think you check every box. If you’re passionate about something, go for it. That’s how you build a legacy, not just for yourself, but for the students coming after you.”

Jyanne Guide is a shining example of what it means to honor history while shaping the future, one story, one speech, and one opportunity at a time.



Photo by Ni’Asia Ali with the University Event Center

Crosby Alum Fulfills Dream of Covering Hometown News

Alexis Wainwright is a Washington, D.C. based reporter

By Mattie Moore



A

lexis Wainwright graduated from N.C. A&T in 2016 with the goal of returning home to Washington, D.C. as a reporter — today she is doing just that.

Wainwright majored in journalism and mass communication at A&T and her career as an Emmy award-winning journalist has taken her all over the country the past few years. Now, she is a reporter at WUSA9, the CBS affiliate.

“The ultimate goal has always been to come back home and be with the community I grew up in,” Wainwright said.

She began her career in State College, Pa. as a Multimedia Journalist.

“It was a small market but I really enjoyed it because I feel like that’s when reality really hit. I was able to make some mistakes because it was a smaller market but I learned from them very quickly,” Wainwright said. “I felt alone, I was away from my family, I worked holidays, I only made \$27,000 a year.”

After spending two years in Pennsylvania, she moved even further from home for a position in Little Rock, Ark. where she worked through the pandemic. Once that contract was up, she received a call from Dallas, a top-five market. “I was in Dallas for two years, had a great time,” she said. “As soon as people found out that I was an Aggie, they were sending me story ideas, inviting me to events asking me to emcee. I loved it completely.”

Photo courtesy of Alexis Wainwright

Wainwright credited her success to mentors she gained in Crosby Hall and being intentionally involved in the journalism department. As a student, she was sports editor for the *A&T Register*, the university's campus newspaper and hosted a sports news show called "*Aggie Sports Report*."

That on campus experience led her to local internships with TEM Video and Fox8 while working as a part-time employee in the sports department at the *Greensboro News and Record*.

"So I never had free time, but I still had a balance of work, school and social life," Wainwright said. "I feel like I never got any sleep but it was so worth it."

Wainwright firmly believes in giving back to her alma mater. "I wouldn't be where I'm at today if it wasn't for Crosby Hall and the mentors who took me under their wing," she said.

She takes every opportunity to pour back into current student journalists at A&T. This year, she volunteered to mentor for the National Association of Black Journalists Short Course.

"I feel like the students that have come after me are brighter, way more talented, so it's just like why not help them?," Wainwright said. "It's important to do, and I think that's why A&T and Aggie Pride is so strong — because we continue to do that."



Alexis Wainwright, Crosby alum and Emmy winning journalist. Photo courtesy of A. Wainwright.



Wainwright working as a student reporter at N.C. A&T. Photo courtes of A. Wainwright.

Bringing Crosby's Impact to the Community

Professor Arthea Perry showcases community efforts led by passionate Crosby students

By Michaela Teasley

From a young age, Professor Arthea Perry was encouraged to engage in media and to discuss world issues with her father. He fostered her curiosity by watching the news with her, supporting her in travels and arranging trips to the public library to research Black history. Through her childhood experiences, she learned how to connect with the community and the importance of learning about history. Unfortunately, she lost her father before she started high school, but she remembers many of the lessons he tried to instill in her.

As a college student, she had the opportunity to meet a variety of successful black creatives. "When I was in college, Dr. Maya Angelou often invited students to participate in discussions with

visiting artists, which allowed me to meet people like Elizabeth Catlett, Romare Bearden and Gordon Parks. I will never forget when Mr. Parks invited students to screen his film "Solomon Northup's Odyssey," the first autobiography of a free Black man, who in 1841 was kidnapped and sold into slavery, and the first version of "Twelve Years a Slave."

While she was an instructor at Winston-Salem State University, opportunities to attend conferences, like ACM Sigggraph, served as inspiration for her to continue her education.

"The first ACM conference I attended was in Anaheim, California. The exposure to cutting-edge technologies, interwoven with the arts



Professor Arthea Perry engaging in the community at a Triad Women's March in 2017. Photo courtesy of Bethany Chafin

and imagination coming from all over the world influenced my focus for graduate studies. One of the people I had the opportunity to meet at this conference was the comedian Sinbad, who also had a fascination with technology. He hosted about 17 kids and flew them from the D.C. area to Anaheim, California, taking care of their round-trip flights, hotel accommodations, food and conference fees. People like Sinbad inspired my thinking on what to do with money to uplift the community,” said Perry.

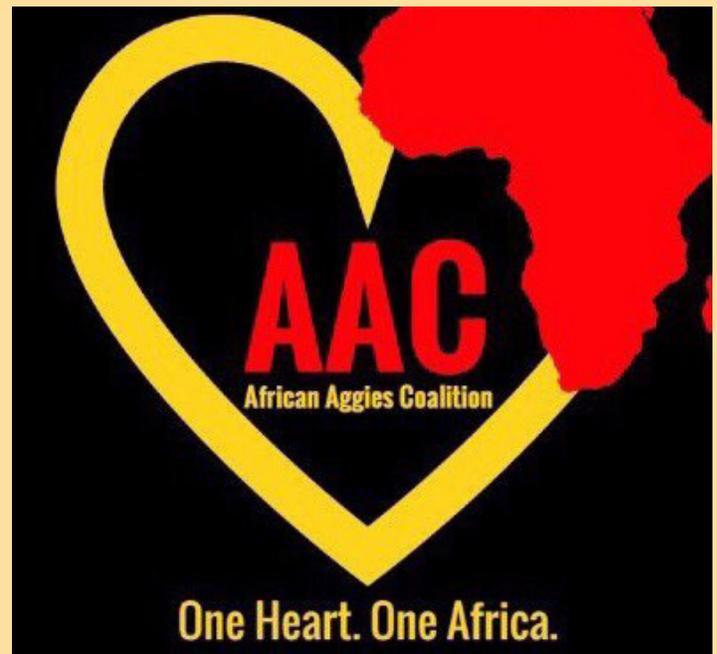
During her educational journey, Perry found herself at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). While attending SCAD, she continued her research on her family roots, and studies related to Black history and ancient cultures with a focus on the Yoruba.

Two of the many people she met and engaged with at SCAD, were Darlene Miller, artist and member of the Lenape (Lenni Lenape) tribe and Rana Bishara, a Palestinian artist. Both shared their experience with racism, their research and stories related to the survival of their people, never taught in western education.

“We shared deep conversations about the importance of learning one’s true history, racism and our love for family and community never taught in my educational experiences. During that time, SCAD recruited from at least twenty different countries. However, I will never forget my conversations with these two women, and the art they created with the passion to commemorate their people.”

A very notable influence on Perry’s life is educator and community activist, Dr. McCoy-Williams. Perry described how Dr. McCoy-Williams encouraged her to read, research and focus on how the research could be included in educational settings. During her tenure at N.C. A&T, Perry has taken her knowledge and community appreciation to further educate and inspire her students.

In 2009, Perry was the advisor for the *Association of African Students* (AAS), now *African Aggies Coalition*. She worked with N.C. A&T stu-



Logo for the Aggie African Coalition, the organization that Perry advised and developed.

dents across the diaspora and assisted with the development of the first Congo Week on campus. The purpose of Congo Week was to raise awareness about the devastating atrocities and conflicts taking place in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa, formerly known as Zaire. The organization also started African Beauty Day on campus, and invited everyone on campus to wear their African or indigenous clothing.

Looking back on this experience, Perry says, “It was refreshing to know that there were and still are young people with their eyes wide open.”

In her JOMC 259 class, some of the students participated in her *Aggies in Community* project. The purpose of this project is to feature stories about former Aggies on their community service initiatives.

Outside of her efforts with *Aggies in Community*, Perry engages with her own projects. As part of her Yoruba community, she is actively creating a book as part of a fundraiser. She is also working with members of *Common Cause*, a women’s empowerment organization to uplift women in the Congo.

“I hope to encourage my students to imagine, how they can uplift people to change their life,” said Perry.

Alumni Spotlight

From Crosby to Corporate

By Shantory Howze

For Donovan Dooley, 27, the transition from being a Crosby Kid to a communications professional has been a journey of growth, connection and opportunity. Originally from Tuscaloosa, Ala., Dooley graduated Summa Cum Laude from N.C. A&T in December 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Multimedia Journalism. Now a Communications Specialist at Ahold Delhaize USA, Dooley plays a key role in fostering a positive workplace culture, leading internal communications and ensuring employees feel included and engaged.

Reflecting on his time at Crosby, Dooley describes it as a pivotal chapter in his journey. He thrived in the tight-knit community of peers and professors, where he learned the value of adapting to different communication styles, working with diverse personalities and embracing new opportunities. Dooley was part of many organizations on campus, including the Beta Epsilon Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated. Dooley crossed in spring of 2019. His experiences taught him the importance of networking, stepping outside of his comfort zone, and having the confidence to go after what he wants.



Two professors in particular had a profound impact on his career. Professor David Squires challenged him with unique teaching methods that sharpened his skills in the communication field. Meanwhile, former Professor and Interim Chair Gail Wiggins played a significant role in his growth, providing invaluable one-on-one guidance from his freshman to senior year. Their mentorship pushed him to strive for excellence and embrace every learning opportunity.

Now in the workforce, Dooley credits Crosby for making his transition from college to career seamless. The department's emphasis on strong communication, adaptability, and professionalism helped him integrate smoothly into his role. His ability to tailor his communication style to fit different workplace environments is a skill he developed early at Crosby and now applies daily.

For current Crosby students, Dooley offers this advice: "Be a sponge — absorb as much as you can. Always strive to learn more and perfect your craft." He emphasizes the importance of "networking and connecting with alumni," as those relationships can "open doors and significantly impact career growth."

Above all, he encourages students to embrace innovation and never be afraid to do things differently than what's been done before. Dooley's story is a testament to the power of perseverance, community and purpose. From his early days at Crosby to his current success in the professional world, he continues to embody the values instilled in him throughout his journey.

As he looks ahead, his commitment to growth, connection and inspiring others remains unwavering. For students following in his footsteps, Donovan Dooley stands as a reminder that with the right mindset and support system, the possibilities are limitless.



Photos courtesy of Donovan Dooley

From The Field to the Front Page

How Sports Photography Adds Depth To Journalism

By Alicia Mckiver



Amya Clark poses on the sideline at Truist Stadium, capturing the action during a home game. Photo courtesy of Amya Clark.

In the blink of an eye, action unfolds. Sports photographers, out on the field, capture moments that are forever frozen in time. Sports photography enriches journalism in ways that words alone cannot - it goes far beyond the game itself.

Photography and sports journalism does more than capture moments. It deepens the narrative. It captures subjects in their rawest form; the triumph and defeat of athletes, the unwavering focus of coaches, and the silent exchanges between teammates and rivals. Each frame adds emotional depth that words alone can't always convey.

These sentiments are expressed through the photographer, in a captivating way — elements that may be lost in a written account. With the addition of this visual, sports journalism goes far beyond an account of events, it becomes

an experience. One that connects with readers long after the game is over. As we enter an advanced digital age, the role that photographers have in journalism becomes even more significant.

For aspiring athletes, the old saying “seeing is believing” resonates deeply as sports photography offers tangible evidence of their abilities. A single photograph can provide proof of their potential, skill, determination and hard work. A visual testament to their journey, allowing others to serve as witnesses.

To gain insight into the vital role sports photography plays in journalism, I spoke with student photographer Amya Clark. She began shooting sports in 2021 and joined the N.C. A&T SU football media team at the start of the 2024 season.

“One of the most notable ways in which sports

“**We** see the game, and even the players, in a completely **different** way compared to someone who reads about it later. We see their **faces**, their reactions and all. We’re able to **humanize** them.”

- Amya Clark

photographers are able to add depth to journalism, is our proximity to the action on the field,” said Clark. On the field, photographers have the liberty to move around and position themselves right where plays are happening. With the addition of telephotolenses, a whole new aspect is presented that would not have been otherwise possible.

For example, it is one thing to read about an iconic play, even to hear about it, but it’s something powerful about witnessing the details of it with your very own eyes. Just as it would be to experience the game live from the stands, versus on the field, merely feet away from the action.

From the perspective of the average fan in the stance, your view of the game is from above and far enough away for you to see the field at large. From the sideline, you witness the emotions on athletes’ faces, the dialogue between them and the calling of plays.

All of these emotions can be captured in a single frame, allowing those who view your photograph to feel as though they are right there, in that moment.

The power of a great photograph lies in its ability to convey all of these elements in a way that words alone cannot.

As sports photographers continue to tie this crucial visual element to written word and verbal report together, they are able to truly capture the complexities of sports, collectively leaving a mark on the sports journalism genre and how readers digest its media, in every form.



Preparing Future Journalists with Real-World Experience

By Zion Mosley

What started as a student-led club has now evolved into a full-fledged JOMC course, offering Crosby students at N.C. A&T hands-on experience in news production. *Aggie News*, once an extracurricular activity, now serves as a training ground for aspiring journalists, preparing them for the fast-paced world of media.

The transition from club to course reflects the growing demand for practical learning opportunities in journalism. Students enrolled in *Aggie News* get to experience the full news cycle — from pitching stories and conducting interviews to writing, editing, and publishing content across various platforms. The course mirrors a real newsroom environment, equipping students with essential skills in reporting, multimedia production and social media management.

For students, the course is more than just an academic requirement—it's a stepping stone into the industry

Beyond the classroom, *Aggie News* has also built a presence

on social media, keeping the campus community informed on current events, student life and pressing issues. The platform not only serves as a learning tool but also as a trusted source of news for the A&T community.

Daija Owens, a junior and 1st Assistant Director, describes her experience with *Aggie News* as both informative and foundational. "It's very good to have a hands-on example of what it's like to actually work in a production," Owens said.

"Getting the opportunity to figure out exactly what I want to do — whether it's audio, gaffing, pre-production or post-production — has been a great experience. This course sets the foundation."

With the success of *Aggie News* as a course, students and faculty hope to see it continue evolving, possibly expanding its reach to include partnerships with local media outlets. As journalism continues to change, *Aggie News* remains committed to ensuring students are prepared to nav-

igate the ever-evolving media landscape.

Trinity Rogers, a senior producer and reporter, credits the program with helping her find her niche in journalism.

"Since freshman year, *Aggie News* has really helped me figure out what my niche is, which is broadcast journalism," Rogers said. "It's helped me realize what I want to do in the news studio and how my purpose can be fulfilled both here at A&T and beyond."



With students like Rogers and Owens finding their voice and purpose through *Aggie News*, the program continues to serve as a launchpad for the next generation of journalists, equipping them with the skills and confidence to thrive in the industry.

For those interested in a career in media, *Aggie News* is proving to be more than just a class — it's a launchpad for future journalists.



Photo courtesy of Siobhan Riley.



Photo courtesy of Tyler Norman.



Photo courtesy of Aggie News.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

What Nicole Neal Does to Expand Her Portfolio

By Ni'Asia Ali



Photo courtesy of Nicole Neal

Many believe going to class and obtaining your degree is all you need to propel you into the creative industry, but Nicole Neal begs to differ. Neal is a junior JOMC student with a concentration in Mass Media Production at N.C A&T.

Neal aspires to be a cinematographer in the film industry. She finds joy in bringing ideas to life through visual storytelling. However, when Neal first arrived on campus she was more focused on the traditional journalism route with writing stories, keeping her love for filmmaking in the back of her mind.

As a freshman, she began exploring all aspects of journalism, determined to get her foot in the door and build more skills under her belt.

During her sophomore year, Neal was an active contributor to the various Crosby organizations: from being theSCENE editor for *The A&T Register*, Technical Director for *Aggie News*, Vice President of the student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalist, and the Communications and Content Chair for *Aggie Filmmakers*.

She is also involved outside the department, serving as a Marketing Intern for the University Event Center, videographer and photographer for A&T's Track & Field team, and a Camera Operator/Sideline Producer for Technical Event Management, as well as having a heavy presence on social media.

Even while gaining experience in various areas, Neal is led back to her passion in filmmaking every time.

Although N.C. A&T doesn't house a film program, the Mass Media Production concentration in JOMC allows students to gain hands-on experience using software in courses such as Non-Linear Video Editing, Intro to Video Production, Scriptwriting, and more.

"Class can only teach you so much," Neal said. "Getting hands-on experience will always be better than just listening about doing it."

Neal explains that going into a creative profession requires you to showcase what you can do, not just what you know, so having tangible items in a portfolio is more beneficial than your degree alone. While it may be simpler to join organizations which will give you these experiences, not all colleges may offer those organizations or it may not work for you personally.

“Make your own spaces,” Neal said. “If you find yourself wanting to do something but you can not find a space to do it, just do it!”

In her spare time, Neal has dedicated herself to brainstorming and executing personal projects, developing her skills from pre-production to post-production. In the spring of 2024, she produced a short film titled “*Governed Love*,” an enemies to lovers short film, which was shown at *The Eddy’s*, the *Aggie Filmmakers* awards ceremony. In the fall of 2024, Neal also produced “*Beneath the Surface*,” a touching and emotional film bringing awareness to toxic relationships. In between producing her short films, she has also created short concept videos for her media page, *RootedNFrames*.

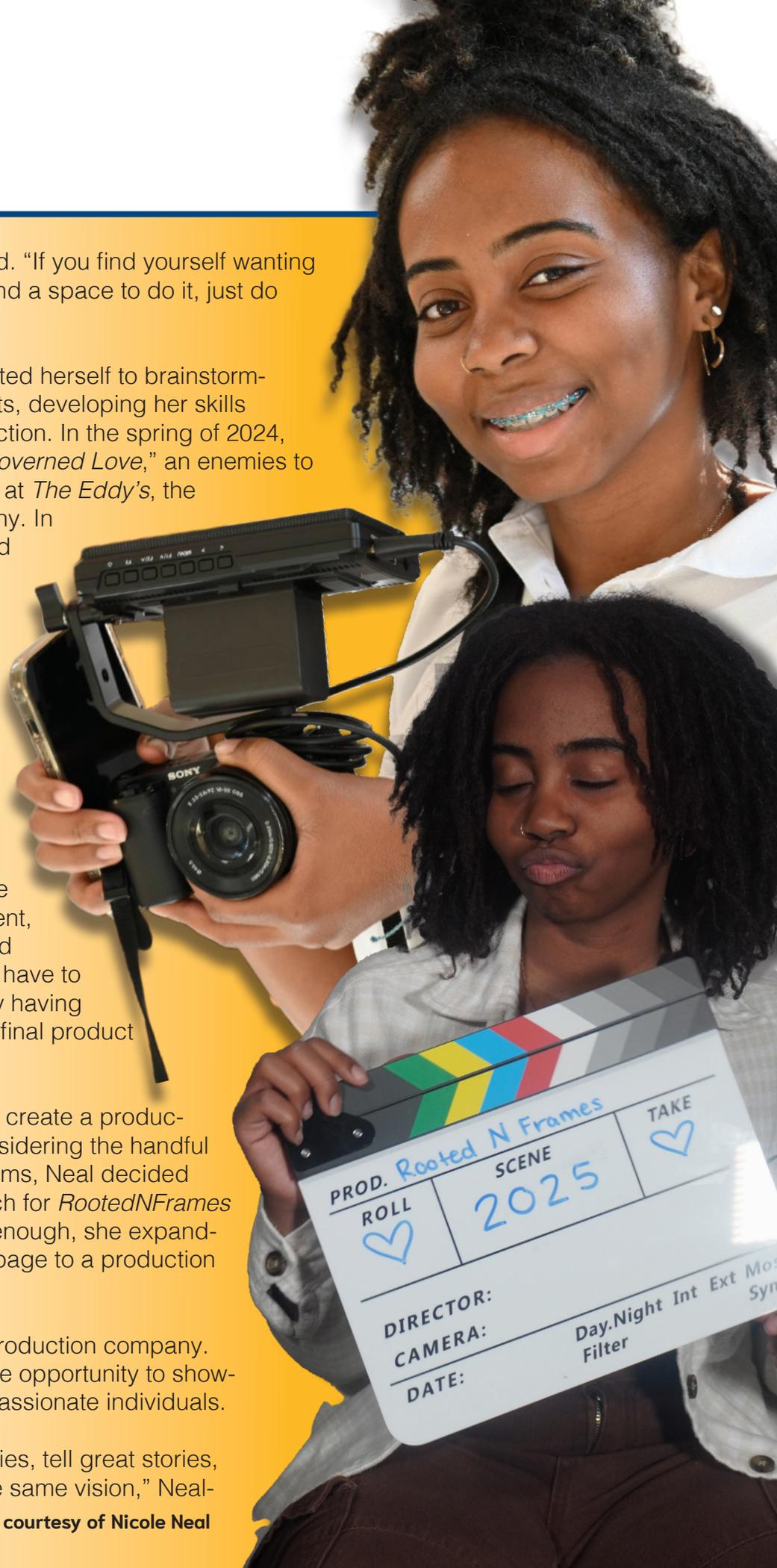
Neal learned a lot through this process, “I had to do everything and it was very overwhelming. I learned that you need to make sure you double check all your equipment, you have to be way more organized with footage and paperwork, and I have to sometimes slow down and be okay having to do things over to make sure the final product is good,” said Neal.

After seeing her friend from UNCG create a production company with friends and considering the handful of work it involves when creating films, Neal decided she wanted to create more outreach for *RootedNFrames* by recruiting her own team. Soon enough, she expanded *RootedNFrames* from a media page to a production company.

RootedNFrames is a student-led production company. The purpose is to give everyone the opportunity to showcase their film ideas with equally passionate individuals.

“I hope to gain long-lasting memories, tell great stories, and do it with people who have the same vision,” Neal said.

Photo courtesy of Nicole Neal



Bridging the Gap

How JOMC 498 Prepares Students for the Workforce

By Makayla Bentley

The internship course called JOMC 498, led by Dr. Kim Smith, is revolutionizing how students prepare for the workforce. Unlike traditional classes that focus primarily on hard skills like writing, editing, and multimedia production, JOMC 498 emphasizes the development of soft skills like critical thinking, collaboration, time management, and problem-solving. These tools are crucial for career success.

The inspiration behind JOMC 498 was simple: many students graduate with technical expertise but lack the real-world experience of working in a team, managing deadlines, and solving problems on the fly. Smith recognized this gap and designed JOMC 498 to provide students with hands-on opportunities to develop these vital skills.

“You go through four years of education, and you may get a job, but you don’t get any real hands-on experience solving problems and how to work with others, I was just trying to fill a gap,” Smith explained. By incorporating soft skills into the curriculum, the course helps students become well-rounded professionals who are better equipped to handle workplace challenges.

Soft skills are often overlooked in traditional coursework, but they can make the difference between a good employee and a great one. JOMC 498 introduces students to several key strategies, including the “Five Whys” technique and the “Not-To-Do List,” which have had a profound impact on students’ professional and personal lives.

The Five Whys process encourages students to dig deeper into problems by repeatedly asking “why” until they reach the root cause. “That really set people off because they started reflecting on their own. Once you have a root cause of a problem, then you can talk about ways to solve that problem,” Dr. Smith noted.



Dr. Kim Smith

Another highly effective strategy is the Not-To-Do List. Many students struggle with time management because they overcommit or waste time on non-essential tasks. By identifying five or six things they should avoid—such as overpromising, procrastinating, or spending too much time on social media, students learn how to maximize their productivity.

To measure the effectiveness of the course, Dr. Smith conducted a sentiment analysis, reviewing essays from students about their learning experiences. The results were overwhelmingly positive, with an 85 percent success rate.

By connecting students with alumni mentors, the program extends beyond the classroom, providing networking opportunities and career guidance.

“The mentors are just as eager to help students as the students are to meet with them,” Dr. Smith explained. “There’s something special about JOMC alumni, I can’t explain it. They want people that are coming after them.”

STUDENT STORIES



BRIANNA WESLEY

As a senior majoring in Public Relations, Brianna Wesley has used JOMC 498 to sharpen her organization, scheduling, and planning skills, preparing her for life beyond college. She treats her internship as a job, applying the tools from Dr. Kim's course to stay accountable and professional. With increased responsibilities due to the absence of a communications director, Brianna has strengthened her time management, reliability, and problem-solving skills. She applies these lessons to her personal life, ensuring she remains proactive and dependable in all areas. Her experience highlights the importance of accountability, preparation, and continuous growth in professional settings.

KENAIYA FOUNTAIN

Kenaiya Fountain, a third-year senior double majoring in Psychology and Public Relations, has gained valuable skills through JOMC 498. By using the Five Whys and a Not-To-Do List, she improved time management, eliminated distractions, and prioritized tasks efficiently. Through her internship at a church, she developed interpersonal communication, empathy, and patience, learning when to speak and when to listen. Fountain advises future students to embrace feedback, build strong relationships with colleagues, and stay focused on career growth. She believes success requires both skill and strong character, encouraging students to seize opportunities and remain professional in all situations.



Aggie Media Group: Elevating Local & Student Business

Connecting Brands, Building Voices –Strengthening North Carolina A&T’s Business Community Through Strategic Public Relations

By Stacey Jeffres

Imagine a place where students aren’t just learning about public relations and media — they’re leading the charge. That’s the reality of Aggie Media Group (AMG), at North Carolina A&T State University’s powerhouse of student-driven communication. Since 2012, AMG has been more than just an organization; it’s been a launchpad for future PR professionals, marketers, and multimedia journalists. Through cutting-edge campaigns and real-world collaborations, AMG connects the campus and local businesses with their audiences, proving that student-led initiatives can make a professional impact.

A Professional PR Firm Run by Students

What sets AMG apart is its structured approach, mirroring that of a professional public relations firm. The organization is divided into specialized teams, each playing a crucial role in delivering high-quality work.

Firm Directors oversee operations, ensuring that every campaign aligns with AMG’s vision and objectives. The Outreach Team builds relationships with local businesses and organizations, securing partnerships and collaboration opportunities. The Creative Team handles content creation, including graphic design, photography, videography, and social media visuals.

The Branding Team focuses on developing brand identities and maintaining consistency in messaging across all platforms. Account Executives serve as the link between clients and AMG, managing communications and expectations.



The outreach team at AMG, captured together in this shot. Photo by the AMG Instagram crew.

AMG Interns gain foundational experience by assisting with various projects, making AMG a space for both learning and leadership development.

Supporting Local and Student-Led Businesses

AMG has built a reputation for elevating brands through strategic marketing, public relations efforts, and brand development. The organization has worked with a variety of clients, including nonprofit organizations, student entrepreneurs, and Greensboro businesses.

One of its notable partnerships is with the Rosa Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting families and children in need. AMG has played a key role in helping the foundation with event promotion, marketing campaigns, and community engagement efforts.



Meet the talented members of AMG, showcasing the creativity and collaboration of all teams—from design to marketing and production. Photo by the AMG Instagram crew.

Another major collaboration is with The BAM Group, a student-led initiative focused on entertainment, event production, and creative media. AMG has provided branding support, increasing their visibility and impact on campus.

HBCU Legaseed, a business dedicated to preserving and celebrating the legacy of HBCUs, has also benefited from AMG's expertise in digital marketing and promotional strategies. Other collaborations include Dreamer's Land Production, a student-run media and production company, and H.E.A.D Designs, a creative brand specializing in art and design.

AMG's ability to offer real solutions to these businesses demonstrates its influence and effectiveness as a student-led PR powerhouse.

Providing Hands-On Experience for Future Professionals

For students looking to gain experience in public relations, marketing, and media, AMG serves as the perfect training ground. Members develop practical skills in managing social media campaigns, writing press releases, organizing promotional events, and conducting media outreach.

"Being in AMG has been such a great way to

enhance my skills in PR, and this group is a great way to gain hands-on experience in public relations!" says Michaela Teasley, an account firm account supervisor.

By working directly with clients, students build professional portfolios before they graduate, giving them a competitive edge in the job market. AMG's commitment to staying ahead of industry trends ensures that members are equipped with the latest strategies in digital marketing and communications.

A Legacy of Innovation and Growth

As AMG continues to expand, its mission remains focused on fostering creativity, communication, and collaboration. The organization is constantly exploring new opportunities for growth, whether through new partnerships, expanded services, or innovative media strategies.

For students interested in developing industry-level skills and for businesses in need of expert-level communication support, AMG offers the perfect blend of education and professional experience. By bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world, AMG continues to redefine the future of media, one campaign at a time.

From Crosby Kid to Director of A&T Campus Enterprise

Jamal Featherstone shares career success and opportunities



Photo courtesy of Jamal Featherstone

Crosby alum Jamal Featherstone's journey in the communications field is a testament to hard work, adaptability and a passion for storytelling. Now serving as the Director of Marketing & Communications and University Program Manager II at N.C. A&T, Featherstone's career began with a deep interest in visual media.

Building the Foundation at NCAT

Featherstone earned his Bachelor's degree in Visual Media and Graphic Design from A&T in 2013. Faced with the challenge of finding a job, he returned in 2016 to pursue a Master's in Technology Management with a focus on Graphic Communications. During this time, he volunteered with Campus Enterprises, honing his marketing skills by designing flyers and learning the ins and outs of strategic communication. "Volunteering allowed me to apply my skills in

By Brianna Wesley

real-world scenarios and understand the impact of effective messaging," he said.

Climbing the Ladder in Communications

His dedication and talent didn't go unnoticed. After a year of volunteering for free, he was offered a full-time position as a graphic designer. From there, he advanced to Public Communications Specialist, taking on speaking engagements under the marketing director. His leadership skills became evident, and after serving as Interim Director, he officially secured the role. "Each step felt like a natural progression, building upon the experiences and relationships I had cultivated," Featherstone said.

Leading with Strategy and Innovation

Featherstone believes communication is at the heart of every organization's success. "Without communication, how will people know the services they need? If there is no communication, your train doesn't move," he explains. His approach to developing a communications strategy involves gathering feedback from directors, identifying key messages and creating targeted campaigns to engage the university community.

One of his most pivotal career moments was organizing student events. Initially a daunting task, these experiences have now become some of his proudest achievements. "Seeing the impact of our events on students' lives is incredibly rewarding," he said.

Overcoming Challenges and Looking Ahead

Balancing external and internal messaging comes with its challenges, especially when people assume communication happens instantly. To manage expectations, Featherstone implemented a project request form. “The biggest challenge is that everyone thinks communication happens in a snap — it takes time,” he said.

Staying ahead of industry trends is crucial in his role. He immerses himself in articles, follows top universities and attends conferences. “Understanding the evolving landscape ensures our strategies remain effective and relevant,” he said.

For aspiring communicators, Featherstone stresses the importance of resilience. “Don’t get upset when receiving feedback — ask questions to understand different brand messages,” he advised.

When he’s not working, he unwinds by disconnecting from technology and spending time with family and friends. “In this field, something is always happening; it’s essential to recharge,” he concluded.

From designing flyers to leading university-wide communications, Jamal Featherstone’s journey is proof that dedication and passion can turn any opportunity into a career-defining moment.



Photo courtesy of Jamal Featherstone

Rising to the Top and Earning MADE Finalist Spot

Early Graduation, Big Dreams: How Ni'Asia Ali's Determination Led to National Recognition

By Jekiah Keith-Smith

Ni'Asia Ali, an ambitious student in the JOMC Department at N.C. A&T, was named a finalist for the ANA Educational Foundation's Marketing and Advertising Education (MADE) program, which is a reflection of her resilience and dedication.

"This recognition is a testament of all the hard work and searching I put forth. I felt like I hadn't accomplished enough my first year, and since I'm graduating early, that worried me. I started applying to every opportunity I could find, and that's how I came across the MADE program." Ali said.

After her interview, the excitement of being selected as a MADE finalist set in. The program is perfect for JOMC students because it not only provides mentorship but it also offers access to a wide network of industry professionals to help students build their careers.

Ali's decision to apply for the MADE program was driven by her desire to obtain real world experience and connect with communications professionals.

"I am very aware that it is both what and who you know," she said. "Applying would guarantee I not only have people in my corner in the industry, but also be able to work on my skills in marketing and advertising."

Her passion for advertising led her to explore a career in a creative direction. With a mentor in the art field, she's receiving guidance tailored to her interests. "I am very lucky that I was given an Art Director for my mentor and he has provided me a list of resources, lots of advice, and his

support in my pursuit. Since he is also a recent graduate from college and already landed a job with an esteemed advertising agency, I find his wisdom both reliable and inspiring," Ali said.

While she wasn't aware at the start of the partnership between the JOMC department and the ANA Educational Foundation, she now sees how it played a role in her journey.

"Since my LinkedIn is predominantly A&T peers and staff, it makes sense why I discovered this



program." she said. She also credited Dr. Maria Zhang for her support. "Despite the tight deadline, Dr. Zhang quickly helped with a recommendation letter that strengthened her application," Ali said.



Photo courtesy of Ni'Asia Ali

“I’m incredibly grateful to Dr. Maria. Her letter of support was instrumental in helping me become a finalist.”

Ali also stressed the importance of prioritizing preparation for real world industry related interview questions.

“The advice I would give is to know as much as you can about the program and also the industry. During the interview, there was a lot of questions with marketing scenarios and what-ifs, so if you’re doing practice questions make sure to touch base with those. On the other hand, always be authentic and have faith,” Ali said.

As a MADE finalist, Ali is excited to explore internship opportunities available exclusively through the program. But above all, the mentorship experience is what excites her most.

“Having a mentor in my field has been so valuable. Navigating this industry can be overwhelming, and knowing I have that support makes a world of difference,” Ali said.

Her dedication to supporting others is already evident. As a mentor to two Crosby freshmen, she’s passionate about helping others navigate their journeys.

“I plan to give back to the JOMC community by aiding others in my same predicament. I am already a mentor to two Crosby freshman, but I would love to continue in the future. I plan to be successful in whatever path that I end up going through and would love to come back and give advice to those who may feel lost, like I have at times,” Ali said.

With her determination and a heart for mentorship, Ni’Asia Ali is reminder of the rewards that come with hard work and perseverance. She is an inspiration to all Crosby Kids. As she moves forward, she is committed to uplifting and inspiring others in the JOMC community.

33rd NABJ Short Course

A Journalism Training That Transforms the Lives of Journalists

Story By Dasia Garner
Design By Jada Webb

On March 12, the 33rd NABJ Short Course took place at N.C. A&T. Students from across the country gathered to gain real-world journalism experience, Florida A&M, Syracuse, Hampton University, North Carolina A&T and Howard University in attendance. The event paired students with professionals from renowned companies like CNN, NBC, and ABC, giving them hands-on exposure to the fast-paced environment of a newsroom alongside mentorship. The three-day workshop had one goal: to produce a one-hour broadcast.

The experience began with a day-long workshop, equipping participants with essential tools for covering hard news, understanding ethics, making tough decisions, and — perhaps most importantly — learning how to pivot under pressure. In journalism, timing is everything, and the short course vividly showcased the urgency of the industry. The workshop was structured like a real newsroom: reporters pitched stories and

paired with mentors who also acted as photographers, and producers selected which stories would be included in the show. The fast-paced atmosphere meant that everyone had only 6-7 hours to get the job done. Reporters had strict deadlines to submit their work, giving producers the time they needed to finalize the show.

Dasia Garner, a junior mass communication student, was chosen as the Executive Producer for the first 30 minutes of the broadcast. “With this responsibility, I got to choose the order of the show, decide how we’d tease it, and control the overall content viewers would see,” she shared. The producers worked tirelessly, crafting teases and writing small packages to layer the show’s appearance.

This year, for the first time, the digital side of journalism was incorporated, including the production of a podcast that tied into what participants

Photo courtesy of Anthony Wilson



learned in the Short Course. Caulin Avery, a senior mass communication student said, “Working on the digital side has exposed me to a part of journalism that I never thought of. This has really expanded my journalistic skills.”

The workshop helped everyone prepare for their specific roles. Students auditioned to be the anchors for the broadcast, and after an intense selection process, five students were chosen: Dasia Garner, Kennedy Chambers, Kayla Hare, and Mackenzie Williams. This year also marked the first time meteorologists were included in the short course. Inspired by former NABJ participant Grant Coleman, who advocated for the inclusion of weather anchors, Ethan Pilson and Davion Huggins took on the role of meteorologists. Ethan Pilson, a senior meteorology student noted, “The short course motivated me to start a digital platform that produces weather content. I post the weekly forecast for students in the Greensboro area.”

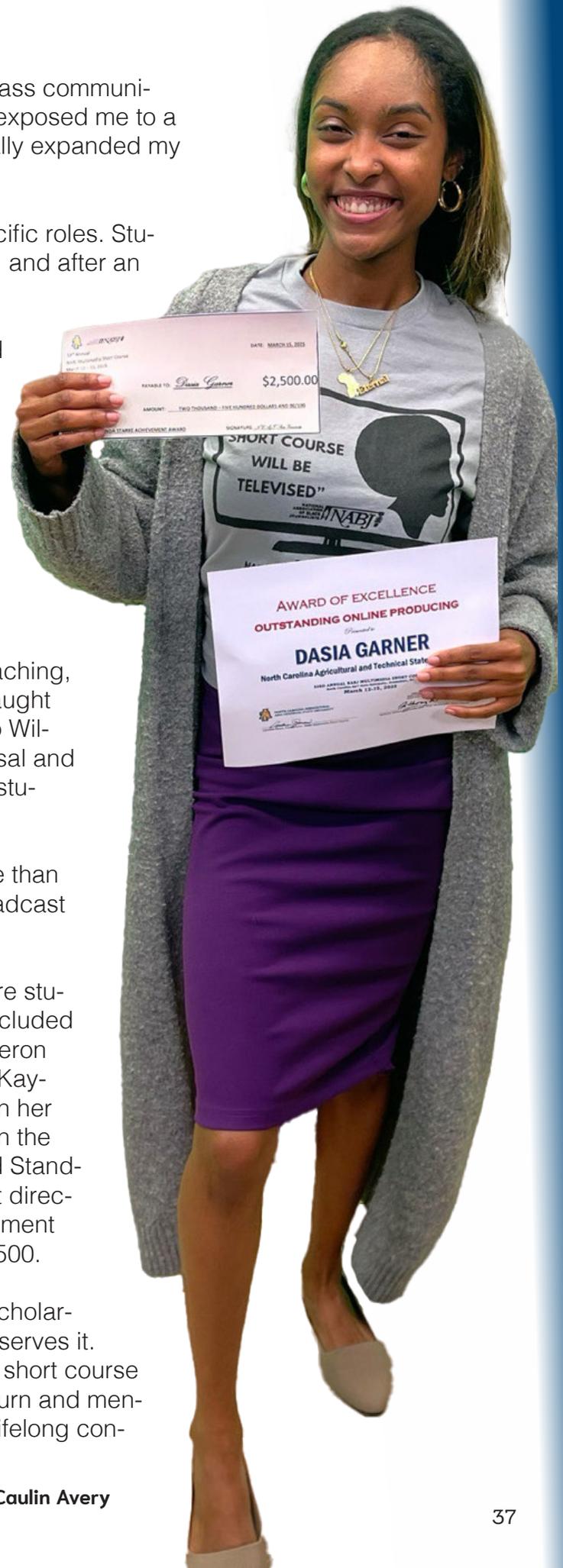
For the first time, participants also received voice coaching, where they worked one-on-one with a coach who taught breathing techniques and proper enunciation. Anzio Williams, the experienced Vice President of NBCUniversal and an N.C. A&T alum, was present to watch and advise students.

The event concluded with a career fair featuring more than five different news companies, followed by a live broadcast on Saturday morning.

The workshop ended with an awards ceremony, where students were recognized for their hard work. Awards included Best Producer, which went to Dasia Garner and Cameron Glymph, and Best Reporter, awarded to Kayla Hare. Kayla, a senior mass communication student, reflected on her experience: “This was my second time participating in the short course, and winning the Best Photographer and Stand-Up Award reassured me that I am headed in the right direction.” The top scholarship, the Wanda Starke Achievement Award, was given to Dasia Garner, who received \$2,500.

Before receiving the award, she wrote, “I do want a scholarship, but I believe that it should go to the one who deserves it. Who would’ve known that person would be me?” The short course not only allowed Aggies and NABJ participants to return and mentor aspiring journalists, but it also helped them build lifelong connections. Most importantly, it reaffirmed that **YOU TOO HAVE A VOICE.**

Photo courtesy of Caulin Avery



NOT *the* NEWSROOM?

what else can your JOMC degree do?

By Jayden Adams

Dominique Carter never intended to be in front of a camera or chasing breaking news. Though she entered the Journalism and Mass Communication Program at North Carolina A&T State University with an interest in media, she always felt more drawn to the work happening behind the scenes and in the clinical field.

Carter has worked as a massage therapist for 23 years, but after an arm injury that left her out of work for a few weeks, it made her question the longevity of her career and prompted her to consider her options. After a 20-year hiatus, she returned to school not out of a desire to report the news, but to finish what she started. “My main goal was just to have something on the backburner,” she said. “I needed a backup plan.

Technology had evolved drastically since her first go at higher education, and adjusting was tough. She credits the community she found at A&T especially in the JOMC department for helping her through. “They really helped build my confidence. It felt like a family.”

That support, paired with the skills she developed, opened new doors. Carter was introduced to teaching through substitute work, just to see if

it might be a fit. “I ended up loving it,” she said. “Every major is in teaching. Journalism is everywhere, especially in education, from the *Teacher of the Year* segments, to principal highlights, to setting goals for the school year. All of it involves communication”

Carter now brings that journalistic mindset into the classroom, where she engages students with the same storytelling tools she learned in college. At the same time, her massage therapy practice has benefited from her communications background, too. “JOMC gave me a foundation for multiple career fields. It’s helped with my business being creative, writing, researching, and knowing how to connect with people.”

For Carter, both careers, education and massage therapy, are rooted in something deeper than a job title. They’re about listening, supporting others, and building trust. Her story is a reminder that journalism doesn’t only live in a newsroom. It lives in classrooms, wellness spaces, and anywhere stories need to be shared and understood.

“Journalism is everywhere,” Carter said. “You might not take the traditional path, but the skills stay with you and they open doors you never even imagined.”



Photo courtesy of Dominique Carter

Outstanding Crosby Student: Scores Big on Her Journey to Sports Journalism

By Alexandra Maynor

At just 20 years old, Nina Monsanto is already proving that age is no barrier to success in the world of journalism. A junior at North Carolina A&T State University, Monsanto is majoring in Journalism and Mass Communication, and she's already carving out a reputation for herself in the competitive world of sports reporting. From reporting on high-energy football and basketball games to serving as president of the Associated Press Sports Editors chapter at her university, Monsanto's talent and dedication to journalism are undeniable.

Monsanto's ability to capture the excitement and nuances of live sporting events reflects not only her journalistic skills but also her deep understanding and appreciation of the sports she covers. "I've been able to become a better writer through true guidance and professors who have "kept it real" instead of sugar coating feedback on my writing. I know they are molding me into the best writer I could possibly be," adds Monsanto.

"The journalism department has equipped me to become a successful sports journalist by providing me with many opportunities, especially Mr. Squires, and just believing in me to reach all of my goals."

As the president of the APSE, Monsanto is honing her leadership skills while ensuring that student voices



Photo courtesy of Nina Monsanto



Photo courtesy of Nina Monsanto

are heard and represented in the world of sports media. Her role allows her to work closely with both seasoned journalists and her peers, creating a vibrant community of up-and-coming sports reporters.

After graduation, Monsanto hopes to either work as a sports broadcaster or commentator for any NBA team. "That's my dream. I am also open to doing anything in the sports marketing realm," said Monsanto.

As Monsanto continues to excel both on and off the field, there's no doubt that her impact on sports journalism is just beginning to unfold.

Her dedication to accuracy and depth makes her a trusted voice in the realm of sports reporting.

Maleia Bracone: Redefining Strength and Style

From Courtside to Headlines: A Journalist with Game

By Kyle Duke

Journalist and Anderson, S.C., native Maleia Bracone has seamlessly balanced her passion for storytelling with her dedication to athletics. Her journey from local basketball courts to collegiate arenas is a testament to her resilience and passion.

Bracone was immersed in basketball from a young age. She was influenced by her parents, Sonya and Michael Bracone, who were both former players. Her father coached her when she was just five, igniting a lifelong love for the game. She began in a YMCA Rec League and by 12 she was playing with an AAU team.

At T.L. Hanna High School, Maleia's talent flourished. She earned All-State honors three times and All-Region honors four times. Her junior year saw her averaging 19 points, 6.7 rebounds, and 4.5 steals per game, which led to her being named Region 1 5A Player of the Year. She surpassed 1,000 career points as a junior and became T.L. Hanna's all-time leading scorer with 1,949 points.

Maleia's dedication extended beyond the court. She was a star student, community volunteer and served as the 2020 senior class president. Her commitment to academics and leadership was evident through her involvement in the National Honor Society and Beta Club.

Starting her college basketball journey at Presbyterian College, Maleia made an immediate impact, leading the team in assists and steals and earning Big South Freshman of the Week.

Photo courtesy of
Kevin L. Dorsey

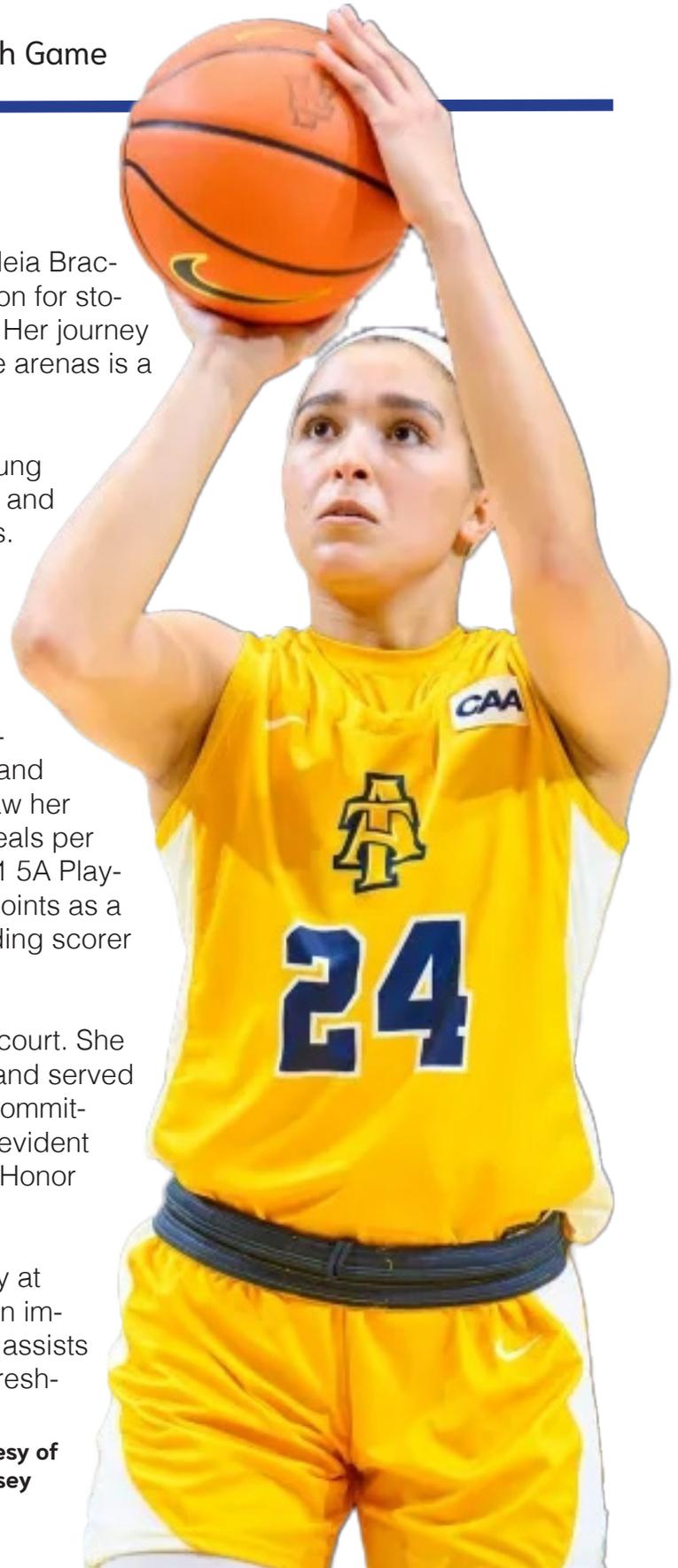




Photo courtesy of Kevin L. Dorsey

Seeking a better fit for her academic and athletic aspirations, she transferred to N.C. A&T in April 2022. Here, she led the team in scoring, assists and steals during the 2022-23 season, earning third-team All-CAA honors and a spot on the CAA All-Defensive Team.

Majoring in journalism, Maleia plans to pursue a professional basketball career before entering the TV field as a sports reporter. Her ability to balance rigorous academics with athletic commitments showcases her dedication and time-management skills.

Reflecting on her journey, Maleia shared on Instagram, “Two years ago, I made the decision to embark on this path of becoming an Aggie. Not fully aware of the transformation that awaited me.”

As a Journalism and Mass Communication major, she has actively contributed to the university’s sports communications office, covering

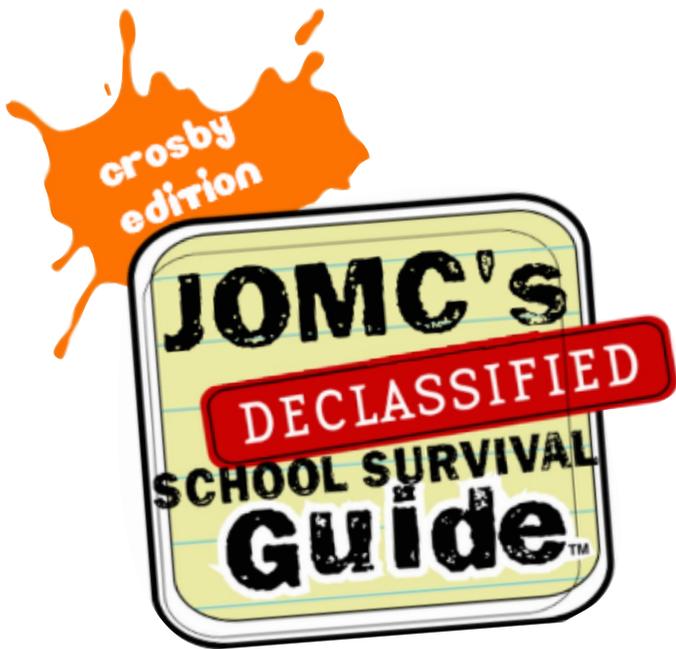
high-profile events such as men’s basketball and football games. Bracone’s involvement in these broadcasts not only fulfills her practicum requirements but also showcases her dedication to mastering the craft of sports journalism.

When it comes to her academic experiences, Bracone shared, “The journalism department was an open door for me, and I will use it during and after my basketball career.” One of her most cherished experiences was covering the men’s basketball games, which resonated with her on a personal level due to her intimate knowledge of the sport.

This connection allowed her to bring a unique perspective to her reporting, blending her athletic insight with journalistic skills. Bracone’s dual role as a student-athlete and aspiring sports reporter exemplifies the true spirit of a student-athlete, balancing the demands of collegiate athletics with academic and professional aspirations.

A JOMC Survival Guide To Scholarships and Internships

By Amanda Forrest



“When I first transferred to A&T, it was definitely a struggle. I had no idea where to start when it came to finding internships and scholarships, and it felt overwhelming trying to navigate it all on my own,” Tsion said. “I’ve built connections, learned where to look, and gained confidence in putting myself out there.”

Haley Pender, a multimedia junior, shares her tips on being a successful Crosby student.



Photo courtesy of Haley Pender

It’s no secret that college isn’t cheap and the price of school leaves students dizzy. Crosby Hall has been graced by trailblazing budding media and communications professionals, each with a journey full of ups and downs.

Opportunities like scholarships and internships often feel like daunting tasks. JOMC students are at times overlooked or simply lack the resources that provide access to scholarships, fellowships, and internships.

Students in concentrations such as public relations and multimedia have succeeded in securing internships and scholarships and have tips from students who don’t know where to start. Jada Tsion, a senior graduating in Spring 2025 with a concentration in public relations, speaks about her experience.

“I guess you could say how difficult it gets depends on your perspective as a student but ultimately for me, I feel like it can be very difficult depending on how you spent the year as a student beforehand,” Pender says.

“Faculty members such as Dr. Marshall and Mr. Squires are constantly sending opportunities

via email and through LinkedIn and Handshake. I also did a lot of research myself via LinkedIn and Handshake and just the internet in general. TikTok is also another good resource.”



Photo courtesy of Jada Tsion

Tsion says a great tip for standing out in your applications is making a lane for yourself and stepping out of your comfort zone. “If you’re a PR student, don’t limit yourself to just PR-related roles, explore opportunities in

marketing, branding, corporate communications, and even event planning. Many skills in our field are transferable, and broadening your search can open doors you never expected,” Tsion said. “Also, don’t wait for opportunities to come to you, be proactive, network, and always be on the lookout for ways to gain experience, even if it’s through personal projects or student organizations.”

Your time in college is meant to be some of the most enriching experiences that mold you in many ways. At times it can be stressful no matter what you major in, especially when thinking about how to pad your resume/portfolio with internships and fellowships.

Many JOMC students often face uncertainty when exploring internships and scholarships. This guide is here to provide practical support, share valuable insight, and reinforce a strong sense of community as you take the next steps in your academic and professional endeavors.

As we say in Aggieland - Always Doing, Never Done!

Tips From Crosby Standouts

1. Put your best foot forward:

Make sure to showcase your most relevant work on your resume. Tailor your resume/portfolio for each application to better your chances

2. Check those emails: Connect with professors and faculty members in the JOMC department! They are also dropping great opportunities for students, make sure to check your emails!

3. Google is your best friend: Do thorough research online for opportunities, great websites include The United Negro College Fund, The Thurgood Marshall College Fund, The LAGRANT Foundation. Don’t be afraid to apply to small scholarships, they provide great opportunities!

4. Early bird gets the worm: Begin your search for scholarships and internships before the next semester starts, especially for more competitive opportunities. For the fall semester, applications usually close around late February to mid-April. For the spring semester, applications usually close before Christmas.

5. Networking is key!: Utilize resources like Handshake, LinkedIn, and networking within the department. Alumni are happy to help out!

The Story Behind Teacher of the Year, David Squires

JOMC Teacher of the Year shares the methods, mindset, and moments that makes his classroom unforgettable.

By Stacey Jeffress & Brianna Wesley



Professor David Squires, 2025, Teacher of the Year at NC A&T. Photo courtesy to N.C. A&T Directory.

In classrooms filled with aspiring storytellers, sharp thinkers, and curious minds, Professor David Squires stands out as both a mentor and a master of the craft. This year, his influence and dedication were officially recognized with one of the university's highest honors: North Carolina A&T's 2025 Teacher of the Year. For the students who have sat in his lectures, edited stories under his guidance and sharpened their

voice through his feedback, the award simply affirms what they've known all along: "Professor Squires doesn't just teach; he transforms."

The nomination came from fellow faculty member Dr. Kim Smith, who praised Squires as "a very hardworking man" whose tireless efforts and genuine passion for the field of journalism have made a lasting mark on the university community.

A seasoned journalist, writer and editor, Professor Squires brings more than 30 years of experience to the classroom. His bylines and editorial leadership span major platforms including ESPN's *Andscape.com*, *SportingNews.com*, and *BlackVoices.com*. He has held staff positions at prestigious publications such as *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, and *The Detroit Free Press*, covering everything from national sports to race and social justice issues.

But while his résumé is impressive, it's his presence in the classroom that defines his legacy. Since joining N.C. A&T in 2015, Squires has taught courses in writing, reporting, public relations, and editing — bringing the newsroom into the classroom and offering students a front-row seat to the evolving world of media.

"Visuals are powerful because today's students are more visual learners, and incorporating them can actually improve writing skills. And I love seeing students work in groups — sharing ideas helps them grow both creatively and collaboratively," Squires said, reflecting on his teaching style.

He also holds degrees in journalism and psychology, along with a master's from UNC-Chapel Hill—a combination that not only informs his craft but also deepens his ability to connect with students on a personal level.

Beyond the university, Squires has long been an advocate for representation in media. He's a founding board member of the Sports Journalism

Institute (SJI), a nationally recognized organization that has spent over three decades mentoring women and minorities in sports journalism.

His work with SJI has helped open doors for hundreds of underrepresented students—many of whom now hold influential roles in newsrooms across the country.

Photo courtesy of NABJ Power Forward, Region III Conference



Student Insights on Squires

Inside the classroom, Professor Squires is known for setting high standards and expecting students to meet them. But he's also known for offering support, opportunity, and a deep, genuine investment in their success.

"He's someone who grows on you! He is passionate about journalism and molding the next generation; he pushes students to be greater," said Amanda Forrest, a senior majoring in multimedia journalism.

Ni'Asia Ali, a junior concentrating in multimedia production, added, "If you stay connected with Professor Squires, he will provide lots of opportunities — especially in multimedia, which is where he shines."

Jayden Adams, a senior journalism major, noted,

"He's definitely a character, but his passion for journalism runs deep. And you can tell he truly cares about his students."

Sydney Bryant, a senior studying broadcast journalism, shared, "Squires is very passionate about the field of journalism and is highly qualified. I appreciate his realness and his active push to get the most out of students."

As the media landscape continues to evolve, Professor Squires remains a powerful influence in shaping not only future journalists, but also thinkers, creators and leaders. His recognition as Teacher of the Year is more than just an award—it's a tribute to a career devoted to empowering others, both in the newsroom and in the classroom.

BEYOND BLACKBOARD

JOMC Faculty and Their Unseen Passions

By Janay Barbee

At Crosby Hall, we see our professors in lecture halls, Zoom meetings and Blackboard announcements. We hear their critiques, read their emails and often pass by their offices still lit long after class ends. But behind the syllabi and structured schedules, there is a whole other side we do not always get to see. These are their passions, quirks and interests that make them who they are.

This section is about getting to know some of our faculty beyond the academic bubble. What do they care about outside the classroom? What brings them joy, peace or a break from the usual routine? These stories remind us that our professors are more than educators. They are real people, just like us!



**Dr. Yahya R.
Kamalipour, Interim
JOMC Chair**

Dr. Yahya Kamalipour is a global traveler, scholar and advocate for cross cultural connection. He has visited 67 countries, published over 18 books and built an international career exploring how media shapes diverse societies.

When he is not teaching or writing, Kamalipour enjoys meeting people from all walks of life. "Traveling and meeting people from different cultures helps me see how media shapes society in unique ways," he says.

Over the years, he has been invited to speak around the world, sharing his research on globalization, media impact and cultural diversity. His experiences continue to shape his teaching, where he encourages students to think globally and critically about the media.



**Professor
Joseph Jowers**

When he is not teaching, Professor Joseph Jowers is likely behind the camera, capturing the world through his passion for photography. His journey began at 14 with a spontaneous answer to a cousin's question about his future. That answer eventually led him to one of the top photography schools in the country.

For Jowers, photography is more than a skill. Influenced by his mother's artistry, he sees it as a way to connect with nature, truth and God. "Writing with light," he says, is how he explores beauty, curiosity, and the human experience.

One of his favorite memories is a trip with his wife, also a photographer, to find a 500-year-old tree deep in a tropical forest. Though they had to turn back early, the experience left a lasting impression and a reason to return.



Dr. Ecaterina Stepaniuc

Dr. Stepaniuc enjoys spending time outdoors with her family, especially on fishing trips. Though not a fan of fishing, she joins her husband and two sons for quality time.

She stays active in research, co-authoring a study on alumni support and student engagement, published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at an AEJMC regional conference.

This summer, she looks forward to two milestones: the publication of a manuscript on media propaganda in a book edited by Dr. Yahya Kamalipour and presenting a top-nominated teaching idea at the AEJMC conference in San Francisco.

Each summer, she and her family return to Moldova to lead English camps, this year expecting to invest in over 250 children from her native village of Costești.



Dr. Gary Guffey

In Dr. Guffey's free time, you can catch him on a golf course. He started playing when he was 13 and still loves how the game brings people together. "Golf takes a few hours, so you really get to know people. You see how they handle pressure and how they think," he says.

One of his favorite memories is winning the Greensboro NFL Hospice Tournament. His team, in a tie-breaker playoff, secured the win thanks to a key shot on the first hole. The reward? An all-expenses-paid trip to Washington to watch the Redskins play the Cardinals.

For Guffey, golf is more than just a sport. It's about strategy, relationships and enjoying the time spent with others.



Dr. Daphne Valerius

When she's not teaching, Dr. Daphne Valerius prioritizes her mental health and self-care, a journey that began in graduate school when the constant pressures of school and social media notifications became overwhelming. To regain balance, she sets personal boundaries to manage both personal and professional expectations.

For Valerius, self-care means carving out time to recharge. Whether it's enjoying a Peloton workout, traveling, or spending quality time with friends, she's learned to make herself a priority. One of her favorite memories is a birthday trip to Tulum, Mexico, where she celebrated her doctorate graduation with close friends.

"Self-care is my jam," Valerius says, embracing the importance of boundaries, balance, and wellbeing in her life.

Crosby Students in the Spotlight

JOMC Students Present Research and Creative Projects

Crisis Communication Role in Influencing Student Perceptions of Safety on Campus

Authors: Madison Solomon, Jyanne Guide, Bryce Graham
Mentor: Dr. Maria Zhang

Crisis communication plays a crucial role in shaping student perceptions of safety. Universities across the nation have leveraged new digital communications

to alert students in times of emergency, but there are persistent concerns about the timeliness and clarity of these messages, and discrepancies in crime reports. The researchers conducted a survey among A&T students to gauge their engagement with campus safety communication, whether digital or in-person, their perceptions of safety on campus and their levels of trust in the university. Through this approach, they hope

to discover whether more frequent messages through various channels correlates with heightened levels of trust and perceived levels of safety. Our findings from this research will offer new

insights for the best practices for emergency and crisis communications and increasing student trust in our university's safety measures. Ultimately, we hope to identify possible gaps in communication, measure levels of student perceptions, and provide strategies

for improved safety communication to cultivate an informed and secure student body.



Racial Discrimination, Social Support, and Perceived Qualification Differences: Analyzing The Impacts on Work-Related Stress and The Mental Health of Black Women

Authors: Cayla Johnson, Nyasha Chikwinya
Mentor: Dr. Maria Zhang

Prior research indicates that racial discrimination greatly affects the mental well-being of Black women in their jobs. This matter is vital since the compounded impacts of racial discrimination can intensify job-related stress and lead to persistent mental health issues, such as anxiety and de-

pression. Cayla Johnson and Nyasha Chikwinya proposed a study examining how racial discrimination at work is perceived and how it impacts mental health of Black women. Specifically, they hypothesize:

H1. Black women who deal with racial discrimination can experience more psychological stress.

H2. Having access to a support system or mentorship at work can help lessen the bad effects of work-related stress on Black women's health.

H3. When Black women see themselves as inferior to their white counterparts, it can make mental health issues worse, leading to more consistent anxiety and depression.

They are conducting an online survey to test the hypotheses. The results of the current study will enable a better understanding on how workplace interactions, especially those surrounding race, impact Black women's mental health. It will also bring awareness to and highlight how important establishing support systems and perceptions of fairness are.



Creative Project - From Director to Doctor

I presented a graphic design project completed in Dr. Stepaniuc's JOMC 249 class - Introduction to Multimedia. It is highly important for students from our college to turn in their creative projects to the symposium to increase not only representation, but awareness of the skills we acquire.

By this point in the class, we had already learned and practiced Adobe Photoshop, so the next project was a Graphic Design feature story utilizing Adobe InDesign. I interviewed JOMC professor Dr. Daphne Valerius about her career trajectory and acquired a photo from her.

First, I used Photoshop to cut out and clean the picture of herself, which I then transferred over to InDesign. I placed her picture on the left-hand side, and created a textbox to insert the feature story about her. I also included a direct quote from my interview with her. While the steps may

seem simple, the project actually took us about four weeks to complete, as we had to completely learn a new software and pair it with a written story. At the symposium, many judges and bystanders were not only impressed with the quality of my work, but also surprised, as most were not privy to the skills we learn and the levels we are able to master them at.

Author: Alyssa Croston
Mentor: Dr. Kate Stepaniuc

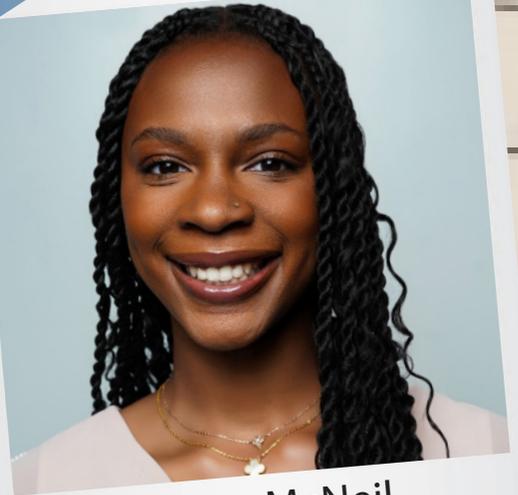


Outstanding Seniors

By: Jakara Dula



Jasmine Van Hagen
Public Relations



Teren McNeil
Multimedia Journalism

“College taught me to honor being an HBCU student, utilize the university’s resources, and explore my interests.”



Sydara Reid
Public Relations



Jada Long
Multimedia Journalism

“College has taught me the value of independence. I’ve learned to become my own source of motivation.”



Atiana Contreras
Mass Media Production



Olivia Brooks
Multimedia Journalism

“Community is everything, and collaboration beats competition every time. I’ve learned who you know, and how you nurture those relationships, can open more doors than any textbook ever could.”



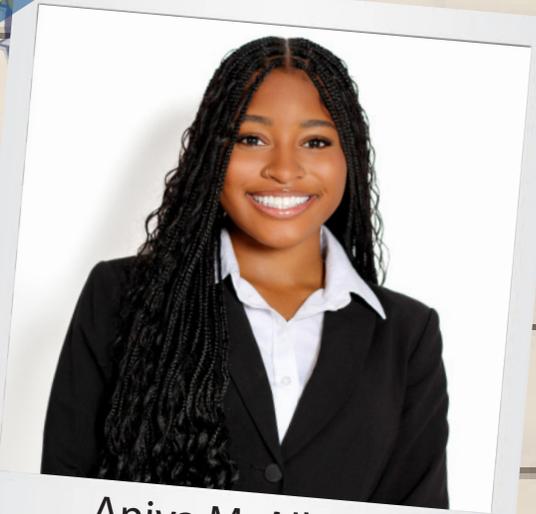
Jada T. White
Public Relations



“College taught me to always stay true to yourself, never lose your fire and passion for your career. What God has for you will always be for you.”



Gabrielle Heyward
Multimedia Journalism



Aniya M. Allison
Multimedia Journalism

“College taught me the importance of being involved in diverse endeavors.”



Re’Onna Vines
Public Relations



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