

MAY 2025

MILLER MINUTE

The Newsletter of the A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication



THE A.Q. MILLER SCHOOL CELEBRATES AN OUTSTANDING YEAR

On April 25, SMC faculty and students took a break from their end-of-semester hustle to come together and celebrate the exceptional students who earned scholarships for the next academic year and won accolades as leaders and members of the school's award-winning student media, clubs, teams. Master's students **Chase R. Jordan** and **Dawson Wagner** served as emcees for an evening of reflection and jubilation.

The event included recognitions of the SMC ambassadors by ambassador coordinator **Anne Bryant**; the PRRSA Student Leader of the Year (**Zoie Stachura**); the Ad Club Student Leader of the Year (**Rylee M. Kerr**); the Mock Trial Team Attorney of the Year (**Lilly Schultejans**), Presenter of the Year (**Adam Watkins**), and Witness of the Year (**McCartney Franklin**); the Forensics Team Speaker of the Year (**Alondra Alvarez**); and the Debate Team Debater of the Year (**Caitlin Sand**) and New Debater of the Year (**Taryn Day**). Wildcat Electronic Media Director **Andrew Smith** introduced the students who won awards at the Kansas Association of Broadcasters (KAB), the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Awards, and the Broadcast Education Association Awards. **Darren Epping-Fuentes**, assistant director for instructional excellence, presented the Nancy Goulden Teaching Award (**Philomena Williams**), and **Dr. Raluca Cozma**, associate director for graduate programs and research, presented the Bill Schenck-Hamlin Graduate Research Award (**Hannah Phelps**) and the Charles JG Griffin Graduate Student Leadership Award (**Chase R. Jordan**).

Dr. Sam Mwangi, president of the K-State Louise Benjamin chapter of Kappa Tau Alpha, and **Dr. Raluca Cozma**, K-State chapter adviser and national president of the Kappa Tau Alpha honor society for journalism and mass communication, presided over the initiation ceremony of seven students who earned lifetime KTA membership: **Allyson Harris**, **Malea Karnes**, **Karamatu Abdul Malik**, **Parker McGowan**, **Emma Patty**, **AnnaBella Peterson**, and **Madison Quinn**.



DR. ANAN WAN SELECTED FOR COMPETITIVE NATIONAL VISITING PROFESSOR PROGRAM IN NYC



Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Anan Wan, Assistant Professor of Advertising & Public Relations, has been selected for the highly competitive 2025 Visiting Professor Program hosted by the ANA (Association of National Advertisers) Educational Foundation in partnership with Fordham University. Taking place June 2–6 in New York City, the program immerses advertising and marketing educators in the dynamic world of industry practice through on-site visits and in-depth conversations with leaders at global companies and agencies such as NFL, Mastercard, Edelman, IBM, McCann, AB InBev, and WPP Open. The coveted in-person program is by application only and open to full-time professors with a terminal degree (e.g., Ph.D., DBA) who teach in the United States.

The program is designed to bridge academia and industry, offering faculty direct exposure to current trends in creativity, sustainability, data, technology, and AI in advertising and marketing. Dr. Wan will bring back fresh insights to inform her research and enhance classroom learning for students in the fall.

MASTER'S STUDENT KATE WILLIAMSON SELECTED AS ONE OF K-STATE'S 2025 RISK MANAGEMENT STUDENT FELLOWS

A career in events and marketing has allowed master's student in Mass Communications **Kate Williamson** to develop a strong foundation in operations and logistics, project management, and data analytics. During her career, she has developed a deep understanding of how to anticipate, evaluate, and respond to uncertainty in dynamic environments. This background has earned her a spot in K-State's 2025 Risk Management Center Fellowship Program. Student-fellows will dedicate time each week toward experiential risk management educational activities. They will gain access to coursework, industry speaker presentations, trips to visit risk management professionals, networking events and team-based industry research projects.

"My experience coordinating complex projects has shown me the critical role that strategic risk management plays in ensuring success and resilience," Kate says. "I'm especially interested in applying these skills in a global context while working for the State Department or the military after graduation."

The fellowship in risk management will allow Kate to deepen her expertise while contributing meaningfully to initiatives with real-world impact. "Ultimately, this aligns with my long-term goal of serving with the State Department, where effective risk mitigation is essential to advancing U.S. interests abroad," Kate shared.

Student-fellows who complete the RMC program will receive a transcript denotation.



2025 K-STATE DIGITAL SUMMIT EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

An A.Q. Miller School team led by **Alan Boyer** and consisting of **Jacob Groshek**, **Huyen Nguyen**, **Nick Homburg**, and **Susan Matzke** organized a successful K-State Digital Summit at the Kansas City Kansas Public School District Offices on March 27. The summit set new standards for attendance and high school involvement, with 100 students from three high schools (Wyandotte, Harmon and Schlagle) participating.

The K-State Digital Summit was established in Spring 2023 as a premier event to showcase the university's diverse digital innovation programs, cutting-edge facilities, and first-rate faculty. "By bringing together high school students and prospective future leaders in computer science, digital media, and business, the summit inspires exploration, fosters collaboration, and ignites passion for digital careers," Professor Boyer said. The event empowers participants to engage hands-on with technology, experience real-world simulations and challenges, and connect with faculty, staff, and peers in a dynamic, forward-thinking environment. "The summit also serves as a vital recruiting tool to help advance new digital education programs, connecting prospective students with faculty and staff in one-on-one program showcases, where they can ask questions, explore advanced technologies, and gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities available at K-State," Professor Boyer added. The summit aims to cultivate the next generation of digital pioneers and solidifies K-State's reputation as a leader in higher education digital innovation.



DARREN EPPING-FUENTES AWARDED RESEARCH GRANT

Darren Epping-Fuentes, Associate Director for Undergraduate Programs and Engagement in the A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication, has been awarded the Bruce Manchester Scholar Series Research Award by the American Forensics Association National Speech Tournament (AFA-NST). The \$5,000 grant will support a collaborative research project exploring trends in impromptu-style speaking at the AFA-NST. The study aims to analyze how students craft and support arguments in competitive collegiate speech settings, providing insights into evolving rhetorical strategies and pedagogical approaches.

Epping-Fuentes is collaborating with colleagues from Illinois State University and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to conduct the research. Their findings will contribute to a broader understanding of current practices in collegiate forensics and may inform future coaching techniques and tournament structures.

"I'm excited to be part of a research team focused on better understanding competitive collegiate speech," said Epping-Fuentes. "Our goal is to uncover ways to enhance coaching practices and student participation in the event." The award was announced this spring, and the project will launch next fall.



WILDCAT ELECTRONIC MEDIA WINS RECORD NUMBER OF HEARTLAND EMMYS

Wildcat Electronic Media had seven nominations for student production awards from the Heartland Chapter Emmys, the most in K-State history, of which three were winners, also a record.

One Emmy was for individual achievement, and two were for long-form programs, including top Magazine special for Professor **Andrew Smith's** study abroad group who traveled to London last spring:

SOLO STORYTELLER

Factory to Field

- **Andrew Smith**, Faculty Advisor
- **Dawson Wagner**, Producer/Photographer/Editor

MAGAZINE PROGRAM

London Calling 2024

- **Andrew Smith**, Faculty Advisor
- **Hannah Whetstone**, Reporter
- **J.P. Cardenas**, Reporter
- **Brody Zwiebel**, Reporter
- **Parker McGowan**, Reporter
- **Aaron McGill**, Reporter
- **Landon Platter**, Reporter

SPORTS PROGRAM

MHK All Day Sports Special

- **Andrew Smith**, Faculty Advisor
- **Dawson Wagner**, Producer
- **Hannah Whetstone**, Reporter
- **Sophie Dille**, Reporter
- **Noah Berchman**, Reporter
- **Toby Hammes**, Reporter
- **Grant Snowden**, Reporter
- **Brian Nicholson**, Reporter



GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Joshua Diehl

Josh is a first-year student in the online master's program in mass communications. Originally from Delaware (and proud of it!), he currently lives in Philadelphia. He is the Social Media and Content Creation Manager at [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org), a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. "In my role, I synthesize the excellent journalism of my colleagues and create bite-sized social posts that are shared with our 1.6M followers across our nine official platforms," Josh shared.

Why did you choose K-State?

"I chose K-State because of the A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication. With 115 years of storied history, the Miller School provided me with an excellent opportunity to learn from distinguished faculty, expand my network and join a community of Wildcats in the communications profession."

What are your research interests?

"My research interest is in the field of social media. Specifically, my interests lie in the intersections of social media and fact-checking, as well as social media and the concept of "virality" in content."

What are your long-term plans?

"My long-term plans include receiving my Ph.D in Communication and trying to make the world a better place in whatever way I can."

Any hobbies or fun facts about yourself that you'd like to share?

"I recently took up baking, and this past month, my Rustic Italian Loaf won the Annenberg bake-off. I even got an etched pie dish to prove it! "



SMC LAUNCHES NEW PODCAST HIGHLIGHTING SCHOOL RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES



CoMMediators is a podcast from the A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication that explores the intersection of media, communication, and culture through the lens of research, engagement, and innovation. Each episode highlights student and faculty work — from senior capstone projects to in-depth conversations with topical experts and alumni — with a focus on how media shapes and reflects our world.

Dr. Jacob Groshek developed the podcast, which he co-produces with master's student and Wildcat 91.9 FM Assistant Chief Operator **Dawson Wagner**. They envision it as a dynamic platform for both academic and real-world perspectives. "What excites me most about CoMMediators is how it brings research to life — it's not just a podcast; it's a bridge between classrooms, communities, and conversations that matter," Dr. Groshek said. "This project grew out of the Ross Beach Research Chairship and the A.Q. Miller School's shared passion to showcase the incredible work happening across our unit and to spark deeper dialogue about media's role in shaping culture, and in the process, further cultivate and highlight our own research culture."

All students, faculty members, and representatives of affiliated programs who would like to share what they're working on are invited to reach out to Dr. Groshek (groshek@ksu.edu) to be featured as a guest on the podcast.

K-STATE'S INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC DISCOURSE AND DEMOCRACY PREPARES TO CELEBRATE AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY



Dr. Colene Lind

This spring, the [Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy \(ICDD\)](#) renewed a longstanding partnership with the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, working with the library staff to prepare for [America250](#).

At the request of Joy Murphy, library and museum engagement director, ICDD Director **Colene Lind** organized a February 5 field trip to the museum. Eight K-State students, along with four from Kansas Wesleyan, dialogued in small teams about their experiences as Americans.

America250 is a nonpartisan initiative working to engage every American in the semi-quincentennial of the United States. July 4, 2026, marks 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. As explained by the America250 organization, the anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on the country's past, "honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond."

The field trip tested discussion protocols for future Eisenhower America250 events. Participating students discussed a favorite song and their interpretation of it, inviting conversation on what distinguishes and binds Americans. Murphy plans to host a state-wide America250 celebration that promotes cross-cultural understanding.

After the morning dialogues, students toured the presidential museum and spoke with library staff about research opportunities at the library. Murphy, Lind, and Dr. Mary Kohn, director of K-State's Champman Center for Rural Studies, will implement student feedback as planning continues for America250.



K-STATE'S THIRD AD & PR SUMMIT WAS A SUCCESS

K-State's Ad Club (advised by **Dr. Anan Wan**) and PRSSA (advised by **Dr. Dani LaGree**) hosted the third Ad & PR Summit on April 1, featuring what Dr. LaGree called "a phenomenal lineup" of industry experts. Students had the opportunity to hear from a panel of professionals, network in small-group roundtable discussions, and have their résumés and portfolios reviewed. Months of planning and communication went into making this event happen. Panelists who shared their insights and advice included Andi DiOrio, APR (Regional PR Lead, Amazon), Linda Cook (former Director of Communications and Chief of Staff for K-State President's Office), Mario Cardozo Baquero (Communications and Marketing specialist, Kansas Childcare Training Opportunities), Bruce Grover (President and Chief Strategist, Cause), Salina Sauber (Director of Communications, K-State Alumni Association), Ryan Hayter (Founder/President, Hayter Industries, LLC), and Addie Linn (Mangaer of Marketing and Communications, Kasnas City Area Development Council).



CONGRATULATIONS

to

Dr. Jacob Groshek & Dr. Nikhil Moro

on being granted sabbatical leaves
next academic year!

Dr. Groshek will spend his sabbatical as senior fellow at the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital / Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Moro will conduct fieldwork at the Library of Congress, the National Archives at Kansas City, and two university campuses in India, all focusing on emerging First Amendment issues related to generative artificial intelligence (AI).

Miller Minute editors:

Raluca Cozma and Chase R. Jordan