



SPOTLIGHT

Professor Brian Ekdale Awarded \$1.7 Million Grant

Associate Professor **Brian Ekdale** and his collaborators have been awarded a \$1.7 million grant to study the spread of strategic information operations (SIOs) on social media. Their project, "Identifying and Measuring User and Platform Vulnerabilities to Strategic Information Operations," was selected for funding by the Department of Defense's Minerva Research Initiative, which supports basic social science research related to national security.

The United States and its allies face a growing threat of influence campaigns organized by foreign actors to spread propaganda, disinformation, or manipulative content on social media platforms. These SIOs rely on user behaviors and algorithmic processes to circulate their content. Ekdale's team is studying how user- and platform- specific vulnerabilities are exploited by SIOs to increase their reach and effectiveness.

"What we're studying is the interaction between people and platforms and the feedback loop that takes place between the people and the platforms," said Ekdale.

The goals of the study are to identify platform vulnerabilities to SIOs and to propose mitigation measures for the identified vulnerabilities. This study examines user engagement in three regions—the United States, Central and Eastern Europe, and East Africa.

The interdisciplinary research utilizes humanistic, social scientific, and computational methods to understand platforms' vulnerabilities to SIOs. The study uses a mixed methods design where each research finding informs the next step in the research process.

The research is being conducted by the Algorithms and Culture Research Group, which includes SJMC doctoral students **Katy Biddle** and **Javie Ssozi** as well as University of Iowa assistant professor of computer science **Rishab Nithyanand** and computer science doctoral students **Hussam Habib** and **Sarmad Chandio**.

External collaborators on the project include associate professor of communication arts and sciences at Penn State **Andrew High**, assistant professor of digital journalism at Appalachian State University **Volha Kananovich**, assistant professor of African and African American studies and film and media studies at Washington University in St. Louis **Raven Maragh-Lloyd** and assistant professor of advertising at Drake **Ryan Stoldt**. Kananovich and Stoldt both received doctoral degrees from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Iowa, while Maragh-Lloyd received her doctorate from Communication Studies at Iowa.

SPOTLIGHT

Professor Rachel Young named Scripps Howard Teacher of the Year



The Scripps Howard Fund and Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication selected University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication associate professor Dr. **Rachel Young** to receive the 2022 Scripps Howard Teacher of the Year Award.

Candidates are recognized for excellence in teaching in several areas, including innovative teaching practices, influences on curriculum, mentoring of students and faculty, scholarship as it relates to teaching, leadership in educational activities and ongoing industry engagement inside and

outside the classroom. This is a national competition and only one award is presented each year.

Young is highly engaged with journalism and media professionals, the surrounding community, and students. As Director of Undergraduate Studies, she has worked extensively to make resources accessible and has created new opportunities for students.

In Prof. Young's classes, students have produced work that is meaningful to them and the communities they partnered with. Students developed a comprehensive bike safety campaign for Sioux City, Iowa, created Spanish and Mandarin-language victim services brochures for the Johnson County Prosecutor, and developed a campaign that led to the passing of a hotel occupancy tax in Washington, Iowa, that will earn \$30,000-\$40,000 annually for tourism promotion and community development.

Building on her experience with community partners, Prof. Young developed the Coralville Media Collaborative. This initiative connects SJMC students and classes with community organizations and small businesses in Coralville, Iowa. The goal of the Collaborative is to help students learn professional media skills while supporting the transformative work already happening in Coralville. Students work with community partners in class settings and through a community-based internship program that Prof. Young launched and directs. Prof. Young is also the recipient of the 2023 Hubbard-Walder Award for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Iowa and the 2018-2019 Collegiate Teaching Award from the College of Liberal Arts in Sciences at Ulowa.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

While students were away and the Adler building was quiet, SJMC faculty and staff have been preparing for the new academic year and continuing to excel in their work. The two featured faculty stories in this newsletter reflect this work and commitment: **Rachel Young** won the national Scripps Howard Teacher of the Year Award and **Brian Ekdale** led a team of researchers who won a \$1.7 million grant to support their research on propaganda and radicalization online.

Faculty and graduate students participated in the AEJMC annual conference in Washington, D.C., conducted field research in the U.S. and abroad, published new work, and planned new classes. **Munachim Amah**, **Rachel Young**, **Javie Ssozi**, and **David Dowling** all won awards at the AEJMC conference in recognition of their research. **Alex Scott** traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border to conduct fieldwork with photojournalists covering migration, and **Sujatha Sosale** traveled to France to conduct archival research on telecommunications infrastructure in Madagascar. Professors of Practice **Jeff Grisamore** and **Adam Kempenaar** established a partnership with the Iowa Men's Basketball team for their Fall strategic communication capstone and content marketing classes, offering students an opportunity to work across courses with a high-profile client.

SJMC also hosted the Iowa Summer Journalism Workshop in July, which brought nearly 70 high school students to campus for a four-day camp. Students worked with faculty and area professionals to develop and hone skills in writing, graphic design, leadership, and photography. This was the first in-person camp since 2019, and we were so excited to have the students on campus.

As we wrap up the summer and head into fall, we're looking forward to welcoming new faculty and students to campus and to staying connected with you throughout the year through our monthly e-newsletter and social media.

-Melissa Tully, Director

SJMC Celebrates 100 Years of Excellence!

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2024! We will mark the anniversary with events in Iowa City and around the country.

Please consider joining us for the 100th Anniversary Dinner on Saturday, April 13, 2024 at the Heights Rooftop in Iowa City. To learn more and to register visit, <https://journalism.uiowa.edu/anniversary>.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS



CLAS Speaker and Fulbright Scholar

▲ **Eleanor Hildebrandt (B.A. 2023)** was selected as a CLAS commencement speaker. She is also the winner of a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship Award to Germany for 2023-24.

SJMC peer mentors **Sophia Restiffe Favoretto** and **Sahithi Shankaiahgari** participated in international internships

this summer. Sophia worked for 3Dsign in Italy, a studio that works in the fields of virtual reality, installations and productions. Sahithi helped collect and analyze data and make videos for CoSAP in Ethiopia.

Sabine Martin worked as an Education Reporting Intern for U.S. News and World Report in Washington, D.C. Sabine is the executive editor for The Daily Iowan during the 2023-2024 academic year.



PhD candidate **Patrick Johnson** has accepted a position as the Director of Student Media and Instructor in the Diederich College of Communication at Marquette

Graduate students **Abubakar Ibrahim** and **Ugochukwu Madu** were selected to participate in the Graduate Engagement Corps at the University of Iowa.

David Lomoywara received a 2023 Stanley Award for International Research.

PhD candidate **Katy Biddle** has accepted a lecturer position in the Department of Communication and Theater arts at Old Dominion University.

▲ **Grace Smith** worked as a photography intern with the Denver Post covering high-profile news and events.

Students in Community Engaged Reporting with **Jason Brummond (B.A. 2008)** and **Zack Kucharski (B.A. 2004)** created an insert celebrating Coralville's 150th anniversary for The Gazette and The Daily Iowan. The full insert is available through the online version of our newsletter.



NEWS AROUND THE SCHOOL

New Major Officially Starts this Fall

We are excited to announce the launch of the new SJMC Sport Media and Culture major. Sport Media and Culture majors examine the meaning, history, and culture of sport. Coursework provides students with the critical skills necessary to understand sport's relationship to media, economics, politics, education, race, class, and gender.

Welcome New Faculty

Several new faculty members have joined SJMC. Assistant Professors **Bingbing Zhang** and **Sang Jung Kim** will teach strategic communication, media effects, and research methods classes for SJMC undergraduate and graduate students. Professor of Practice **Adam Kempenaar** will teach sports media and strategic communication classes. This fall, Adam is teaching Sports Content Marketing, a course that explores how sports teams and entities build their brands. **Emma Calow** joins SJMC as a visiting assistant professor in Sport Media and Culture.

We're Hiring

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is hiring a tenure-track professor in the area of Journalism Studies. The position is open rank. We are seeking applicants with expertise in studying news within its social, cultural, political, and global contexts.

We are also hiring a faculty member with professional experience in journalism. We are seeking applicants with substantial professional experience. Potential areas of specialization include, but are not limited to: in-depth or investigative reporting; public affairs and government reporting; data journalism; rural and community journalism; and health, environment or science reporting.

Visit <https://jobs.uiowa.edu/> to learn more.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS

Austin Hanson (B.A. 2023) was a finalist in the 63rd National Writing, Photojournalism, Audio, Television and Multimedia Championships for the William Randolph Hearst Foundation's Journalism Awards Program. He was recognized for his profile on UI wrestler Alex Marinelli.



▲ **Gretchen Lenth (B.A. 2023)** interned as a data reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

Grace Keller (B.A. 2021) was crowned Miss Iowa. She is the third state-wide pageant winner in the last four years joining **Katie Wadman (B.A. 2022)** and **Mikhayla Hughes-Shaw (B.A. 2019)**.

▲ **Maxwell Willis** participated in two internships in the Milwaukee area over the summer. He worked on The Morning Blend, a lifestyle show. He was also the arena marketing intern for the Milwaukee Bucks.

▲ **Kate Perez** worked as a breaking news and trends intern for USA Today.

FACULTY NEWS

David Dowling delivered the keynote address at The Future of Technological Mediation in Journalism and the Media in Paris, France.

Tom Oates and **Travis Vogan** are co-organizing the Fall 2023 Obermann Arts and Humanities Symposium, "Sports, Power and Resistance: Legacies and Futures" supported by Arts and Humanities Initiative Award.

Sujatha Sosale conducted archival research at the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France this summer. She collected data on the establishment of telecommunications infrastructure in Madagascar when under French rule for her project on communications infrastructure.



▲ **Meenakshi Gigi Durham** received the 2023 Michael Brody Award for Faculty Excellence in Service. Gigi was also featured in the highly acclaimed Pretty Baby: Brooke Shields documentary for her work on media sexualization.

Kylah Hedding is part of a team of researchers analyzing interviews with officials and emergency managers in Iowa to better understand how local administrators and community stakeholders respond to and communicate about natural disasters.

Alex Scott won the International Communication Association Visual Communication Division Top Dissertation Award.

SJMC Professional Advisory Board member, **Peter Gross (PhD 1984)** published a new book, "The Cultural Core of Media Systems."

PhD candidate **Tessa Adams** has accepted a position in the English and Communications Department at Carlow University in Pittsburgh.

Hannah Pinski (B.A. 2023) has accepted an internship to join Politico as a policy intern in Washington D.C.

Zach Lohmann (B.A. 2021) joined KCCI as a producer for their morning news broadcasts.

Sarah Galla joined Fox Sports as a Women's World Cup Intern in Los Angeles, California.



▲ **Lucy Rohden (B.A. 2020)** has joined the Dan Le Batard Show/Meadowlark Media as an on-air talent and producer.

Bruce Japsen (B.A. 1988) published a new book "Walmart's Second Opinion," about Walmart's history in the healthcare industry.

Rachel Young and **Melissa Tully** received an interdisciplinary research grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research to support narrative research on the changing cultural, social, and economic landscape of the Midwest.

Tracy Hufford won a UI Mental Health Champion Award for her integration of the Green Bandana Project into her Foundations of Event Management course. The Green Bandana Project promotes mental health awareness.

The M.A. in Strategic Communication program is turning 10!



To celebrate this milestone, the School is hosting a social event and brunch on October 6-7, 2023. For more details and to register for the event, scan the QR code.



Visit <https://journalism.uiowa.edu/news> for more SJMC news