

Mayborn School of Journalism

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2025



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Note on this Report

2024 and 2025 were transition periods for Mayborn School of Journalism due to that we have combined the report for the year 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. Moving forward we will return to yearly schedule and will be release at the beginning of each academic year.

A Letter from the Dean

“You Belong at the Mayborn!”

That new slogan, created by our public relations students, exemplifies the idea that you are critical to our development as the hub of journalism for North Texas. Whether you are an alum, a professional or a student, we want your help to keep the Mayborn an outstanding school and take it to new heights. We serve as a place where all who are interested in the profession can come to exchange ideas, learn, and create solutions for the challenges facing the industry. We took a step in that direction in 2025 by moving our prestigious Mayborn Literary

Nonfiction to the campus for the first time ever. We partnered with the Department of Media Arts to showcase award-winning films in their theater, and we intend to forge more partnerships with other UNT departments to expand the conference.

“You Belong at the Mayborn” also means that we are student-centered. We focus on what helping students achieve their professional goals through the classroom, research, internships, student media and student chapters of professional organizations.

I’m in my 25th year at UNT, and second year as dean (the first year as interim dean). I’ve seen a lot of changes in the journalism program during at time—going from a department in the College of Arts and Sciences to an independent school and back to a school in the new College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. But we have always had world-class faculty mentoring the next generation of media professionals.

Scroll through this report for some highlights of a few of the achievements of our students, faculty and alumni.

Please let me know how you would like to be involved with our school. After all, “You Belong at the Mayborn!”

James E. Mueller,
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Dr. James Mueller
Dean, Mayborn
School of Journalism



Mayborn by the Numbers

Spring 2025

48 graduate students this semester:

19 JOUR-MA

17 DCMA-MS

12 JOUR-MJ

Fall 2024

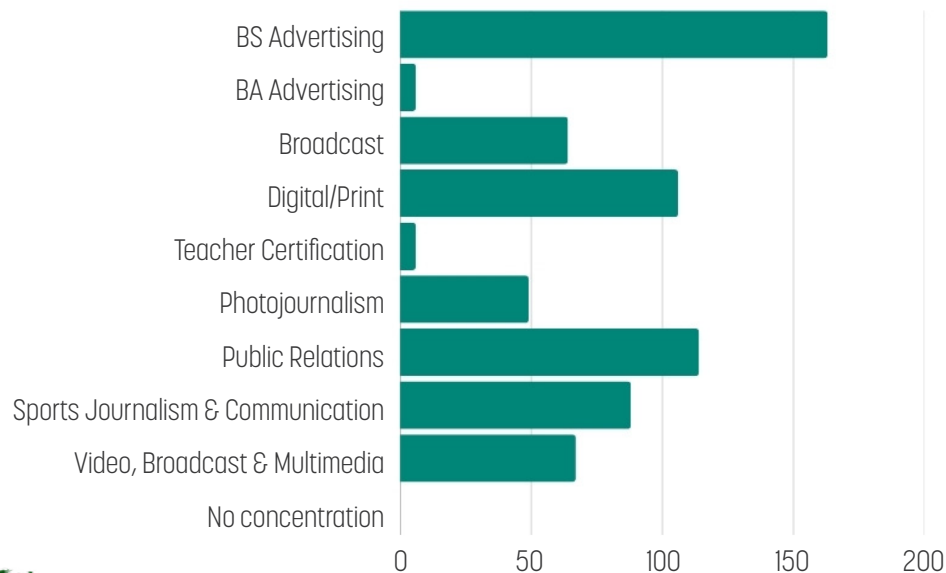
49 graduate students this semester:

16 JOUR-MA

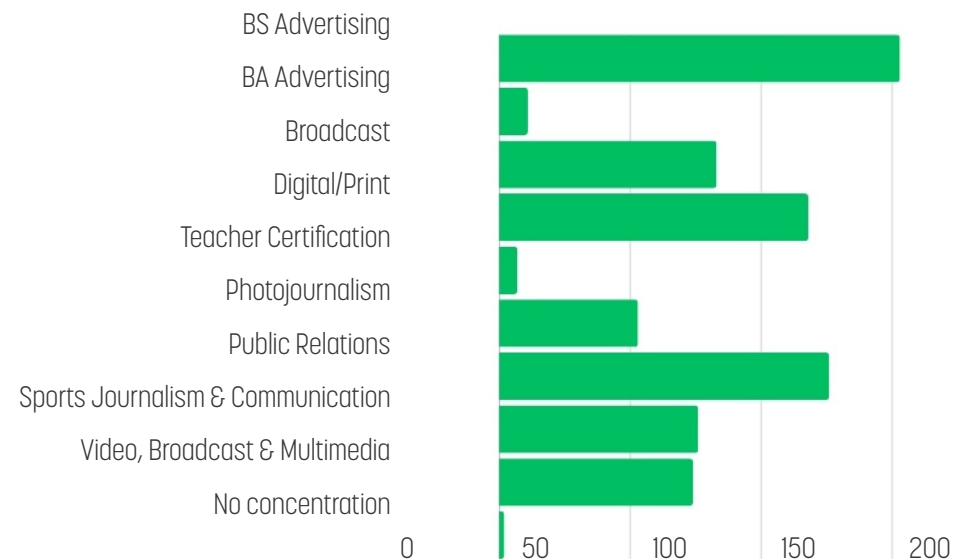
20 DCMA-MS

13 JOUR-MJ

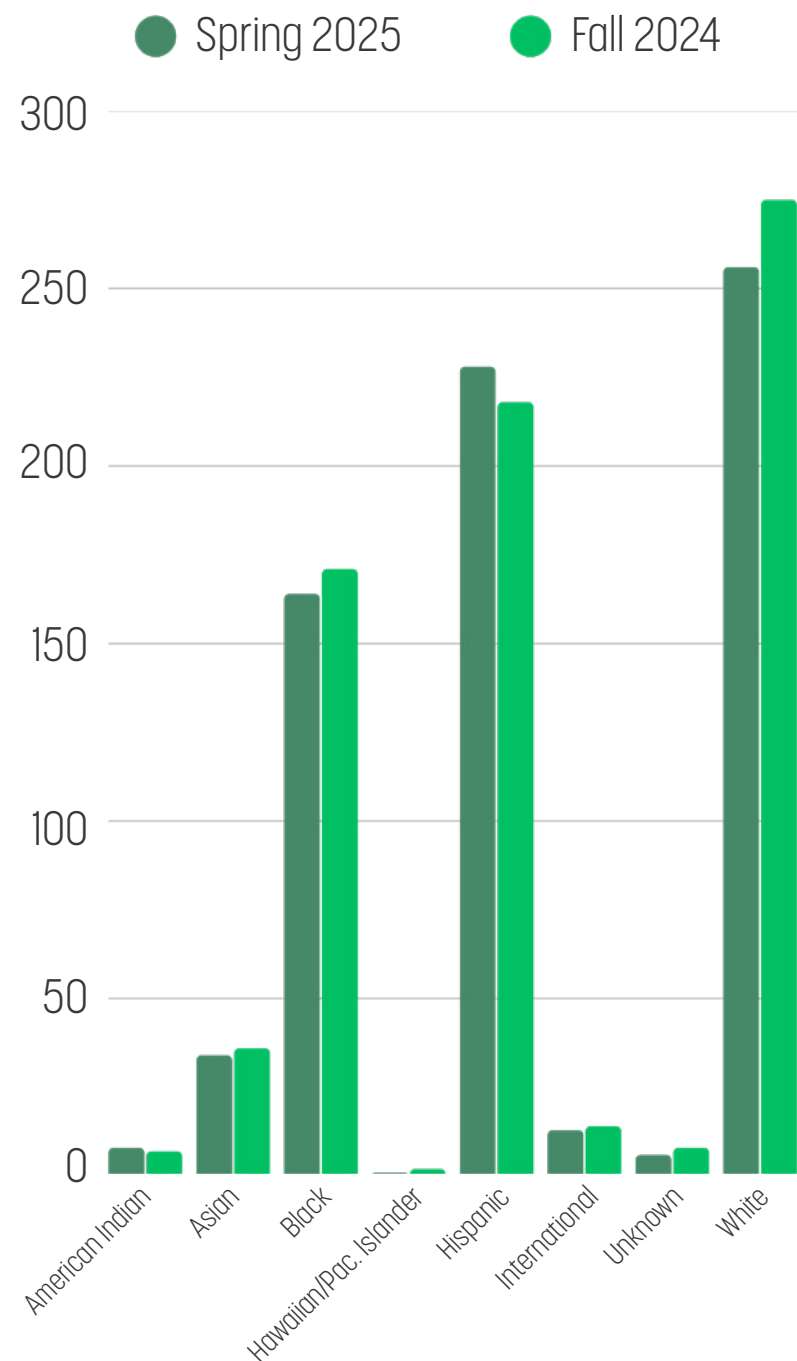
664 UNDERGRADS



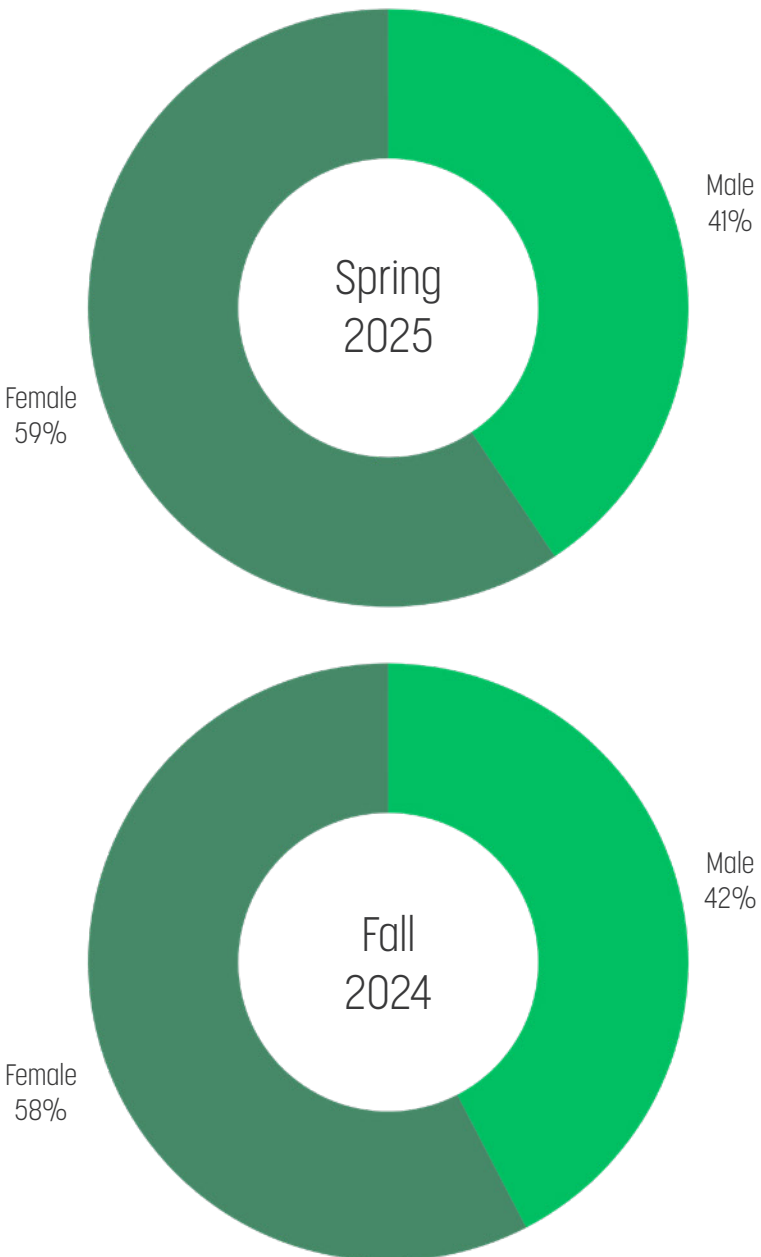
703 UNDERGRADS



Population by Ethnicity:



Population by Gender:



Accomplishments

2023 - 2024

Study Abroad & Facilities

- 12 students traveled to Madrid, Spain for a study abroad program under Professor Tracy Everbach and Associate Professor Gwen Nisbett.
- The MacLab was completely updated with new Mac computers.

Faculty Recognition

- Professor Tracy Everbach won the 2023 Educator Award presented by the Southwest Education Council for Journalism and Mass Communication.
- Senior Lecturer Brittany McElroy was a finalist for a CLASS Teaching Award.
- Professor Dorothy Bland and Neil Foote, former Principal Lecturer and current Executive Director, Frisco Marketing Strategy, for UNT, received the History Maker Award from the DFW Chapter Black Public Relations Society
- Professor Dorothy Bland was named recipient of the Lionel C. Barrow Jr. Award by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) for her distinguished achievement in diversity research and education.
- Senior Lecturer Rebecca Poynter joined nine other UNT faculty members in being selected for the Faculty Leadership Fellows program. As a Leadership Fellow, Poynter was recognized for her leadership as she embarked on an independent project to strengthen her field by leading the student PR organization, AgenZ.

Alumni Recognition

- Alumna Terri West won the UNT Distinguished Alumni Award and was appointed a UNT System Regent.
- The Mayborn Board of Advisors introduced Tina Young as President of the board for 2024-2025.
- The Mayborn Board of Advisors introduced Trent Walters as President of the board for 2025-2026.

Student Awards & Competitions

- Mayborn students won 7 College Emmy awards.
- At the 2023 College Media Association Film and Audio Festival, Mayborn students placed first in the short documentary category and second in the long documentary category.
- April Pierdant won first place in the following categories for Carnegie-Knight News21 “America After Roe”:
 - » Best college/university investigative story or series
 - » Best college/university-produced community or niche website
 - » Best news story or series on a college/university website
- Azul Sordo, a photojournalism student, was a top 10 finalist in the 2023-2024 Hearst Photo Picture Series/Story competition.
- Hudson Crozier was a top 20 finalist in the 2023-2024 Hearst Television News Competition.
- The Mayborn School of Journalism placed 8th in the 64th Annual Hearst Journalism Awards for the Intercollegiate Photojournalism Competition.
- Gabrielle Pippins was recognized as the Wes Vernon Broadcast Scholar by The National Press Club 2024 Scholarship winners.
- Gabrielle Pippins was recognized as the recipient of the Darrell K. Royal Scholarship by the Headliners Foundation for her outstanding potential in journalism.
- Camilo Díaz was awarded for his feature videography in Region 8 by the National Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ). Camilo’s submission, “Valley Brush Strokes,” was featured in the border reporting trip.
- The student advertising team placed third in The National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) for Region 10 of the American Advertising Federation (AAF) for their Tide campaign. Additionally, they took home the special judges’ award for team camaraderie.

Student Leadership & Organizations

- Assistant Professor of Practice Larry Powell took four student leaders to New York City in 2023 for the AAF Student Career Conference: Citili Gonzales and June Brown of SWOOP, Lauren Williams of Gravitas, and Cassandra Blake of AD Club.
- The Mayborn’s student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists received their brick at the university’s brick ceremony for being the 2023 Student Organization of the Year.
- Ethan Gillis, a Mayborn student, was announced as the newest UNT System Student Regent.

2024 - 2025

Faculty Recognition

- Professor Kim Keller was named the winner of the 2025 Fessor Floyd Graham Award by the UNT Student Government Association.

Institutional Recognition

- Mayborn Assessment Committee recognized as the Outstanding College by University Accreditation.
- Dr. James Mueller named as the new dean of the Mayborn School of Journalism.

Study Abroad & Travel

- Students traveled to Japan for a study abroad program under Associate Professor Koji Fuse.
- 13 students traveled to Madrid, Spain for a study abroad program under Associate Professor Newly Paul and Associate Professor Gwen Nisbett.
- Lecturer Hoda Emam and Professor Tracy Everbach led students on a Spring Break reporting trip to the Muscogee Nation, Oklahoma. Students were honored to meet former U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo and Principal Chief David Hill.

Research & Presentations

- Master's student Mezabahnur Masum presented his research paper at the international conference The Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference of the Arab-US Association for Communication Educators (AUSACE) in Cairo, Egypt. He also presented two additional papers at the 2024 Southwest Symposium of the Southwest Education Council for Journalism and Mass Communication (SWECJMC). Previously, he presented another paper at the 2024 Public Interest Communications Summer Institute conference in Denver.
- Masters students Mezabahnur Masum and Martin Friedenthal won the Best Extended Abstract award at the SWECJMC Symposium. Mezabahnur presented another paper in the field of health communication and cognitive psychology, titled "The Role of Cognitive Psychology in Shaping Public Responses to Health Crises: An Analysis of Two COVID-19 Misinformation Case Studies."

- Tabitha Hidalgo presented student work from a class reporting trip to the Muscogee Nation in spring 2025 [JM2] at the Indigenous Media Conference in Albuquerque.
- Associate Professor Xiaoqun Zhang was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the UNT Honors College to support the development of a new Honors College course about the use of Artificial Intelligence in journalism.

Student Awards & Recognition

- Master's student Maria Crane was selected based on her portfolio for the 2024 Eddie Adams Workshop, which is a four-day photojournalism seminar held in upstate New York. In 2025, Crane was also accepted into the 2025 CatchLight Local Fellowship, in partnership with Report for America.
- Luis Verduzco was selected to participate in a leadership program sponsored by The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations and the Grossman Group. The program, the EMERGE Leadership Academy, provides students with a virtual leadership curriculum plus opportunities to interact with Plank board members and other PR industry professionals. He also received a scholarship to attend the Plank Summit and Gala, a forum for practitioners, educators, and students to discuss crucial leadership issues in PR. The summit took place on Nov. 7 in Chicago.
- Jonathan Forbes was selected to represent UNT in the DC Intern Program. Forbes was in DC during the U.S. Presidential Inauguration and the first 100 days of the next administration.
- JC Ramirez Delgadillo was accepted into the 2024 Hispanic Scholarship Fund Media and Entertainment Summit. Delgadillo also earned NAHJ's 2025 Ruben Salazar Scholarship.
- Emily Fyffe and Jazlyn Drake, two seniors from Mayborn's Advertising and Brand Management program, were honored as UNT Golden Eagle recipients.
- Jordan Lindsay and Martha Bratcher were named finalists in the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Region 8 Mark of Excellence Awards for Television General News Reporting.
- Chris Moss and McKinnon Rice were accepted into the Reporting Fellowship at the Fort Worth Report.
- Alfred Dozier IV will work as an North Texas in the District of Columbia (NTDC) intern on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.
- Delanie Okocha landed a fall 2025 remote internship with Photo Book magazine.



Student Competitions

- Gravitas received the Judges Special Award (The New America) for having the best representation of Gen Z in their campaign at the National Student Advertising Competition.
- The North Texas Daily staff was awarded numerous Texas Intercollegiate Press Association awards for their outstanding work on the publication:

1st Place

- Spanish opinion writing - JC Ramirez
- Sports action photo - Tyler Quisenberry
- Editorial - *The North Texas Daily* editorial board
- Visual illustration - Allie Garza
- Sports game story - Justin Na

2nd Place

- Overall design/web - Ismael M. Belkoura, Rose Wright, McKinnon Rice
- General video news story - Jordan Lindsay
- Cartoon strip/panel - Allie Garza
- Critical review - Jordyn Stevens

3rd Place

- Sports column - Chris Moss
- Sports game story - Chris Moss
- Photo story - Luis Revilla, Ismael M. Belkoura, MaKenzie Givan, Brock Burgan

Live Contests

- Third place: Copy editing - McKinnon Rice
- Third place: Live news photo - McKinnon Rice

Honorable Mention

- Sports reporting/video - Christian Bersuch
- Live radio news writing - JC Ramirez
- Live Spanish news writing - Diego Hernandez
- Best in Show - *The North Texas Daily* staff



2025 Celebrate Mayborn

Student Scholarship & Awards Gala

In April 2025, we combined the Student Scholarship Gala and the Alumni & Industry Awards into a single evening of celebration. This event allowed students to network with alumni and industry professionals, while recognizing outstanding contributions across the Mayborn community. Faculty selected award recipients who exemplify excellence, innovation, and leadership in journalism, strategic communication, and related fields.

Spring 2025 Outstanding Students

- Advertising: Anisha Jolie Collazo
- Video, Broadcast & Multimedia: Madeline McCrory
- Digital Print: Makenzie Givan
- Photojournalism: Alaina Jones
- Public Relations: Javeriya Anwar
- MSDCA Graduate: Courteny Hutchinson
- MA/MJ Graduate: Maria Crane

Fall 2024 Outstanding Students

- Advertising: June Brown
- Video, Broadcast & Multimedia: Marshal Farmer
- Digital Print: Madison Brewster
- Photojournalism: Madeleine Moore
- Public Relations: Luis Verduzco
- MSDCA: Amy Barnett
- MA/MJ Graduate: Justin Powell

C.E. Shuford Award Winner
Tina Young

Mayborn Medallion Award Winner
Chip Mahaney

**Distinguished Professional
Achievement Award Winner**
Carolyn Mungo

Rising Star Award – News
Caroline Cluiss Fletcher

Rising Star Award – PR
Connor Gray

Super Alum Award Winner
Wendy Moore

Alumni Appreciation Award
Zaira Perez Viera

**Career Service
Recognition Award – News**
Chris Cobler

**Career Service
Recognition Award – Advertising**
Greg Knipp





Mayborn Mentors

“Mayborn Mentors” is an initiative of the Mayborn Advisory Board’s Education Committee that focuses on career preparation. This year was a huge success with 12 mentors and 60 students participating. The discussion included industry topic discussions, career pathways, and networking with industry professionals.

Another milestone in 2023-2024 was the in-person highlight events of the year. That included a panel and one-on-one mock interviews in fall 2023 (Mock It ‘Til You Rock It), and a career fair (Communication Networking Event) that included 21 companies in spring 2024. Through these events, almost 200 students received advice on how to get that dream internship or first job from professionals with hundreds of years of industry experience.

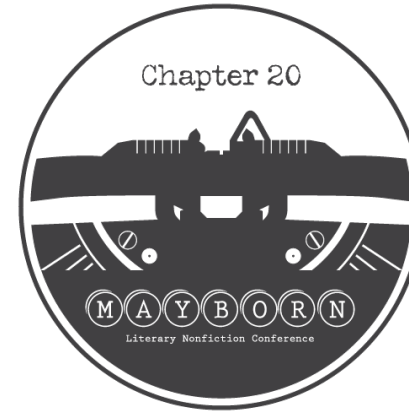
Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference



2023

The 19th annual Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference uniquely focused on the power of storytelling through multimedia platforms. The Mayborn on Tap: Craft Storytelling emphasized narrative nonfiction by highlighting radio, film, newspapers, magazines, and books; the 2023 conference even featured a live screening of *Bad Press*, a Sundance award-winning documentary tracing the heroic efforts of Angel Ellis. The Mayborn on Tap: Craft Storytelling returned to a fully in-person conference where participants mingled with one another.

Beth Macy, the 2023 keynote speaker, discussed her journey writing *Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors and the Drug Company That Addicted America* and *Raising Lazarus: Hope, Justice, and the Future of America's Overdose Crisis*. Macy additionally discussed what it was like to take her pages to the big screen when Hulu adapted *Dopesick*.



2024

The Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference, Chapter 20 took place October 25-26, 2024, at Four Corners Brewery, bringing together award-winning journalists working across documentary, radio, podcast, and written formats. The conference, curated by Professors Thorne Anderson and Brittany McElroy, featured Pulitzer Prize-winning keynote speaker Caitlin Dickerson, known for her investigative piece “We Need to Take Away Children,” and documentarian Ibrahim Nash’at, who was embedded with

the Taliban for a year to create “Hollywood Gate.” The event’s unique format allows speakers to stay throughout sessions and engage directly with attendees, creating an intimate, conversational atmosphere that helps students connect with professionals on a personal level.

The conference aims to show mid-career journalists how to diversify across different mediums and demonstrates to students the depth and impact possible through dedicated investigative journalism. Attendees like UNT senior John Forbes and alumni Chandler Jackson, now a reporter for ABC Channel 6 in Minnesota, praised the inspiring atmosphere and the rare opportunity to connect directly with accomplished journalists. The organizers intentionally keep the event intimate requiring about 10 months of planning and fundraising to maintain its collaborative, conversational quality that distinguishes it from larger conferences.



2025

The 2025 Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference marked a historic milestone as it moved to its new home at the University of North Texas in Denton on October 24-25, 2025. The conference expanded its programming to include a Documentary Film Showcase in collaboration with the Department of Media Arts, featuring screenings of *The Librarians* and *The Stringer*, along with a documentary shorts block, and the return of popular writers' workshops for book authors and narrative feature writers. Saturday's main programming featured compelling panel discussions on topics ranging from long-form storytelling and biography to immigration narratives and science writing, with distinguished speakers including Gina Barton, Constance Hale, Benjamin Moser, Anna Malaika Tubbs, Steve Padilla, and Edgar Sandoval.

The conference culminated in a keynote dinner presentation by Kavitha Surana of ProPublica with Stacy Kranitz, winners of the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, moderated by Tracy Everbach. Throughout both days, attendees engaged in meaningful networking opportunities, including an opening reception, author book signing, and a musical performance by Jeff Whittington, fostering the conference's mission to bring together luminaries of narrative nonfiction to discuss craft, find inspiration, and build community among storytellers dedicated to illuminating the truth.



Study Abroad & Special Classes

The Mayborn School of Journalism recognizes the excellent benefits of partnerships and is proud to highlight its recent initiatives. The school's collaborations with the NBCU Academy (which concluded in 2024) and the Scripps Howard Fund Emerging Journalists Program underscore the importance of our work in cultivating a diverse future workforce.

Beyond these partnerships, the Mayborn continues to offer students transformative, hands-on learning opportunities through immersive programs such as Mayborn in Japan, Mayborn in Spain, and a spring special class on reporting in the Muscogee Nation. These experiences reflect the school's commitment to preparing students for global and community-centered journalism.



Mayborn in Spain

A group of thirteen students and two faculty members spent four weeks in Madrid as part of the study abroad program in Spain. Associate Professors Gwen Nisbett and Newly Paul led the group, which included students from majors such as journalism, advertising, communication, and business.

Students took classes in International Advertising and Public Relations and Cross-Cultural Reporting. They visited several media organizations in Madrid, including a strategic communication firm, a digital news organization, and Atresmedia, the largest broadcast group in the country. Cultural visits included day trips to the ancient cities of Toledo and Segovia, where students learned about Spanish history and architecture. They also enjoyed a flamenco performance and attended a cooking class where they made classic Spanish dishes including paella and tortilla de patata (Spanish omelet).

During weekends, students traveled independently to Barcelona and other cities along the Spanish coast, where they enjoyed the beaches and tried the local cuisine. Students spent most evenings after class exploring Madrid's quirky neighborhoods, sampling tapas, and shopping for clothes and gifts. They also visited the city's art museums and popular tourist spots such as the Royal Palace and El Retiro Park. At the end of the visit, students produced multimedia pieces on aspects of Spanish culture and life that appealed to them. Projects included topics such as Madrid's coffee culture, street fashion and the prevalence of thrift stores, tapas culture, and Spain's colonial history with Mexico. The four weeks passed quickly. Both students and faculty found the experience enjoyable and enriching, with several students experiencing international travel for the first time and expressing gratitude for the opportunity.

Mayborn in Japan

The Mayborn in Japan 2025 was a tremendous success, with students spending one week in Tokyo visiting media organizations, agencies, and other institutions related to journalism and mass communication, followed by four weeks in Fukuoka learning cross-cultural reporting and international public relations. The program used facilities at Seinan Gakuin University (SGU) in Fukuoka at no cost, thanks to UNT's memorandum of agreement with SGU's Faculty of Foreign Language Studies to promote mutually beneficial student, research, and teaching exchanges.

Through Associate Professor Koji Fuse's personal connections, students visited numerous organizations free of charge, including The *Asahi Shimbun*, Kyodo PR, Kartz Media Works, Weber Shandwick Japan, Japan National Press Club, Jarman International KK, Bloomberg Japan, Kyodo News, and Ad Museum Tokyo in Tokyo, as well as *Nishinippon Shimbun* and RKB Mainichi Broadcasting in Fukuoka. Students showed their seriousness and curiosity in their tours.

Notably, the dean of SGU's Faculty of Foreign Language Studies has expressed interest in continuing to renew the agreement with UNT, and the Mayborn is also working to strengthen relations with SGU in other areas, including collaborative teaching and learning initiatives and additional exchange programs.



Scripps Howard Fund

The Mayborn is one of only two journalism programs in the nation to receive the Scripps Howard Fund Emerging Journalists Program (SHFEJP) grant. Each summer, the program welcomes 20 high school students to the University of North Texas for nearly one week of immersive training, where they gain firsthand knowledge from professional journalists through the Mayborn School of Journalism.

The program concludes with a multimedia story presentation for parents and guests, showcasing the students' application of the skills they learned.

In addition, the UNT SHFEJP provides paid summer internships with more than a dozen local media outlets across the state and offers stipends to high school teaching ambassadors, expanding its impact beyond the campus experience. The Emerging Journalists Program, hosted in summer 2025, brought together 16 high school students for hands-on reporting and newsroom training.



Mayborn in Muscogee Nation

Nine students from the Mayborn experienced hands-on reporting during Spring Break (March 9-14) through a week-long trip to the Muscogee Nation as part of the class "In-depth Storytelling from Indian Country," led by Professor Tracy Everbach and Lecturer Hoda Emam and fully funded by UNT. Students reported and produced their own stories from Okmulgee, Muskogee, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and other locations, focusing on telling the stories of indigenous people and places often stereotyped and marginalized in media.

To prepare, students spent the beginning of the semester learning about the nation's history and people through materials like the series *Reservation Dogs*, the podcast *This Land*, and the book *Killers of the Flower Moon* to understand both the history and media stereotypes. Students went through an application process emphasizing motivation and courage, with no out-of-pocket costs, and were required to have basic journalism and multimedia skills, though coaching was provided throughout. Junior Tabitha Hidalgo and sophomore Emma Walls reported gaining confidence in both their technical and reporting abilities, with Hoda Emam noting that this career-changing work will open doors for students for years to come, giving them the privilege of interviewing tribal citizens and understanding their stories firsthand.



Chilton Hall Construction Update

Chilton Hall has undergone major reconstruction over the past year, with new facilities that significantly enhance learning and practice opportunities for students.

Photography Studio and Podcast Space

We've added a new photography studio that provides students with a controlled environment to experiment with different photographic techniques. The space features multiple wall-mounted backdrops that can be rolled down based on preference, three lights with various modifiers to encourage experimentation, and a small television on rollers that allows faculty to demonstrate camera techniques. The podcast space has been streamlined with greatly improved camera image quality and audio isolation. While work continues on the background and room decoration, the space is already in consistent use by the North Texas Daily and other student groups.

Chilton Studio

Chilton Studio has undergone major renovations to increase flexibility in content creation. The studio now operates with a minimum of one operator down from the five previously required. This dramatically improves accessibility, allowing more students to work with Deane Marshall to shoot their shows even without a full production crew. Thanks to generous donations, the studio has expanded its graphics capabilities to include up to 100 layers for

lower thirds, tickers, full-screen graphics, and more. DCTV also received a new audio mixer designed for large-scale productions, enabling everything from single-microphone setups to full bands to be heard clearly and confidently.

DCTV Enhancements

DCTV has restructured student assistant positions to better match individual students with roles that suit their strengths. We now offer dedicated assistance with graphics creation, social media management, writing support, and media performance training. To expand DCTV's reach, a group of students launched the first *DCTV Guide*—a monthly zine that serves as both a newsletter for the channel and an opportunity for students to engage with the community and apply their journalism training. The inaugural issue was released in August 2025. Additionally, DCTV has reorganized the back offices to promote better collaboration among student employees and volunteers and has secured a dedicated meeting room for large group projects.

Looking Ahead

Future goals for Chilton Studio include building a set to better utilize the video wall and improving the Mean Green Room to function as both a resting area and a prep space for on-camera talent. The future looks bright for DCTV and Chilton Studio. These long-overdue improvements have created momentum and a renewed focus on collaboration.

Faculty Research/ Achievements



Thorne Anderson

Thorne Anderson is a professor and Mayborn Endowed Chair for Narrative & Multimedia Journalism at the University of North Texas, where he also serves as Co-Director and Creative Curator of the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference. In this role, he curates panels and invites leading figures in journalism to the annual gathering, introducing deep discussions on storytelling's power to inform, connect, and expand understanding across diverse perspectives.

An award-winning photojournalist and multimedia storyteller, Prof. Anderson has worked internationally for major outlets such as The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Time, Newsweek, and Stern. He co-authored the book *Unembedded: Four Independent Photojournalists on the War in Iraq*, which offered a ground-level view of the conflict and was accompanied by a traveling photo exhibition displayed at cultural institutions including the High Museum of Art and the DeYoung Fine Arts Museum. In 2024, Prof. Anderson collaborated with Palabra to produce and edit a four-part Spanish-language narrative podcast series, *Los Volcanes*, which chronicles the 2,500-mile journey of exiled Cuban journalist Jesús Jank Curbelo to the United States.



Dorothy Bland

Dr. Dorothy Bland is an accomplished educator, journalist, and researcher with nearly two decades of leadership and teaching experience in higher education and 25 years in the news industry, where she advanced from reporter to publisher. Her current research includes projects on celebrity influencers and anti-fentanyl messaging, reflecting her ongoing commitment to media literacy, digital access, and the use of digital technology across platforms. She also has a forthcoming book titled *HBCU Radio: History, Disruption and Digital Futures*, co-authored with a colleague at another university.

In 2024, Dr. Bland earned four major honors: the AEJMC Lionel C. Barrow Jr. Award for Distinguished Achievement in Diversity Research and Education; the NABJ Outstanding Book Award for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategies, co-authored with Mas Biswas; the SWECJMC Top Faculty Paper Award for her work on women's leadership; and Second Place in AEJMC's Small Program Interest Group for a co-authored paper on AI in journalism education.

In 2023, she was one of 33 faculty champions honored by the Center for Community News for her work with the UNT Scripps Howard Fund Emerging Journalists Program, which placed nearly 70 students in paid internships. Additional accolades include the Dow Jones Multimedia Training Academy selection, the TAJE "Friend of Journalism Education" Award, and the History Maker Award from the Dallas Fort Worth Black Public Relations Association.



Tracy Everbach

Dr. Everbach's field of study centers on women in the newsroom, the representation of gender and race in media, and the coverage of women's sports. Alongside Dr. Gwen Nisbett and Dr. Newly Paul, she co-authored an upcoming book titled *Women's Leadership in Popular Culture* which examines media portrayals of women in positions of leadership and power.

The project aims to challenge marginalization in journalism and promote more inclusive media narratives, advocating for increased opportunities for women, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities to enter the field and report on underrepresented communities.

She was honored with the 2019 Donna Allen Award for Feminist Advocacy by AEJMC's Commission on the Status of Women and received the 2023 Educator of the Year Award from the Southwest Education Council for Journalism and Mass Communication. Her commitment to hands-on, immersive education is reflected in student successes: in 2024, students received national recognition for a reporting project based on a field trip to the Texas-Mexico border. Their work is published on the website vocesdelacomunidad.com.

Continuing this model of experiential learning, Dr. Everbach and Prof. Hoda Emam led another student reporting trip during spring break of 2025 to the Muscogee Nation in Oklahoma. Armed with equipment and enthusiasm, students spent a week documenting stories from Indigenous communities. Like the previous border project, their work will be published on a dedicated website and submitted to journalism contests. The initiative reflects a broader goal of empowering students to tell meaningful, community-centered stories while building a portfolio of award-winning work.



Kimberly Keller

Keller, a first-generation college graduate, finds deep meaning in her role as an educator when students particularly fellow first-generation students introduce her to their families at graduation, a gesture that reflects the lasting personal impact she has made in their lives.

In recognition of her commitment to students, Professor Keller received the prestigious Fessor Graham Award for 2024–2025. Presented by the Student Government Association, this award honors a faculty member for outstanding service to students and represents the highest distinction bestowed by the student body.

Keller's students extend their learning beyond the classroom by developing research-based campaigns for organizations such as Canine Companions for Independence, Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL), Habitat for Humanity of Denton County, and Ronald McDonald House of Fort Worth. Their work has made tangible contributions to these organizations, with the class's research for CPAL highlighted by KERA News, underscoring the real-world relevance and impact of their academic efforts.

Her students also excel individually. In 2024, public relations student Luis Verduzco was selected for the EMERGE Leadership Academy, an initiative led by The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations and the Grossman Group. The program offers a specialized virtual leadership curriculum and exclusive networking opportunities with Plank Center board members and leading professionals in the PR industry—further affirming the caliber of mentorship and preparation Keller provides her students.



James Mueller

Dr. James Mueller is the Dean of the Mayborn School of Journalism and a digital and print professor. Before entering academia, he worked as a newspaper reporter, where his favorite stories were about veterans and individuals' lives that intersected with major historical events. His interests as a news reporter naturally led him to historical research.

His current research is on press coverage of World War II, with a particular focus of the Battle of the Bulge, the largest battle fought by the United States Army. Dr. Mueller's research seeks to reassess the quality of press coverage and how that coverage has shaped the public's understanding of the battle. He plans to expand his work to examine other areas of World War II press coverage on war and peace. In addition to his current research, Dr. Mueller is writing a chapter for a book on forgotten journalists. The chapter details Trezzvant Anderson, an African American military journalist in World War II known for his coverage of the war and Civil Rights.

Dr. Mueller's research has been widely recognized. His research on press coverage of George Armstrong Custer and his last stand at the Battle of the Little Bighorn has earned three national awards and remains frequently cited in the field. In 2025, his biography *Ambitious Honor* received the Jay D. Smith Literary Award from the Little Big Horn Associates.

One of the most meaningful moments in Dr. Mueller's career came in 2025, when he presented his research on Trezzvant Anderson at a symposium in Ghent, Belgium. Many of the European attendees were unaware of the significant role African American soldier played in winning World War II. Sharing Anderson's story and helping preserve his memory was a rewarding experience for Dr. Mueller.



Gwen Nisbett

Dr. Gwen Nisbett is an associate professor of public relations and ethics in strategic communication. Her research examines pop culture, influencers, and celebrities, and their impact on wider culture and society, spanning sports and entertainment media. In addition, her research seeks to gain a better understanding of how media on pop culture and celebrities influences audiences. Dr. Nisbett is published in journals including *Political Communication*, *Health Communication*, and the *Atlantic Journal of Communication*.



Newly Paul

Dr. Newly Paul is an associate professor of print and digital media. Her research is in media representations of marginalized communities, with a specific focus on how race and gender shape patterns in news coverage and the real-world impact of those portrayals. Her work seeks to bring awareness about the influence of the media in everyday life. Through her research, she aims to expand scholarship related to race and gender in the media. She is currently developing an article examining how commercial media and nonprofit media organizations cover extreme heat in urban areas. She is also co-editing a book about women leaders in popular culture, alongside two Mayborn colleagues scheduled for release in November 2025.

Dr Paul's scholarship has earned significant recognition, having received the 2025 Gene Burd Award for Research in Urban Journalism Studies from AEJMC. One of her most impactful publications is a book chapter analyzing media coverage of transgender politicians, a topic that addressed a gap in research. Included in a widely used textbook on race and gender, the chapter reached journalism students across several schools.



Marta Mensa Torras

Prof. Torras' research focuses on multicultural consumers and gender in advertising, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of Hispanic-Latinx women in the U.S. advertising industry. Her current study, titled "My biggest blessing is my biggest curse: An Intersectional Study of Hispanic Women in the US Advertising Industry", examines how cultural identity shapes the professional experiences of Hispanic-Latinx women within advertising agencies.

The research seeks to understand how elements of cultural identity may both support and challenge these women's career progression, ultimately aiming to introduce a more inclusive and welcoming environment for Hispanic women in the industry.

She is also finalizing a paper on digital media influencers titled Gender and Advocacy: Social Causes and Brand Endorsements Among Digital Media Influencers, which explores how influencers engage with gendered advocacy and social causes in the digital marketing space.

Her previous work has received notable recognition, and she was surprised to see one of her citations on Wikipedia for her 2023 publication: Women are survivors: Public service announcements on violence against women in Latin America, co-authored with J. M. and published in the journal Violence Against Women.

Additionally, Torras is an active member of the Global Social Media Influencer Research Lab, where she collaborates with Dr. Ha on ongoing research related to influencers and their roles in advocacy and branding.



Xiaoqun Zhang

Prof. Zhang conducts research in media economics, media management, and artificial intelligence. His current research focuses on how media narratives influence economic behavior. This project integrates economic theory with media studies, contributing to interdisciplinary scholarships in the field. This project is being developed into a book, with a book contract with Palgrave Macmillan.

Prof. Zhang has an extensive publication record, including three monographs and numerous peer-reviewed journal articles. As editor-in-chief of the Journal of Media Economics, a leading publication in the field, he plays a key role in shaping discourse at the intersection of media and economic studies. In 2023, he was formally appointed to this role by Taylor & Francis, marking a significant milestone in his academic career.

Additionally, he was awarded a teaching grant from the University of North Texas Honors College to develop a new course on artificial intelligence and journalism, further demonstrating his commitment to innovative and future-oriented education.

Student Research Highlights



Ziyad Alghamdi

Doctoral student Ziyad Alghamdi is examining U.S. newspaper coverage of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiatives in tourism, sport, and entertainment. His research combines qualitative framing analysis with quantitative methods to analyze how leading American newspapers construct narratives about these reforms. He has published works including "Saudi and U.S. Newspaper Coverage of Saudi Vision 2030 Concerning Women in Online Newspapers," reflecting his interest in comparative

media systems and digital platforms in international news coverage.



Martin Friedenthal

Master's student Martin Friedenthal won the best extended abstract award at the SWECJMC Symposium for his co-authored study with Mezabahnur Masum on media framing of the East Palestine train derailment. In November, he will present research at the national conference in Albuquerque to analyze ethnographic techniques used by reporters covering the 1897 Klondike Gold Rush. He also served on the Student Media Committee to select the new editor of the *North*

Texas Daily. Friedenthal plans to pursue a PhD focused on media and journalism history.



Mezabahnur Masum

Master's student Mezabahnur Masum focuses on digital media, public trust, health communication, and crisis journalism. He received the AEJMC Gene Burd Award for Research in Urban Journalism Studies with advisor Associate Professor Newly Paul for a study examining how news outlets cover extreme heat in major U.S. cities. His master's thesis on AI chatbots in healthcare communication earned the 2024–2025 Graduate Student Research Award from the Toulouse Graduate School. Masum co-

presented research with fellow Mayborn graduate student Martin Friedenthal at the 2024 SWECJMC Symposium, receiving the Top Extended Abstract Award for their study on media framing of the East Palestine train derailment. He has presented research at national and international conferences, including the Arab-U.S. Association for Communication Educators conference in Cairo, Egypt.



Kate Pezzulli

Doctoral student Kate Pezzulli specializes in environmental communication and climate change messaging, particularly for audiences skeptical of climate science. Her research examines media reporting on climate change and develops educational interventions to inform the public regardless of political affiliation. She is currently working on papers analyzing climate discussion in news media and conducting dissertation research on environmental communication in podcasting. She has

presented at NCA and AEJMC conferences and will present again at NCA in November 2025.

Student Orgs, Agencies & Media

Student-Led Agencies



AGENZ PR, is a generation z-led agency with a focus on diversity, data, innovation and digital content. The agency is comprised of hand-selected, senior student professionals of the Mayborn to garner real, hands-on public relations experience. Their 2023- 2024 roster of clients includes the Texas Music Project, Cossman PR, Friends of the Dallas Public Library, Engage Dallas, Communities Foundation of Texas, Kaleidoscope Park and Mayborn School of Journalism. In 2025-2026, AGENZ PR will be merged with SWOOP.



SWOOP, our student-run advertising agency, prepares students with invaluable industry knowledge and expertise, providing them with a significant competitive edge as they prepare for their careers as strategically grounded advertising storytellers. The agency specializes in developing vibrant and dynamic strategies to reach the Young, Multicultural, Always Connected (YMAC) consumer segment. Last year, SWOOP landed UNT transportation as their client.

Student Media



DCTV (Denton Community Television) serves the city and as a training ground for aspiring student broadcasters and producers, providing hands-on opportunities to develop professional skills while delivering diverse programming from news and public affairs to entertainment. In 2025, the station expanded its creative reach by launching its first-ever student-produced zine, conceived, written, and designed entirely by students. This new venture reflects DCTV's commitment to fostering innovation, storytelling, and experiential learning while giving students a platform to share their voices with the community.



HATCH Visuals is the only student-run photography agency on a college campus in North Texas. Embracing a community-focused approach, HATCH provides a nurturing environment for members to explore and develop their professional skills while learning new tools. Beyond agency operations, HATCH exposes members to diverse creative processes, from business tools to web design, equipping young professionals with a robust toolkit as they enter the workforce.

North Texas Daily

The *North Texas Daily*, the official student news publication at the University of North Texas, features a dedicated team of student editors, reporters, designers, photographers, and social media developers. As a powerhouse of student journalism, the Daily regularly wins national awards and produces stories picked up by national news organizations.



Ad Club members received career coaching and internship guidance through the Interviews, Internships, and Industry panel. Students connected with national agencies like GroupM and Arts & Letters Creative Co., while building relationships with local agencies including Commerce House, Loomis, Moroch, Saatchi & Saatchi, The Marketing Arm (TMA), The Richards Group (TRG), and VML.

Through workshops, networking events, and agency tours, Ad Club provides students with the resources needed to launch their careers and continuously produces promising advertising professionals.

Student Organizations



Our SPJ student chapter connects students with industry professionals, providing opportunities to gain skills, network with journalists, and learn about ethical journalism practices. As the nation's most broad-based journalism organization, SPJ encourages the free practice of journalism and stimulates high standards of ethical behavior. This year, Mayborn SPJ welcomed *The New York Times* opinion editor Kathleen Kingsbury to campus to speak with members and review Mayborn student work.



The Mayborn's NABJ Student Chapter facilitates professional development for Black journalism students, serving as a hub for accessing job opportunities, exploring the legacies of industry changemakers, and strengthening connections among Black journalists. Membership is open to all students.



The Mayborn's NAHJ Student Chapter anchors culture and community at the core of its operations, prioritizing member needs through professional development programming, guided workshops, and alumni panels.

NAHJ advocates for member success by providing career-shaping resources and breaking down barriers for future Hispanic journalists. NAHJ is open to all students.



The Mayborn's NPPA chapter brings together still photographers, television videographers, editors, and journalism students, focusing on creating community, growth, and impact through photography.



Founded in 1967, PRSSA is the foremost organization for students interested in public relations and communications. The Mayborn's chapter regularly hosts alumni panels, social events, and agency tours. This year, students visited Pierpoint Communications, Three Box Strategic Communications, Weber Shandwick, and Southwest Airlines.



Alumni Profiles

NaKadia Hackworth

As the nightside news producer at KOCO 5 News in Oklahoma City, NaKadia Hackworth is no stranger to breaking news, tight turnarounds and the pressure of creating a compelling newscast that informs and connects with viewers before airtime hits.

Reflecting on her journey, Hackworth credits the Mayborn School of Journalism for being the foundation for her career. Classes taught her the professionalism and responsibility required in a real-world newsroom, while hands-on experience with student-run media helped her build confidence in her skills. Job fairs gave her opportunities to connect with industry professionals, and those early relationships eventually helped her land a position with Hearst Television.

Hackworth's professional career started at 40/29 News in Northwest Arkansas, where she learned to think fast and lead under pressure. She recalled a defining moment in her career when she pushed for coverage of a developing police incident that turned out to be a fatal officer-involved case.

Although it was a grim and sad story, Hackworth said she was really proud that she trusted her instincts and helped keep the community informed. "That really shaped the way that I go into the newsroom, becoming a senior producer and helping our management lead the newsroom," Hackworth said.

Today at KOCO 5, Hackworth is responsible for producing the station's 10 p.m. newscast, which covers everything from elections to severe weather to major sporting events. She coordinates with reporters, anchors, meteorologists and sports directors to deliver timely, relevant stories. She also assists with weekend planning to help keep the newsroom running smoothly.

Hackworth credits her work ethic to her time at Mayborn. She remembers the classroom discussions that pushed her to think like a journalist but also reminded her that reporters are human, and everyone has their own point of view. "One of the most important things that I took away from Mayborn is understanding the importance of what we do and the importance of getting

things right, and also being ethical about our decisions," Hackworth said.

Hackworth encourages current Mayborn students to keep their biases in check. "Be mindful that it's not our job to project what we feel like people should know or how they should feel," Hackworth said. "It's to simply give the facts and let people come to their own interpretations of it."

Hackworth also reminds aspiring journalists to maintain a healthy work-life balance. "News is exciting," Hackworth said. "It's fun. It can be very fulfilling, but it also can be challenging and tough. Just be mindful of taking care of your mental health."



Victoria Jones

Since graduating from the Mayborn School of Journalism in 2019, Victoria Jones has built a multimedia career that bridges communication, technology and global outreach.

Today, she serves as the Technical Content & Multimedia Manager at the Society for the Advancement of Material and Process Engineering. Before her most recent role, Jones was the multimedia content manager at the Society of Petroleum Engineers, where she assisted in developing and maintaining the association's virtual programming and multimedia content, collaborating directly with global teams and members.

Looking back on her time at Mayborn, Jones said the school truly helped her develop many crucial communication skills and credits Visiting Lecturer Jacqueline Fellows with shaping her path as a journalism student. "She really taught the foundations of journalism," Jones said. "And how to ask those tough questions and use your resources."

One phrase from Fellows that stuck with Jones was: "What's new is what's news." Jones said the quote has served as a reminder when looking for new ideas.

Jones's first job after graduation was as a junior digital producer at HousingWire, an information services company covering the housing market, real estate and mortgage trends. As a podcast producer, she helped write, produce and host a daily B2B real estate and mortgage news podcast. She frequently interviewed industry experts on topics such as regulations, economics, and data related to the housing and mortgage industry.

In that role, Jones worked hard to absorb everything, learning the ropes in a professional environment. Fast forward a few years, and Jones has stepped into a managerial role, leading projects and working with members and sponsors internationally. She said her career has evolved since her first job out of school, and that she now feels more confident as a professional.

One of her proudest projects is creating and developing the "Get to Know: Women in Energy" video series, which highlights diverse voices, insights and career stories in the energy industry. Launched in 2022, the series runs annually during Women's History Month and recently earned three industry awards.

Jones said she loved her time spent with the Mayborn School, where she made good friends and gained the skills to become a multimedia professional. "Being part of Mayborn is one of my greatest honors," Jones said.

Jones encourages current Mayborn students who may feel unsure about their next steps after college to recognize that there is a vast world of different opportunities across media and the skills they are learning are transferable. "There are things that you can do, not just within journalism, but outside of it as well, where your skills will be valued," Jones said.



New Hires

Faculty



Marta Mensa Torras,
Assistant Professor



Christopher Assaf,
Assistant Professor



Hoda Emam,
Lecturer



Olivia Moore,
Lecturer



John Clendening,
Assistant Professor of
Practice

Staff



Simran Firoz Ratnani,
Assistant Director,
Marketing



Nina Melishkevich,
Student & Program
Coordinator

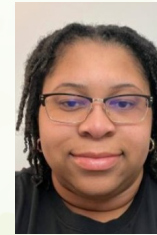


Siarra Azocar,
Sr. Administrative
Coordinator

Academic Advising



Zach Yeager,
Assistant director,
Advising



Whitney Kwentoh,
Academic Advisor



Allison Vatzlavick,
Academic Advisor

Mayborn Board of Advisors

The Mayborn Board of Advisors is a stellar group of 21 professionals, mostly alumni, who give their time and talents to serve the school. These professionals provide informative, strategic advice to the Dean and the School of Journalism. The school would like to extend a special thank you to all of the board members for their dedicated service!

Leona Allen

Deputy Publisher, The Dallas Morning News

Patty Arellano-Tolotta

Vice President of Marketing, Lennox Residential

Sarah Burns

Senior Director of Marketing & Communications,
North Texas Food Bank

Farrah Cox

Global Head of Integrated Marketing, Cisco

Graham Douglas

Co-Founder/Creative Director, Gus.biz

Sandy Diaz Haley

Founder, SDH Communications

Becky Kimbro

Vice President of Strategic Brand Engagement, San Antonio Spurs

Theresa Kushner

Partner, Business Data Leadership

Sue Mayborn

Editor & Publisher, Temple Daily Telegram & Killeen Daily Herald

Leslie O. Mba

Senior Counsel, Texas Instruments, Inc.

Cheryl Richards

Senior Vice President/Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, VisitDallas

Kara Schectman

Marketing Director, Benchmark Income Group

Angela Smith

Writer/Editor/Communications Consultant

Veronica Sopher

K12 Communications Expert/Consultant

Wendi Strong

Executive Vice President of Corporate Communications, USAA (Retired)

Brian Sweany

Principal, Genuine Article

Olmar Vanegas

Head of Corporate Social Content & Strategy, McKesson Corporation

Trent Walters

Brand Management Principal, TRG

Terri West

Senior Vice President, Communications & Investor Relations/Texas Instruments(Retired)

Tina Young

President/Founder/CEO, Marketwave

Remembering our Fallen Eagles



Douglas W. Adams (1951 – 2024)

With heavy hearts, the Mayborn announces the passing of Mayborn alumnus Douglas W. Adams. Adams started his journalism career right here at the Mayborn School of Journalism, and he quickly developed an illustrious 30-year career.

During his career, Adams started as a reporter for WBAP until he transitioned to KXAS-NBC 5, where he served as a reporter, Dallas bureau chief, executive producer, and assistant news director; Adams additionally became one of the youngest news directors in the country. Before retiring as the general manager for KXAS, Adams also spent time working in local news for Decatur, IL, and Virginia Beach, VA.

Doug Adams was a reflection of amazing journalism, and we are sad to announce the loss of a phenomenal alumnus.



Keith Shelton (1932–2024)

Keith Shelton, a longtime Mayborn professor and journalist, passed away on December 11, 2024. He was a treasured member of the Mayborn faculty for 23 years and left a profound legacy, teaching countless students and mentoring faculty members, including Dean Mueller. Shelton was instrumental in shaping the North Texas Daily as its first faculty advisor, and three of his students won Pulitzer Prizes. His journalism career

including reporting for the Dallas Times-Herald, where he covered the Kennedy assassination, and serving as managing editor and executive editor at the Denton Record-Chronicle..



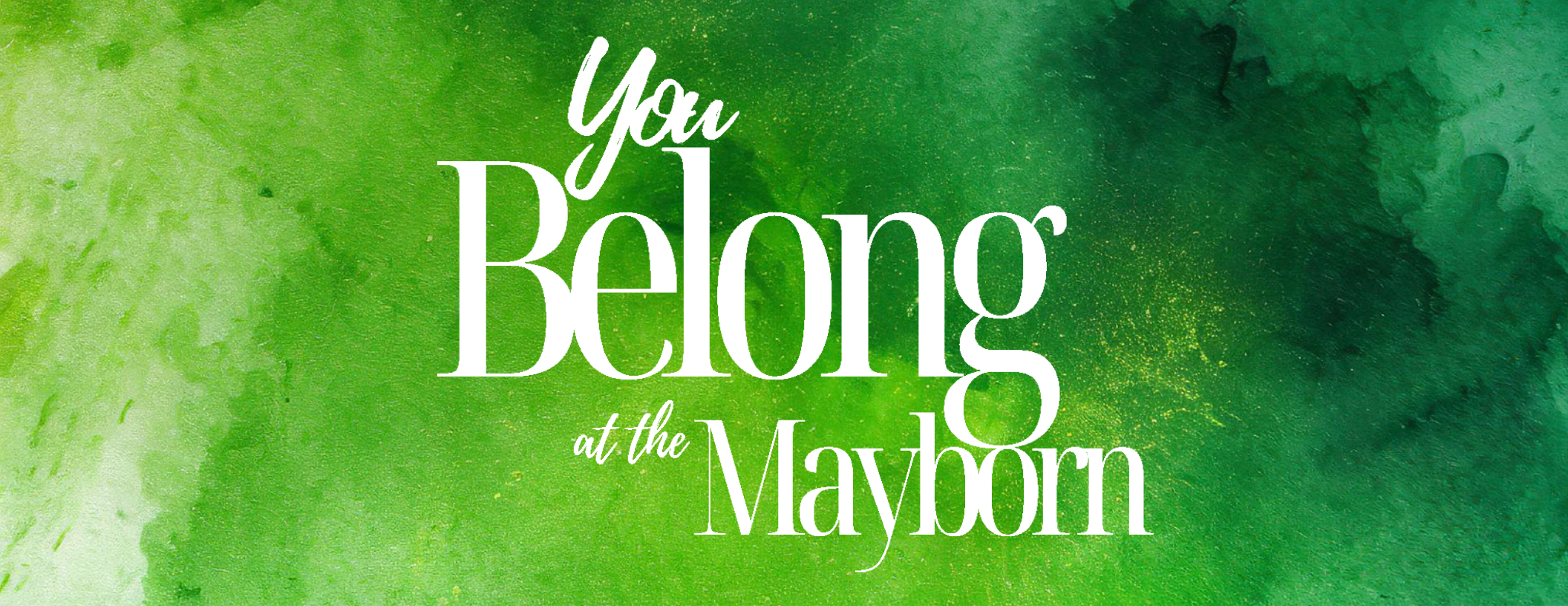
Bill Moyers (1934-2025)

Mayborn School of Journalism honors the life and legacy of Bill Moyers, a former UNT student, White House press secretary to President Lyndon B. Johnson, and one of the most influential journalists of our time. His dedication to public service and storytelling began at UNT and has left a lasting impact on the world. Moyers' legacy will continue to inspire future generations.



Life at the Mayborn





You
Belong
at the Mayborn