

communiqué digital

communication, arts and media alumni magazine

2013-2014



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president wilson



clay jacobsen



betsy baehr



jonathan cyprowski



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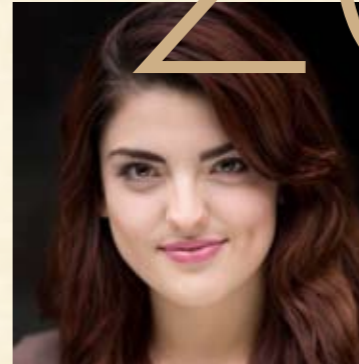
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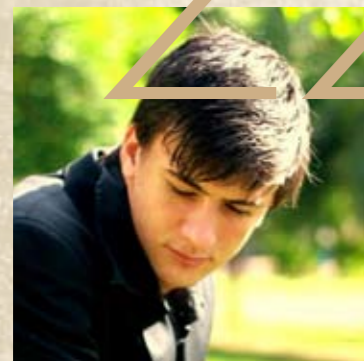


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caleb koehler

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features

rising to global heights

president wilson provides new direction



After months of searching and an immeasurable amount of prayer, Dr. William Wilson was selected to carry on the legacy of excellence as the university president. Wilson and his wife Lisa are humbled and honored to be serving in the leadership capacity. photo/mark moore

Each chapel service began with international students showcasing their nation's flag and leading an opening prayer in their native tongue. A nation is highlighted each service, giving the Oklahoma-based university an international presence. The emphasis on recapturing a global vision to enlarge the ORU footprint is the brainchild of the new president, Dr. William Wilson.

Founder Oral Roberts visualized a university with the purpose of building men and women to further the Kingdom and to "go where My light is dim... to the uttermost bounds of the earth." His son Richard Roberts succeeded him, carrying on this legacy. Dr. Mark Rutland, as the third president, took steps to regain a strong foothold for future success.

God has strategically placed strong leaders in this crucial role for specific seasons, and it is Wilson that is empowered with a clear vision to usher ORU into globalization. With well-established global ties through the Empowered21 ministry and an unshakable heart for the nations, he will no doubt ensure that no little plans are made here. • story/sierra quant



...go where My light is dim... to the uttermost bounds of the earth.

- oral roberts,
ORU founder & chancellor





Inauguration was a day for the ORU community to embrace the inspiring vision of President Wilson. During this special time, leaders from around the globe were invited to share their encouragement and prayers for Wilson in his new endeavor. The festivities were concluded with the first on-campus fireworks display, illuminating the campus with light. photo/mark moore



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giving right direction

clay jacobsen impacts the industry



Each new project Clay Jacobsen undertakes fuels his creativity and passion for his craft. A successful director, novelist, and business owner, Jacobsen realized his career allows him the freedom to influence people's lives for the better. photo/mark moore

No second chances. No room for mistakes. Armed with determination and caffeine, the team was ready for the challenge. Cameras were rolling, and everyone was poised in position. It was show time. The telethon would air LIVE for over 21 hours straight; the success of this show fell on one man's shoulders.

When Clay Jacobsen graduated in 1978 from Oral Roberts University with a Telecommunications degree, he never imagined he would direct one, let alone six, "Jerry Lewis MDA Telethons," the shows that raised funds to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Weeks of preparation went into the making of a telethon, and the few days leading up to one were hectic. For some, 60-second commercials seem like an eternity, making a 21-hour show hard to fathom.

Although Jacobsen had an array of accomplishments and acquired skill at the time of his first telethon, he didn't feel prepared for this mammoth undertaking and questioned how he would master the assignment.

"The telethon was so overwhelming my first year," Jacobsen said. "But when I broke it down into 45-minute shows instead of 21.5 hours live, it started to all come together. In the end, everyone was happy, Jerry loved it and I just wanted to go to bed."

Looking back, Jacobsen found this experience one of his most rewarding due to the difficult challenges that he faced head-on and rose above. To his acclaim, he worked with actor and producer Jerry Lewis for 25 years. Jacobsen's climb on the ladder of success has gone from cameraman to technical director to tech supervisor to director. Jacobsen has risen far above his humble beginnings as a high school student who dug graves at the local cemetery.

Today, Jacobsen has a diverse career journey and résumé. In addition to owning his own production company and being an accomplished author, he has worked alongside many distinguished individuals and programs. "The Mike Douglas Show," "Alf," "The Arsenio Hall Show," "The Hollywood Squares," "Jeopardy!" "American Idol Extra" and "Miss Teen USA" are part of his extensive directing credits. He was also involved in specials with celebrities Frank Sinatra, Wayne Newton, Kenny Rogers, David Copperfield and Diana Ross.

Many directors dream of landing jobs of such prominence. Jacobsen credits the hands-on expertise he gained at ORU as a vital part of his success.

By the time Jacobsen began his search to attend a university, his two older brothers had encountered the one-of-a-kind education ORU offers. They relayed stories of their involvement, which compelled Jacobsen to take further interest. Ultimately, he was drawn to the strong sense of spirituality and the nationally televised shows the students had the privilege to crew.

"I knew I would walk away with a degree and experience, not just classroom knowledge," Jacobsen said. "I had three years of national TV camera experience when I graduated."

While on campus, Jacobsen ran cameras for basketball games, the chancellor's weekly television shows and quarterly nationally syndicated specials.

Another aspect that made Jacobsen's time at school so influential was the encouragement and professionalism of the professors.

Charles Zwick, Assistant Professor of Communication, Arts and Media, who still teaches at ORU,

“Directing happened on God’s timing, not mine. Man makes goals that are sometimes not God’s goals.”

– clay jacobson, director & author

impacted Jacobsen greatly. Zwick bridged the gap between the hands-on competency of the technical crew and the classroom. Jacobsen appreciated how Zwick made the academic work relevant for a career in production.

After graduation, Jacobsen was equipped to enter the work force and the media field. He moved to Las Vegas to help a Christian television show develop a national presence for a season. Seeking direction for the next step in life’s journey, he searched diligently for a new opportunity.

Equipped with valuable field experience, Jacobsen approached the growing studios of talk show host Merv Griffin, the creator of the game shows “Wheel of Fortune” and “Jeopardy!” Jacobsen took a leap of faith and submitted his working portfolio, anxiously awaiting news. It didn’t take long for Jacobsen to be offered a job.

“Within three days, I was running camera on a CBS sports weightlifting event,” Jacobsen said. “The opportunity opened amazing doors. I was able to do freelance camera work for about a year and a half until I became a technical director.”

Jacobsen was advancing by leaps and bounds in his professional career, and his technical expertise was in high demand. He traveled frequently to Los Angeles when “Entertainment Tonight” called upon him to assist with state-of-the-art equipment that created elaborate special effects.

With new skills and developing competency, Jacobsen stepped into a new role and gained recognition. He had the honor of becoming a member of the Directors Guild of America, and he became the director for “The All New Dating Game.”

Jacobsen continues to have a successful career as a director, but there was a time when he nearly called it quits.

Jacobsen had a personal goal to become a full-time director by the age of 30. He was working as a technical director, anticipating the day he would sit in the coveted director’s chair. On Jacobsen’s 30th birthday, his dream job was given to another man, the cameraman working on the same show. It happened to be the cameraman’s birthday as well, but this was no party for Jacobsen.

Jacobsen was discouraged his dream was not coming to pass within his timing. At this point, there were two options: throw in the towel or overcome the obstacle and press on. He chose the path of diligence and was blessed because of it.

“Since then God has opened so many doors,” Jacobsen said. “Directing happened on His [God’s] timing, not mine. Man makes goals that are sometimes not God’s goals.”

Currently, Jacobsen dabbles in multiple projects, but he is also the associate director for the popular television game show “Jeopardy!” His responsibilities include editing episodes before they air. He values the flexibility of his schedule so he has the freedom to pursue other projects to direct, such as “NFL GameDay.”

Jacobsen also appreciates his profession does not become mundane but grows and evolves as time progresses. He spent four years involved with the show “Prime Time Country” and observed changes in the show’s structure throughout seasons. With state-of-the-art equipment as tools for fresh techniques, every year there is always a skill to learn or improve upon.

The hardest part of Jacobsen’s job is the challenge of directing a live show.

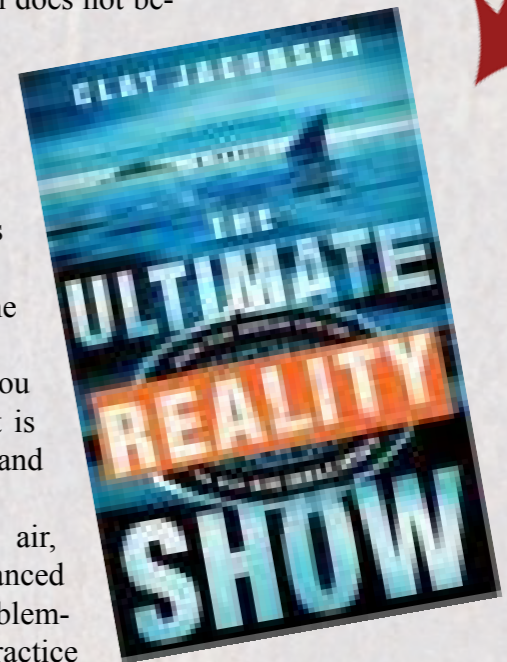
“You have to put it all together, and you can’t do it all by yourself,” Jacobsen said. “It is always a team effort. It is the highest pressure and also the most rewarding.”

Countless situations can occur on the air, and he has to be ready for the unexpected. Advanced preparation, a dedicated crew and creative problem-solving skills are must-haves. As if the actual practice of directing a show isn’t hard enough, the content of a show can reveal another concern.

“It’s hard to find good quality television shows a Christian can work on and feel good about,” Jacobsen said. “The grind of putting material out that you don’t agree with can be taxing. I’ve turned down shows for moral reasons.”

With uncompromising standards, Jacobsen strives to show his faith, as opposed to hiding it in an abundantly secular environment. Jacobsen interacts and works with people from different backgrounds and beliefs, but he chooses to respect others even when they hold opposing viewpoints. ORU

order the book here



students and alumni are challenged to go into every man's world to share the love of Christ. He does that well.

"You have to be ready to defend, but also to love others," Jacobsen said. "I hope people can see how Christ can work in a life, and you can have joy and a great time being a Christian. I never want to work with someone who thinks they were just a piece used for the puzzle, but that I cared about them."

Others have come to notice Jacobsen's kindheartedness as well.

Cinematographer Ray Reynolds, who currently operates cameras on the set of "Jeopardy!" has worked on numerous projects with Jacobsen, such as "The Florence Henderson Show," "The Other Half" and "American Idol Extra." Reynolds has the utmost respect for Jacobsen's integrity.

"He makes you feel a part of the team," Reynolds said. "He genuinely cares for people while, at the same time, is very knowledgeable and skilled at his craft. He also brings creativity to the table."

Many people in the industry are aware of Jacobsen's faith because of his Christian-based works that have been published.

Jacobsen has published four novels, multiple shorter works and a nonfiction book. With ideas colliding in his head, he needed an outlet of expression and turned to the written word.

This resulted in the birth of the book, "The Ultimate Reality Show." This novel showcases the character Jack Forrest and the potentially morally compromising situations he is put in on a reality show to try and win \$10 million.

Jacobsen enjoys writing as a secondary career, utilizing free time between filming to develop more stories. "Circle of Seven," "The Lasko Interview" and "Fiction and Truth" are additional publications.

The next novel Jacobsen would like to pursue is the sequel to "The Interview with the Devil." He was compelled to write it after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. It portrays the story of a reporter's once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to interview the ruthless leader of a global terrorist group.

But his concept for an upcoming novel may be overshadowed by an all-new project he is undertaking.

Clay Jacobsen and his wife Cindy started CC Jacobsen Productions as an avenue to help expose up-and-coming high school athletes to potential colleges. Videos are made to highlight the athletic skills of the student. Now, as new empty-nesters with their two daughters away at college, they plan to focus more of their time and attention on this innovative project (ttp.tv).

Much of the idea is still in the dream stage. Strategic planning and tactical details have yet to be determined, but Jacobsen passionately believes he should pursue this new venture.

"I feel God is leading us to do mini-documentaries featuring the turning point of a life as God moves in their life," Jacobsen said. "We are

looking for great stories to reach other people around the world—to share how the Holy Spirit is working in people's lives today."

Each episode would be fully produced and directed by CC Jacobsen Productions and released in an easily accessible format to the public. Whether these videos become the next YouTube sensation or are broadcast on television for all to see, Jacobsen accepts the challenge to take the gospel into every man's world. ● [story/sierra quant](#)

Jacobsen seeks creative ways to share the love of Christ. He followed God's path through the years, cherishing his ever-changing profession, and has climbed the ladder of success in various areas of production. [photo/mark moore](#)



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to be ad-mired

betsy baehr brings creativity to advertising

Within the sprawling metropolis of Chicago, there are sights to see and experiences all around. Known for being a city of innovative discoveries, it is a playground for clever minds developing brilliant works. Uncovering the next big thing is around every corner or dare it be said, inside every coffee shop. Nestled in a Chicago Java shop on a cool fall afternoon armed with nothing other than a notebook and pen while sipping her favorite warm delight, she has conceived some of her greatest ideas. It is moments like these that produce outcomes such as cultivating an ad campaign for one of the top 50 global brands.

Betsy Baehr Drach earned her degree in Public Relations & Advertising from Oral Roberts University in 2009. With a passion burning inside her and an eye for brilliance, Baehr has been able to go from student striving for excellence to notable initiator of creative ideas.

“God created my brain to dream,” Baehr said.

Baehr has been an art director at Salt Communications in Chicago for the past three years. She has become a crucial part of her inspired team. With creative strengths, she’s able to bring a fresh perspective to every project she undertakes. Baehr draws from her surroundings influences for her cutting-edge approach, and yet her ideas are still her own. Often, her concepts are the segue into up-and-coming trends that are yet to be uncovered by the public.

Throughout her career, Baehr’s professionalism and ability to generate innovative ideas within her field has afforded her the opportunity to work on top-notch advertising campaigns for notable brands such as P&G, Groupon, Craftsman, Reebok, Bayer Pharmaceuticals, S.C. Johnson & Sons, French’s and Hershey’s, but the rewards of her labor were not handed to her.

After graduating high school, Baehr found she was drawn to ORU because it embodied the Christian model she desired to see in a collegiate institution. Having enthusiasm to express herself creatively, Baehr selected her degree as Public Relations & Advertising with a minor in Graphic Design. While attending college, Baehr had the opportunity to participate in internships which further fueled her passion for design.

“I wasn’t so much motivated by my GPA; I was more so motivated by my desire to learn and take everything in,” Baehr said. “ORU taught me to approach my career with the mindset that it’s possible to make a living and make a difference doing what you love.”

It was the summer between her sophomore and junior years when Baehr had an internship with Better Homes and Gardens magazine.

“It was really my first job in any type of creative marketing or advertising,” Baehr said. “It’s really where I learned the power the right image holds to sell a product or tell a story. I learned a



From a cozy photography studio to the bustling city of Chicago and everywhere in between, Betsy Baehr uses her creative skills to impact others. Baehr simply takes each challenge in stride, step by step. photo/jennifer lemerand

“ORU taught me... it’s possible to make a living and make a difference doing what you love.

- betsy baehr, art director

lot about collaboration, and this was really where I developed my boldness to speak up and share my ideas about design or the direction of a photo shoot.”

When Baehr returned to school after completing her summer internship, she was given a task in Assistant Professor Chris Putman’s Ad Layout and Design class she counts as a defining moment in her academic career and one she believes launched her into her destiny. The assignment required students to create content for rebranding a Broken Arrow church. Baehr took her work so seriously that she took the time to visit the church to better learn about the essence of who the client was. While visiting the church Baehr realized just how important understanding the identity of her client was to the idea-development process.

“It was about me creating something that represented who they were and met their needs, not just satisfying my own creative desires,” Baehr said.

After graduation, Baehr worked for a season in her hometown of Des Moines as a designer and photographer in a photography studio. Still desiring to venture into design within the advertising industry, Baehr set out to make her impression on Chicago.

As time went on, Baehr faced obstacles when initially trying to establish herself within the industry. She found herself doing personal resume drop-offs and anything that would set her apart in the competitive industry. She noted that because she opted for a graphic design minor, she had a rough time breaking into the creative development side of advertising. Perseverance brought her through as Baehr continued to build her portfolio and gained more design experience. Then came that open door. She was able to land an internship at Havas Worldwide, one of the largest integrated marketing communications agencies in the world. After more than a year there, Baehr scored a creative position at Tribal DDB, a worldwide organization specializing in interactive marketing. Baehr proved herself as an effective designer. During her time there, she worked on the Reebok account. Baehr had been hired along with a copywriter as a partner though they had never met before, they had been paired up to work on every project together.

“I enjoyed working with someone and having someone to bounce ideas off of,” Baehr said.

This career-illuminating experience afforded Baehr work on several projects for Reebok, including design of their e-commerce and online rating system. Upon visiting the Reebok headquarters, Baehr was filled with excitement. She was submerged in the brand’s history and was given an undertaking that would mold the brands future. Baehr needed to be exposed to everything Reebok, the art and science of shoemaking, and the design behind the product. Baehr also had the opportunity to see a custom-built facility where shoes are tested for quality, durability and consumer benefits.

“I just felt excited and a huge sense of accomplishment,” Baehr said. “I felt valued because Reebok invested in me.”

She then transitioned herself to work in her current position as art director at Salt Communications, where she is prized and a proven inspiration.

“ORU really taught me that if your dream job doesn’t exist, then create it,” Baehr said.

Baehr now provides her clients with sensational, well-designed, conceptual solutions to meet their business goals. Looking back, Baehr is amazed at how far she has come from working in a small photography studio in her hometown.

“If I had seen the end results when I started working at this little photography shop and you told me that within a year I would be working in downtown Chicago for one of the biggest advertising agencies in the world—working on the Reebok account—I don’t think I would have believed you,” Baehr said.

Baehr’s journey was not only one of perseverance but one that some might see as being intricately fashioned by God.

“I just took it step by step,” Baehr said. “I worked hard for it, and it all worked out.”

Though Baehr was not mentored by a specific person, she has received pearls of wisdom along the way. It’s the impartation of simple yet vital knowledge that made the difference for her.

“Interviews don’t get people jobs, relationships do,” Baehr said.

Baehr learned this invaluable truth through personal experience. It has proven to be the case throughout her career. Through all of the vision and widespread success, Baehr finds even more drive and accomplishment in using her designs to impact her community. Using her artistic expertise and appetite for transforming lives, she has donated her skills to help stop human trafficking. Baehr is working with the Chicago-based organization Traffick Free, to which she has applied herself and her time to positively impact the lives of others. As creative director, she is reaching her personal career goals as well as being afforded the opportunity to change the world.

Unwavering when facing the unknown, Baehr looks to the future with unending excitement. She trusts that her steps are ordered and that they all lead to a higher path. photo/jennifer lemerand



“There really is nothing that motivates me more than using what I feel God has gifted me with to make a difference, and so, whether it’s this organization or another, I know that I will always need that side outlet using the gifts God has given me to create change in the world,” Baehr said.

With a passion for initiating transformation first within her community and then throughout the globe, Baehr is grateful for the manner which brought her to this place of desire and artistic vision today. Baehr credits ORU with helping to shape her creative practices and looks to the future with expectations of what God will do next.

It is made evident through her work: Baehr is filled with a burning desire and untamable excitement for her daily responsibilities.

“I get to create every day,” Baehr said. “I get to take my ideas and make them into something that has never been created before. I get to think of new ways of communicating ideas. I get to research what motivates people. The psychology behind advertising really fascinates me, and figuring out how to motivate people toward action is a challenge I thoroughly enjoy.”

As she reflects on what she believes her purpose within the design world is, Baehr gushes over her love for conceptualizing long-term success, the bigger picture, and fulfilling the creative piece of a dream. Some of the newest realizations about who she is professionally have come not from her own visionary gifts but appreciating that gift in others around her. Whether her inspiration is coming from individuals in her own office or just people being creative in general, Baehr’s progressive goal is to put herself in situations in which she can more readily be stirred to come up with new ideas.

“I’m trying to find other ways to find inspiration, rather than just letting it find me,” Baehr said. “This journey of finding inspiration ranges from participating in women’s networking groups to monthly creative meeting groups, reading creative blogs and even browsing websites like “Kick Starter.”

Baehr’s love for relationship and collaboration throughout her career has not only brought her motivation, but has also acted as a two-edged sword. Growing within the industry, one of the things that made Baehr better was her ability to be vulnerable with her creations and allowing others to see and provide constructive criticism of her work. She admits it has not always been easy and could even be painful trying to accept criticism about projects that she had become so passionate about. When she was completing her degree, Baehr had a difficult time sharing her work with others for them to critique. It was only after completing her internship with Better Homes and Gardens that Baehr realized her confidence in her work goes beyond the opinions of others and that when executing a concept for a project, there are times when she can get so engrossed in her own vision that constructive critiquing usually strengthens the project and betters the outcome.

Baehr now aspires to enhance her leadership role with the opportunity to pour her experiences and industry-based knowledge into interns, those who are where she once was. She enjoys reaching out and investing in others.

With all of her creative ability to dream and think long term, she finds it easy to start planning the future and neglect the present. Baehr is learning to say focused on the now of her journey, giving her best for where God would have her be in this season of her life. Desiring to leave a lasting impression, Baehr wants nothing more than to be a creator of change and make an impact on her world. ●

story/rondah frierson

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i am, therefore, i must

jonathan cyprowski rises above the norm



Unsatisfied with the status quo, Jonathan Cyprowski strives to perform every task with absolute excellence. He instructs his students with expertise as he pours into their lives zealously. photo/mark moore

He's not normal. But then, he never wanted to be. With an unbreakable enthusiasm and dedication to God, W. Jonathan Cyprowski—call him Jonathan—strives for excellence in every endeavor and expects nothing less from others. He currently devotes his time and talents to his dual role as Oral Roberts University Director of Student Publications and Instructor of Journalism.

He has prepared himself well, having completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications with a minor in Theater from California University of Pennsylvania. He followed that accomplishment with earning the title of Most Outstanding Student in his pursuit of a Master of Arts degree in Journalism from Regent University, graduating at the top of his class. These achievements were only one stop in his drive toward success.

He grew up in a Christian home with parents who were involved in ministry from day one. He was saved at the ripe old age of four and, from then on, dedicated himself to God's ministry. He took the role of Jesus in his life very seriously. The words he lives by are the words of Jesus in John 10:14–16, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."

For Cyprowski, "I am; therefore, I must" means a Christian life begins with a God-given identity and ends with a God-fulfilled responsibility.

"My primary love in ministry is to develop people," Cyprowski said. "I must live with a Kingdom-dynamic mindset. [Jesus] is my driving force, because I've seen Him do so much."

Cyprowski saw Jesus in his parents, so much so that he feels they should wear red capes under their clothes.

"They taught me how to live life," Cyprowski said. "They both raised me not to make average decisions. I would put posters of my parents on the wall, if possible."

His parents also taught him how to plan ahead, how to identify his goals and accomplish them on time. In his freshman year of high school, he started a youth Bible study group, which expanded to include a large percentage of the student body. He also traveled extensively with Vision Ministries International doing youth conferences and events all over the country. Being talented in many areas can be both a blessing and a problem, and the difficulty for him was pinpointing the exact direction of his ministry.

"I had a real passion to travel and preach," Cyprowski said. "I had to have something to go with ministry. Communications was the right fit."

“If you do everything unto the Lord and offer excellence to God, He gets the glory from what you do.

- jonathan cyprowski, journalism instructor

He launched himself wholeheartedly into a career of both ministry and journalism, working first as an intern for a major television sports network.

“I had incredible success at ESPN,” Cyprowski said. “They offered me a permanent job, but then the economic crisis happened and the position just wasn’t there anymore.”

Though this setback cost him an advantageous and potentially lucrative job, Cyprowski forged ahead, remembering God had made him who he was and would continue to be with him. “I am; therefore I must,” rang in his heart.

At the same time, he continued ministering in his home church. Youth Minister at Christ Community Church in State College, Pa., and close friend in ministry Jim Bucci describes Cyprowski as a confident and genuine speaker.

“He has an authority when he speaks,” Bucci said. “He motivates people to go after God. He brings excitement and vision to people’s lives.”

He landed a job with the Christian Broadcasting Network writing feature stories on Christian sports figures. He continued there until 2010, when he moved to Pittsburgh to write freelance for the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review covering sporting events while working for First Niagara Bank. He jokes about the incongruity of working for a bank.

“God can use me anywhere,” Cyprowski said. “Like with Balaam. If He can teach a donkey to speak, He can use a journalist in a bank.”

His position at First Niagara paid the bills, and freelancing for the Tribune-Review kept his hand in the journalist ink, but he began to feel the itch of dissatisfaction that comes with a new direction from God. He has always loved education, believing it to be a key to success, so he began praying about teaching.

“Banking and being a part-time journalist wasn’t enough,” Cyprowski said. “Sometimes a calling is worth more than money. A calling is attached to ‘I must.’”

A friend of his from ORU called the next day asking if he would be

interested in teaching journalism. From that moment, the ball started rolling very quickly and Cyprowski found himself on the road to Tulsa, ready to start a new chapter in his life. He now throws himself headlong into teaching 17 credit hours and his work with students on the Oracle and the Perihelion. He is now afforded a rare and unusual opportunity for creativity.

“My creative outlets are my students,” Cyprowski said. “They are a different generation even from when I was in school. How they learn is different, also their perspective and how they see the world.”

Perspective, for Cyprowski, concerns life and the community, a real purpose and what a journalist wants people to see. If anything changes in the approach for Student Publications in the future, it will be the grasp of a new perspective.

“Journalism can be so negative,” Cyprowski said. “The greatest weapon in a journalist’s repertoire is to admit when they’re wrong. There must be integrity, mental fortitude and the ability to say, ‘Here’s the real truth of it.’”

He hopes as his students leave his classroom to become effective journalists, they will be true to themselves, to God and to their calling. An effective teacher, according to Cyprowski, doesn’t spoonfeed information to students and then expect them to stand on their own.

“You don’t teach people what to think,” Cyprowski said. “You teach them how to think, how to see different perspectives. And you don’t have to separate faith from profession.”

For Cyprowski, being successful is a journey defined by one’s core identity. He cites a speech by civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. when he spoke of how even a street sweeper should be so good at his job, the host of heaven would stop to notice.

“Success is in your excellence,” Cyprowski said. “If you do everything unto the Lord and offer excellence to God, He gets the glory from what you do.”

This is excellence in action: never satisfied with normal. ● story by sarah cochran

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build it, they will come

jared cole goes with the grain

He likes fixing things, building things, fixing things he builds. He is constantly improving on his theater sets, his skills and himself. Even his title is evolving. Officially an assistant professor of theatre, he is also the technical director and the scenic and lighting designer and always willing to experiment with new challenges. Jared Cole is learning by doing.

His fine tuning began at Greenville College, Greenville, Ill. where he graduated with a double major, Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications: Theatre and in Music. Five years later, he launched himself fully into set designing and a Masters of Fine Arts degree in Theatre: Scenic Design from Wayne State University in Detroit. But this was not his original plan.

Growing up in the church, he was not an overtly rebellious person and never experienced a major turnaround or upheaval in his Christian life. Saved at 4 or 5—he's not sure which—he's been a steady follower of Christ with those teachable moments in life when God drew him yet a little closer.

"I was a good kid," Cole said, nodding his head. "But I've come to realize that sin is sin no matter what it is. It's a daily walk. You can't live on what you did in the past; you have to look to the future."

The future for Cole came with a twist. His original design included teaching music, especially choir, at the high school level. Then life's journey took an unexpected turn, and he decided to switch to a Communications and Theatre double major.

And he loved it. It had started in his high school days as an actor, picking up carpentry skills along the way. For fresh ideas on learning construction, he watched the PBS series, "This Old House," and poured through how-to construction books.

"As an actor in a small theatre, I had to help build the sets," Cole said with a shrug. "Somebody has to build the sets, or, otherwise, they don't get built. There was also a lot of on-the-job training. They would need something welded and say, 'Here, practice on this scrap metal. Okay, now go do it.'"

His real inspiration to "go do it" came from Associate Professor of Communications at Spring Arbor University, Spring Arbor, Mich., Paul



To make a set design as functional and innovative as possible, Jared Cole labors over every detail of construction. He tackles daunting design projects and is eager to face new challenges himself while building up whole-person students by encouraging them to overcome difficulties they face. photo/mark moore

“I want to inspire them to be good artists, to stay true to the character they’re playing, even if it’s the bad guy.

– Jared Cole, theater instructor

Patton. Fresh out of college as an undergraduate, Cole was helping the Theatre Department with some of the set work and acting roles.

“Paul encouraged me to go into the designing field,” Cole said. “He said I could learn things that would be more marketable. Yeah, and that was it.”

Patton saw in Cole a real dedication to the work and a commitment to the story: first in his acting and later in his set designs. Patton described Cole as the antonym of Diotrephes in 3 John, a man who caused contention in the early church because of his self-serving appetites.

“People who are good don’t have to be first,” Patton said. “And Jared is definitely one of the best stage designers I know. His combination of construction and design skills are unmatched by anyone I know in theatre. His work continues to serve stories we have staged. He is every director’s friend, serving a vision without trying to dominate it.”

Cole’s humility agreed with Patton’s advice, and with the master’s degree under his belt, he began seeking full-time positions teaching theatre and designing sets.

“Oh, it’s a long story,” Cole said, eyeing the ceiling above the Howard Auditorium stage. “I began sending out a lot of applications. The more I began to look into ORU’s website—[the university] quickly rose to one of my top choices. There are so many advantages to a Christian school. The thing that drew me was the education of the whole person and the really strong faith aspect.”

His current position keeps him on his toes, presenting new challenges every day. The large wooden house he built for “Proposals” needed paint and shingles and roof space, and evergreen trees were needed to fill the stage.

“I do like the word ‘challenges,’” Cole said, rubbing his chin. “Every theatre and school has different challenges—like trying to find creative ways to use space. Like, how do I solve this?”

He enjoys a variety of performance genres, including opera and ballet. The work he witnesses by top artists in their fields creates a continuing learning environment for him and drives his passion.

He stays true to his belief that being passionate about what he does is only part of the story. More than anything, he wants to leave it all on the table, knowing he did his best to give glory to God with his talents.

“My philosophy is that God gave us talents, and we should honor God with those talents,” Cole said, choking up a little. “Like it says in Colossians 3:23. I tell my students we’re doing it for a higher purpose. I want to inspire them to be good artists, to stay true to the character they’re playing, even if it’s the bad guy.”

He wants students to walk away with success defined by a healthy pride in their work, not a boastful pride.

“Success is being able to look at the finished product and know that I did the best I could,” Cole said. “If I can put my name to it, if I can look at a show and say I’m glad my name’s attached to this, it’s a success.”

One of his previous successes was “The Spitfire Grill” at Greenville College, and he wants to bring it, if possible, to ORU. He would also like to make some adjustments to the techniques in construction, lighting and painting.

“I like doing challenging theatre,” Cole said, looking around the stage. “It changes our perceptions, forces us to look to find the truth. Combine that with making physical improvements. We do great work already, but how do we expand, do better? It’s what I’m trying to do.”

Through his journey so far, he has acquired unmatched design and artistic ability, leaving his mark, his unique style, everywhere he goes. He is still adding to himself, always building his knowledge and his life. It may not be perfect or as originally planned, but he, like the shingle-less house on stage, is a work in progress. ● story/sarah cochran

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lights, camera, action

rafael barreiro propels the mmi program

He has a heart for people, and he wants them to grow, to be better, to do big things. He may have to check his name badge to confirm his Oral Roberts University title, but he knows his purpose without hesitation: to take students with a passion for work in media to making a big impact on the world. As an associate professor and the director of the MultiMedia Institute, Rafael Barreiro has set out to do just that.

His own journey to do big things for God started with a well-rounded education. He graduated from Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn., with a bachelor's degree in Theater Arts and Secondary Education and a concentration in TV production. He went on to get a third bachelor's degree in elementary education from the same university. Finally, he capped off his student career with a Master of Fine Arts degree in directing cinema and television at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Va. His desire for learning about the love of God, however, came long before his formal education.

As a youngster growing up in Uruguay, Barreiro participated in the Catholic Scouts program, where he first learned about God and how to walk with Him every day. After his confirmation, the Holy Spirit aroused a hunger in him to know more about the Bible and about the love of God. A big leap for him came while attending school in the United States. The International Student Advisor paired students with local friendship families; his was a father of six children and pastor of a Charismatic church.

"I saw this family reading the Bible at the table, and the Bible came alive," Barreiro said, his eyes wide. "I saw love in action. They were living the book of Acts, and I began to learn more about the Holy Spirit and that if you humbly seek the Lord, holding fast to Him, he will take you to unexpected places."

The first unexpected place for Barreiro was theater arts, which was a significant change from his original goal of going into the field of biology. Uruguay was near the ocean; it made sense. However, it was not God's plan for him. As an exchange student, he saw a production of "West Side Story," and a production at The Children's Theatre Co. in Minneapolis, and it was a shock to him that something so theatrical existed. He became involved with school plays and the speech and debate team, finishing sixth in the state



Rafael Barreiro wholeheartedly assumes command of the MultiMedia Institute, eager to produce uplifting programming. His passion for his craft and knowledge of the technical work has been valuable in shaping the next generation of filmmakers. photo/mark moore

competition for his debate on the dramatic arts. The final turning point came when he was trying to encourage a friend who wanted to be an archaeologist and was becoming unsure of such an illogical choice for her education in that country.

"Referring to Jesus' parable of the talents, I asked her, 'Are you going to bury your talents?'" Barreiro said, tapping his hand to his chest. "The question bounced right back to me. Then I thought, 'Should I be a biologist now?'"

The answer was no. His passion was telling people about the love of God, and the best venue would be through film and TV production. To Barreiro, Jesus is real—not just another subject in school, like math and



“I want them to do for God what Hollywood does for money.

- rafael barreiro, multimedia director

science. The more people with whom he could share about the Good News at once, the better. He wanted to see in every home what he saw in his pastor's home: reading the Bible together, experiencing the Holy Spirit and the depth of God's love.

“I wanted to show the love of Christ lived out in family films—movies the family can enjoy together,” Barreiro said. “The main characters would be kids. I always liked working with kids. God wants to do big things with them.”

His first opportunity for working with kids was at the Saint Paul elementary school EXPO for Excellence and then at Heritage Middle School in West Saint Paul, where he worked for eight years teaching theater arts among other subjects. During his tenure there, he directed 100 school plays, 20 of which were full productions, but he wanted to go bigger. He started freelance video production work and soon took a position with the Christian Broadcasting Network in Virginia Beach, Va., and in nine years, rose from line producer to senior producer of the Spanish television show, “Club 700 Hoy,” reaching 30 million viewers, primarily in Mexico and Latin America. But God had yet another vision for him.

“I wrote and produced 430 episodes for CBN, and I thought, ‘Is this it, God?’ because I felt I had been called to family films and entertainment,” Barreiro said. “God gave me the vision to equip and unite young filmmakers and to start producing those films. I thought, this is the time to train excellent, effective workers for God.”

CBN Managing Producer Steve Schaefer, who was the supervising producer during Barreiro's stay, was reluctant to see him go. Barreiro's ability to assemble an effective and cohesive team for producing shows was unparalleled, and his Christ-like approach to managing his team impacted the entire program. Barreiro kept up with the technology and patiently trained his team.

“He took the show to new levels,” Schaefer said. “He was always looking for new ideas to shoot various stories and for new camera and editing techniques. There was a high standard to everything he did. ORU is blessed to have his skills and background.”

Though leaving CBN to teach at the college level didn't seem like the typical switch, he knew God had a master plan for him. He started asking God what was next. When he heard about the MultiMedia Institute, he felt an immediate pull.

“I got really excited about MMI,” Barreiro said. “It felt like a good strategy for in-depth training and where big things can happen. Here, I can make an impact.”

It will be a different impact. He focuses more now on teaching effective classes, on acclimating himself to being a professor and on enhancing the MultiMedia Institute. He wants to use the experiences he has had as an elementary teacher and a producer to prepare students for creating the most professional, up-to-date films possible.

“We need to produce powerful stories in high-quality films—television shows ready to air,” Barreiro said, rubbing his hands together. “Graduating students will have demo reels. They will know how things work so they don't have to be trained on the job.”

Most of all, he wants to empower students to do excellent work without excuse and enter the workforce with practical experience and an open heart to what God will do with them without fear of failure. That is why he often shares with his students one of his favorite verses: 2 Kings 18:6–7, which says, in part, “He held fast to the Lord and did not stop following him; ... he was successful in whatever he undertook.”

“I want them to learn something, which is key,” Barreiro said. “If they seek God with all their heart, if they are strong in the Lord, He will direct them in unexpected ways. More than they can imagine. I know by experience.”

For Barreiro, the purpose of film production and life in general is to tell others about the love of God clearly, effectively and with excellence. By doing excellent work and making quality films, students can move forward, reach more people and do more than even he could dream.

“Do bigger and bigger things,” Barreiro said, spreading his hands wide. “If it's not us at ORU, who will?” ● story/sarah cochran

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and that's a wrap

don eland retires, enters next phase of life

Few people can say they battled hypothermia while lost in the Olympic National Forest, went mountain biking on Slickrock Trail in Utah or that they had a close encounter with a bear. This may seem like a description of a wilderness explorer, but a certain professor at ORU has experienced these scenes.

Don Eland, assistant professor of Communication, Arts and Media is about to embark on a new phase of his life as he enters retirement, opening an invitation for future adventures.

Eland has become skilled in the multimedia field, but it has not always been his professional focus. Growing up in a family that cherished music, Eland grew to love melodies and chords. At the young age of 16, Eland was already giving dozens of music lessons at Tulsa-based Saied Music Company.

ORU has played a pivotal role in Eland's life with six family members teaching or working at the university and 12 earning degrees. Eland's brother was in ORU's first graduating class, and his father chaired the music department for the first 20 years of the university's life.

Eland walked the ORU graduation stage twice: once with a Bachelor of Music degree in Performance, and again with a Bachelor of Music Education degree. He continued his education, earning a Master of Music at the University of Tulsa, followed by postgraduate classes. He landed an adjunct professor teaching position at Oral Roberts University because of the musical influence he had on the community. This allowed him to transition into a full-time professor and develop one of the Midwest's first music technology curricula.

The marriage of music and software inclined Eland to shift his professional direction, and he has loved exploring and learning about multimedia since.

He has been grateful for the opportunity to teach an engaging subject and impart it into young lives.

Don Eland divides his time among outdoor excursions, creating lesson plans and becoming acquainted with the latest technology. Eland made it a priority to be a lifelong learner and has become a man of many talents. photo/courtesy ORU photography



Creative thinking is the mental currency of the 21st century, and I get some of my best ideas during worship services.

- don eland, assistant professor of multimedia

"I've always loved my job," Eland said. "It's a privilege to love what you do. I love the variety and the creative challenge. It's really fun."

Escaping a wild bear or battling the elements has nothing on the challenges that teaching an ever-changing subject can provide. As much as Eland has enjoyed creating through the years, he has overcome obstacles in his profession. The prime barrier was the challenge to teach innovative and emerging technology.

"You are never done, and it never stops," Eland said. "I don't think I ever taught a class with the same syllabus. I couldn't refine a lecture over time until it was perfect. It's like a new class every semester—challenging, exhausting. There is not a profession that isn't changing."

Eland has taught a wide variety of multimedia classes ranging from photography to interactive media, but one aspect that Eland has thoroughly enjoyed about teaching is the ability to help develop world leaders.

"My favorite part about teaching is the creative challenge of working with students and that none of them are alike," Eland said. "I think there is a new generation of students with a new kind of intelligence—one that is not even recognized yet—a kind of learning that is going to change the way people think. The whole culture of education is changing."

The thrill of discovering tools to help expand his knowledge has been an intriguing jour-

ney, and keeping up with the innovation has been no easy task.

"Nobody can keep up with media," Eland said. "You collect it, filter it, build networks and prioritize—picking your battles. In media, you can't do that kind of job unless you love what you do. You have to love what you are doing or there is no chance of keeping up."

The 21st century boasts stunning technology and Eland encourages other professors to embrace teaching styles that reside with upcoming generations. Students agree that he is motivated to employ lessons that complement students' learning styles.

"Eland is very hands-on in his teaching style; this is very helpful when learning photography," freshman Graphic Design major Taylor Graham said. "We [the class] were able to put into practice the methods we were learning every day. He engages his students by allowing them to experience the programs, as well as having the opportunity to participate in real life photo shoots." As Eland has taught his students the basics of photography, he has enthusiastically sharpened his own skills.

He has traveled all over the globe and takes his camera on every journey. From Europe to Asia and everywhere in between, he likes to freeze memories while they happen, seizing the moment's emotions and action. The added 15 pounds to his backpack is worth the weight when

he can take a phenomenal picture or video. Eland has had multiple occasions to capture stunning and sometimes shocking photos. He had the opportunity to capture the tsunami wreckage that devastated Japan in 2011; he recalls his emergency response team had a base camp in Sendai, near the Fukushima nuclear reactor.

No matter what Eland experiences or where he travels, he still relies on the Lord to spark his creativity.

Once Eland gave the last final exam that concluded his teaching career, he has no intention of ceasing what he loves. His options are a little less conventional than most retirement plans and could be a fascinating journey in themselves. With a quick dusting off of the mountain bike, shaking out his crumpled backpack and considering other retirement options, photography and multimedia will likely be included in all of them.

"My son lives in a self-sustaining community just outside of Lexington, Virginia, which has a lot of appeal to my wife and I," Eland said. "I also bought a 5th wheel trailer and a truck. I have been to 46 countries and every state but Alaska—I want to go back to my favorites. I'd love to go back to Rijeka in Croatia, and to remote Costa Rica—it's the most beautiful place on earth."

Although Eland has closed the door on the teaching profession, he can continue to capture new memories through his camera lens in retirement. ● story/sierra quant

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taking the leap of faith

ecuadorian michelle rojas follows God's lead

Seven words: "I want to be an actress someday." That's all it took for Michelle Rojas to express the dream she had kept hidden since age six when she played the role of Eve, Adam's wife, in a first-grade performance. For the Ecuadorian, that whisper of her desire would present an array of obstacles she would overcome.

As a young girl, it was impressed upon Rojas that acting in Ecuador was an undesirable occupation because of the reputation that shadowed the craft. It was not to be pursued because the opportunities were scarce and frequently involved worldly content.

"Nobody really knew I wanted to act," Rojas said. "I was ashamed to say it because of cultural ties. It was considered strictly a hobby, and that you were supposed to do something serious with your life."

She was exclusively involved in sports in high school until her literature teacher announced an additional actress was needed for a play. Rojas received the part without formally auditioning for the show, and her passion for acting flourished.

"That was the first time I knew I loved theater because it made me feel alive," Rojas said. "There's a point when you have that adrenaline rush like when you jump from a plane, and that's what I felt on stage."

As high school graduation drew near, Rojas was confronted with critical decisions regarding her future and education. Desiring a stimulating experience, she enrolled in a year-long exchange program in France, hoping to gain clarity about her upcoming transition to college. Rojas was thrust into an environment where she didn't speak the native language. Initially, she couldn't fully express her emotions in French. Her need for an outlet of communication caused Rojas to fall in love with the expression of movement and dance.

Rojas wanted to continue her education in France, but due to economic hardships in her family, she returned to Ecuador. Studying at the University of San Francisco in Quito, Ecuador, Rojas was determined to embrace the redirection.

"The Lord told me, 'I'm preparing you in a different way,'" Rojas said. "There are no majors in theater or dance there, so I chose Public Relations as my major."



Michelle Rojas will not let any hindrance stand in the way of her becoming the woman she is destined to become. Her dauntless determination to pursue her dream brought her to the university hundreds of miles from her Ecuadorian home. photo/ Ezra Chavez





... God was telling me to jump a cliff to get to the other side, but without knowing if there was enough ground to catch me. I had to take a leap of faith.

- michelle rojas, ecuadorian junior dlf performance major

Noticing the integrity and quality of the work Rojas produced in her degree of study while still a student, corporations began to seek her out for her expertise. She opened a successful cupcake shop called Mr. & Mrs. Yum as a group project in a business class and assisted other clients like footwear and apparel champion Nike. Yet even with her budding success, Rojas did not feel fulfilled.

"The opportunities were awesome, but if I saw myself working in the field ten years from now, I wouldn't like it," Rojas said. "Dance means freedom to me. Acting is pure adrenaline. Watching a movie makes my heart beat faster."

Although dancing brought Rojas great joy, it came to a screeching halt when she broke her knee in rehearsal and the doctors said an operation was in order. Little did she know, God had a different plan.

"I went to the doctor a week later, and he said, 'I can't operate; it's not broken anymore,'" Rojas said.

This experience drew her in to an intimate relationship with God. Rojas came to realize God wanted to use her gifts for the glory of His kingdom.

Determined to find a university that would help fulfill her purpose, Rojas applied to colleges around the globe, searching for the one that would be her perfect fit. She was offered a full-ride scholarship to a university in Los Angeles but it was during this time her parents

learned of the Christ-centered education and whole person ideology that Oral Roberts University offers and encouraged Rojas to apply. With little knowledge of the Sooner state, Rojas chose ORU as her new home.

"I had a peace to come here—such a great peace—but I've also never been so scared in my life," Rojas said. "It was like God was telling me to jump a cliff to get to the other side, but without knowing if there was enough ground to catch me. I had to take a leap of faith. I don't want to dance for me, or do theater for me, but for God."

Nowadays Rojas is a first-year transfer student majoring in Drama-Television-Film Performance and is scheduled to graduate in 2015.

Others have acknowledged Rojas' tremendous journey.

"She is very focused, even in the midst of adversity," ORU alumnus and Gray Media Tim Gray founder said. "Just to get to ORU, she already has achieved so much. She is very passionate and determined."

Rojas looks to the future expectantly with God-ordained steps on the horizon. Her desire is to be an actress in the film industry, to be a light and example to those in the entertainment world.

Whether dancing her heart out or gracing center stage, Rojas will continue to diligently take steps toward making her dreams reality. ● story/sierra quant

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photo/chandler branzell

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When God puts a call on your life, it's your job to continue that call.

- caleb koehler, sophomore
convergence journalism major

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Evident excellence

SHRM chapter earns national award for 17th year

Excellence is not a single action but a habit. A group of ORU students has consistently gone the extra mile to grasp their professional potential. The school's chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management embodies excellence.

The goal of SHRM is to give every member the opportunity to gain real-world experience and hone networking skills to become proficient in human resource practices. The team has flourished under the direction of Assistant Professor of Communication, Susan McMurray, who has coached the group to success. Their efforts have paid off. This diligent group of students is acknowledged in the top 20 percent of chapters in the nation.

The Superior Merit Award is the highest nationally recognized honor a chapter can receive. Chapters earn merit points based on the activities completed throughout the year. SHRM gave a helping hand to the Tulsa area through community service projects, planned field trips, published a newsletter, and hosted HR professionals in order to be considered for this prestigious award. The points have been tallied, and among 575 affiliate chapters, the ORU chapter has been recognized with a Superior Merit Award for the 17th consecutive year.

Each member is actively engaged. Recently, they toured Tulsa-based The Williams Companies Inc. and St. Francis Hospital facilities, eagerly soaking up knowledge about corporate HR.

The chapter hosts monthly guest speakers so the students can gain insights from professionals who are established in the field. Julie Thornton, Vice President of Human Resources at Paragon Films, spoke about revamping the workplace to be a more nurturing and creative environment. Carey Baker, President of Part-Time Pros, addressed the importance of professional development. Members also chat with professionals as they interact at the monthly Tulsa Area Human Resources Association luncheons.

The relationships established through this society have opened doors for students for job opportunities and internships. Many SHRM members are offered HR jobs before they walk across the graduation stage. This society prepares students to go into every person's world and be adept in the workforce. The tradition of excellence will be continued for years to come as new students propel the Society of Human Resource Management chapter forward. ● story/sierra quant

“SHRM members learn to network and serve in meaningful internships and as a result stand out as being prepared and ready for the workforce.”

– susan mcmurray,
assistant professor of communication
SHRM adviser

grace on the stage

dance students tap into their destiny

Howard Auditorium's stage was dark and abandoned, but once the semester was in full swing, it burst with movement and melody. Performances given by dance students were the product of dedication and personal sacrifice.

"Eternal Flame," the fall showcase, addressed how Christians today strive to be a light in a dark world. In the spring performance, "Light in the Uttermost," the audience was enthralled. Each song invited the spectators into a dynamic blend of choreography and music; the extensive range of dance styles displayed students' versatility of technique.

Backstage, a flurry of dancers prepared for their next cue. Costumes, shoes and even hairstyles needed to be changed in minutes.

The classical ballet dancers gracefully pirouetted across the floor. Jazz, musical theater and modern dances were incorporated into the performance as well. Heart-pounding numbers were contrasted with whimsy. The crowd was captivated by the groups in perfect synchronization and powerful solo pieces. Choreography, costumes, lighting and style were all me-



Countless hours of rehearsal develop the skill that allows dancers to perform stunning pieces. Dance majors use their God-given craft to connect with the audience in a meaningful way, prompting thought and discussion. photo/mark moore

ticulously interwoven to enhance each expressive dance number. In an attempt to connect with others, pupils, through their creative capabilities, hoped routines impacted lives at a deeper level. Many student-choreographed pieces represented personal revelations. Even after the curtain closed and the artists took their well-deserved bows, the audience was abuzz about the intricacy of the show they had witnessed.

Just as the dancers flourished in Howard Auditorium, students had the opportunity to share the stage with other prestigious dance programs at the American College Dance Festival. This opportunity opened doors to students for scholarships and future possibilities with esteemed dance companies. • story/sierra quant



on with the show

drama, theatre, film majors take center stage

Audiences stood and cheered as student performers acted, sang and danced their way through another outstanding season of shows. Students have showcased their rising talents every semester, and this year they have raised the bar of excellence.

Students portrayed brilliantly developed characters in classic plays, capturing humor in the comedies and superb vocal and dance abilities in this season's tremendous dramatic showpieces. The altitude of talents the students possessed continued to skyrocket.

ORU Theatre presented a spirited opener to the season by carrying out a modern take on Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing." Maintaining its established excellence, the follow-up production was "Proposals" by the world renowned playwright Neil Simon, which captivated onlookers. The performance gave viewers a show filled with laughter and enjoyment that had them cheering and applauding for more. The department only continued to gain momentum in the spring semester, opening with "Tintypes," a musical review conceived by dramatists Mary Kyte, Mel Marvin and Gary Pearle. Students danced and sang their way into



Actors blossom on stage into convincing characters full of depth. Excelling in many genres of theater, drama students take a bow, knowing the performance was a job well done. photo/mark moore

the hearts of spectators and delivered a show-stopping performance that brought the house to its feet. ORU Theatre in conjunction with Playhouse Theater Tulsa, a production company founded by alumni, put on an outstanding performance surpassing all expectations. The cast's efforts to invite the audience into the wonderful world of "A Little Princess: The Musical" by playwright and composer Brian Crawley and Andrew Lippa were fruitful. The thrilling and artistically outstanding performances highlighted the quality the theater program has been known for. ● story/rondah frierson



up for debate

debate team triumphs at competition

The tallies have all been totaled and there is no argument about the results. Hours of preparing and it all comes down to a meeting of the sharpest minds to argue their positions on some of the most relevant current events and topics—that is what students have been working toward. It is the art of refutation as it should be displayed; it's the place where pupils engage in powerful persuasion for the prize.

The ORU Debate team, a national-award-decorated competition team, has now completed its second academic season at a varsity level in the National Parliamentary Debate Association. The NPDA is the largest intercollegiate debate tournament. Teams argue in a two-on-two format facing off on a topic, usually one fulfilling current events, one taking the affirmative position and the other the opposing side.

With more than 120 opposing groups from across the country vying for the title of masters of persuasion, this year they won the Green Country Swing First Place Sweepstakes, placed third in the Sweepstakes at Henderson State, first place at John Brown University's Golden Eagle Tournament and Overall Sweepstakes winner of Ozark Cup.

Sponsored by Assistant Professor of Organizational/Interpersonal Communication Agena Farmer and led by their coach, Molly Brown, an adjunct faculty member, the convincing cluster spends their semesters preparing, traveling, competing and proudly representing their university in competitions.

These devoted students work hard maintaining their academic responsibilities all while preparing for events, and on the weekends the group hits the road, bringing their A game to challenge opposing teams from other universities.

The experience is packed with a range of activities—from individual speaking and debate events to tournament management and development of business and church communication. The focus on developing presentation skills within the participants prepares them for making presentations in every walk of life.

To be involved, there were two options for joining. Participants either joined the debate club or enrolled and earned class credit. Both opportunities make students eligible for yearly scholarships, but it is the passion for persuasion and a competitive nature that keeps them coming back year after year. ● story/rondah frierson

“We had another outstanding team with 30 students logically presenting the truth of God's Word.

- agena farmer,
assistant professor of comm
& debate coach

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from old english to new dean

dr. mark hall promoted to dean of arts and cultural studies



Dr. Mark Hall transitions from focusing solely on teaching classes to serving as Dean of Arts and Cultural Studies. He looks forward to shaping and improving the program by partnering with the dedicated faculty and students at ORU. photo/mark moore

People can dedicate their lives to discovering the beauty of the written word, to crafting phrases that dance off the page or sweep the reader to another world, but it takes an outstanding communicator to be able to transfer that skill to young creative minds.

Dr. Mark Hall is such a person and has been an ORU professor of English for over 20 years. With a heart for the world-class students and faculty, he is transitioning into a new assignment as the Arts and Cultural Studies Dean.

Starting as a Teacher's Assistant in the university's College of Theology and Ministry in 1987, Hall has always had a passion for higher education. Hall goes beyond instructing and is committed to being a lifelong learner. He is equipped with three master's degrees from Oral Roberts University: two different M.A.s in Biblical Literature and an M.A. in Theological and Historical Studies. From the University of Central Missouri, he earned a B.S.E. in English Education, an M.S.E. in English, and a Specialist degree in Higher Education with an emphasis in English. At the University of Tulsa, he earned his Ph.D. in English.

With expertise in classes such as British Literature I, English Romantic Period, C.S. Lewis and the Inklings and his two-decades long journey in higher education with all he has gleaned along the way securely under his belt, Hall was well prepared to accept his position with enthusiasm.

In addition to his involvement in education, Hall is an ordained minister and was the pastor of a church. Managing faculty and students is much like shepherding a flock, and Hall is up to the task.

As Hall reflects upon his diverse life experiences and looks forward to the impact he can make in his new position as the Arts and Cultural Studies Dean, he can help shape the program so that students and faculty alike can embrace their potential. ● story/sierra quant

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I teach to make a difference in the lives of my students so that they can make an impact for Christ in their world.

- mark hall,
arts & cultural studies dean

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Some of you alumni remember what it was like when we were figuring out the grand experiment of, ‘Could we really create a whole person?’ That same excitement is back.

- Laura Holland,
Department Chair

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the communique wins again

PRSSA 1st in nation, OCMA 1st in state



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The quality of student writers exceeds the year before. This year we added a phenomenal videographer. As a result, we hope to win in a new category this year, online interactive magazines.

- chris putman,
assistant professor of media
communique adviser

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