

the Journalist

a departmental newsletter for journalism majors & minors

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SCJ adds 20 students to its membership

By Cory Dimitrakopoulos

A group of 20 Eastern journalism students has been inducted into the Society of Collegiate Journalists for the 2008 – 2009 academic year.

Working for student publications and organizations including The Daily Eastern News, The Warbler and Pounce Online, the inductees are journalism students who devote a significant amount of time to journalism activities on and off campus.

“The main function of SCJ is to honor outstanding journalism students and their work,” adviser to Eastern’s SCJ chapter, journalism professor Sally Turner said.

Initiation into the Society, which takes place annually in the fall, includes students signing their names on a scroll and receiving a SCJ pin and official booklet.

“I was honored to be asked to join the Society,” Michelle Simek, a senior journalism major and recent inductee, said. “I have heard a lot about the group

and I felt proud to finally join.”

Students who are asked to join SCJ are selected not only for quality work, but also for their

ability to balance schoolwork with extracurricular responsibilities. “They must have a strong academic standing while

producing quality journalism,” Turner said.

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These students were inducted into SCJ on December 10, 2008. Those not present for this date will be inducted in February. First row, from left: Tyler Angelo, Dylan Polk, Sarah Jean Bresnahan, Samantha Sottosanto, Dan Cusack. Second row: Heather Holm, Nicole Wesherna, Joe Astrouski, Christine Godbey, Brittney Ferris, Josh Van Dyke, Michelle Simek, Brittni Garcia, Kyle Pruden, Jessica Leggin, Bob Bajek. Not present: Juliette Beaulieu, Christina Guadiana, Krista Henery and Collin Whitchurch. Photo by Rick Kambic

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EIU student experiences life at Keene

Study-abroad experience helps him decide his major - journalism

By Christina Guadiana

If you've visited EIU's Web site lately, you've seen his face. His story of participating in the National Student Exchange program is currently being featured on EIU's homepage. He's Joseph Astrouski, journalism major and an active student on campus.

Joe spent the fall 2008 semester at Keene State College in Keene, NH. Keene College is a small campus; about 5,200 students are enrolled. The college itself is nestled in a community of 23,000 residents.

Joe first heard about the National Student Exchange program through Bonnie Irwin, dean of the Honors College and EIU's coordinator for NSE. Although Joe had not planned on participating in the program, he had intended to study abroad for a semester.

"To be honest, I participated in NSE more out of wanderlust than anything else. I had always planned on studying abroad for a semester. With NSE, I could make it a year," Joe said.

Previous to the semester at Keene, Joe attended Dublin City University, in Dublin, Ireland, during the spring 2008 semester.

Joe had not planned on attending Keene College. His first choice was the University of Minnesota, since he had previously applied there.

"I picked Keene for my second choice because I thought it would be fun to live in New England for a while. Other than that, I really didn't know anything about Keene," he said.

Not knowing much about Keene from the beginning made his experience an adventure.



Joe stands outside the Louvre in Paris. France was just one of ten countries that he visited while studying abroad at Dublin City University, in Dublin, Ireland. Submitted Photo

Joe fondly recalls exploring the campus and surrounding cities. He cited his most memorable experiences as the times that he spent with other foreign-exchange students.

Being at Keene during the fall 2008 put Joe at the forefront of the presidential race.

"Sometimes, I would cover stump speeches by the candidates, either for my journalism classes or for the *Keene Equinox*, the campus newspaper."

During his coverage, he met Sen. John Edwards, Gov. Bill Richardson, Rep. Ron Paul, Michelle Obama and former president Bill Clinton.

"I also had breakfast with Rudy Giuliani at the home of a local Republican donor. I also met and spoke with Gov. Mike

Huckabee in a local dentist office," added Joe.

Besides the presidential race, Joe covered a variety of other events, some of which earned him national recognition.

"Working for the *Keene Equinox*, I got to cover the Keene Mayoral race from beginning to end. I covered Keene's famous Pumpkin Festival, the Keene Mayoral race, and a controversial proposal for a new ice rink. I even got to cover a riot that broke out on campus after the Red Sox won the World Series," he said.

His coverage of the riot won a third place award in the Hard News division of the Society of Collegiate Journalists' national competition. Joe was also named "reporter of the semes-

ter" by the staff of the *Keene Equinox*.

Joe has continued to be an active member in EIU's journalism department since his return home. He is currently City Editor for the Daily Eastern News. He also does some production work for WEIU-TV News-watch.

Outside of his major, Joe plays trombone in the EIU Trombone Studio and is a member of Haiti Connection, a group of EIU students who work to help support clean water, environmental protection, and education in Haiti.

His semester at Keene State College cost Joe "almost exactly" the same as a semester here at EIU. According to Joe,

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Agency director gives advice to students

By Amanda Smith

I recently have had the privilege of interviewing the head of The Agency, Cory Dimitrakopoulos. During our short interview, I got to know her a little better, and, also in the process, understand what drives her to do what she does.

When I asked her why she took the position of being head of The Agency at Eastern Illinois University she said it had a lot to do with getting involved, that one of the most important things a student can do at a university is to get involved, no matter what the student organization. She decided her sophomore year to declare a major in public relations and joined The Agency a short time later. As she got more involved, she mentioned that The Agency po-

sition just kind of “happened” after taking on more projects that interested her.

Cory has many responsibilities. One of them includes recruiting new members to The Agency. In fact, The Agency just hired several people for some new positions that Cory had helped create. Another one of her responsibilities is to guide the editors with their newsletters. There are three editors, and they just got a new addition to their team. Cory has taken stories on several occasions to help one of the editors if they are running short on time. Other responsibilities include creating campaigns and dividing the tasks The Agency must complete. “We got a lot of new people who are passionate. We’re all students and we’re all on the same page,” Cory said.

Being the head of The Agency does have its benefits. Clearly, getting experience that will benefit Cory after she graduates is a big bonus.

“It will look great on a resume!” Cory said.

Being involved in The Agency also allows Cory to make a lot of friends and contacts. “It’s allowed me to network not only in Charleston, but outside of Charleston, too,” she added.

There are good and bad aspects to being the director of an organization such as The Agency. Cory’s favorite thing about The Agency is that she gets to work with her friends, which can always be more fun. The other thing she likes about The Agency is that she gets to see her ideas come to life, from the paper to reality.

According to Sally Turner, as-

sociate professor of journalism, “My experience with Cory has been on the outside most of the time because I am the sponsor of the Collegiate Journalists. But we often team with The Agency and I have found Cory to be a person that gets things done. She has a vision and she accomplishes it. She’s very positive, and I think that’s a big part of being a leader. I love working with her.”

However, there are drawbacks to managing The Agency. The biggest problem is how time consuming organizing and being in charge of The Agency can be. And it’s understandable that it can be a bit overwhelming at times.

“It keeps me very busy, but it also prepares me for the real

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SCJ initiations

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Once inducted, students have opportunities to get involved with on-campus activities like the yearly journalism department open house for incoming freshmen as well as Constitution Day. Kristina Peters, a senior journalism major and SCJ member since 2005, explains that this special event is “a day when [SCJ] set up a microphone in the Quads and allowed students to take a minute to voice their thoughts at the microphone. It was a chance for them to express their First Amendment opinions.”

Advantages of being an SCJ member continue even after graduation. “SCJ is the largest journalism group in our department and has the longest history,” Turner said. “A majority of

our graduating alum who have been successful have been members. When they come back to visit, they always say they have the fondest memories of SCJ.”

The first general meeting of the semester was Tuesday, Feb. 10, at 6:30 p.m., in room 2441 of Buzzard Hall.

The group planned to discuss the IHSA high school journalism conference, and an upcoming panel that SCJ will host in February as well as other SCJ sponsored events and activities.



Newly elected officers for 2009 induct Collin Whitchurch into the Society for Collegiate Journalists. Front row from left: Pres. Stephen DiBenedetto, Whitchurch; second row: VP Adam Larck, Secretary Emily Zulz, Treasurer Christine Godbey and Event Coordinator Jessica Leggin. Submitted Photo

Studying at Keene

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most students can even pay the NSE tuition to their home-schools, and then simply pay room and board costs to the host college. For Joe, the transportation costs were the biggest difference.

However, the payoff was well worth the cost. His experiences studying abroad gave him a new perspective on life. He was able to experience life at a college he knew nothing about and came away with a passion for journalism. It was after his work on the Keene Equinox that Joe decided on journalism as his major.

After graduating, Joe would like to get a reporting job - whether in print, broadcast or online. "I'll take a job wherever I can get one, but I'd eventually like to make my way back to Illinois and the midwest."

Michelle Obama.

Joe covered a speech by the current First Lady for the campus newspaper, the Keene Equinox. During his stay at Keene, the New Hampshire primaries were taking place, which allowed Joe to meet many presidential candidates.

Photo by Joe Astrouski



Advice from director

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world," she said. It is tough to balance The Agency with classes and other activities, but, like Cory mentions, she manages.

Wanda Brandon, professor of journalism, said, "If you want a job, a job well done and on time, give it to Cory. Cory has always been able to help other students in the process."

She does have some advice to offer for those students who

are interested in the journalism department: "You just have to do it, just jump in and get involved. Get your feet wet and your hands dirty." She added, the only way journalism students will know if they will like the profession is if they try different groups and get involved.

"I came to Eastern with curiosity and am leaving with a passion for journalism," she reveals. Cory said there is no downside to joining groups and

getting involved in the school programs. It will only make you stronger and give you more experience. Gaining experience is the most important thing that journalism students can do for themselves.

As The Agency and the semester go on, what changes will come?

Right now, no changes are planned. However, Cory does wish that, when she started at The Agency, there were more positions such as publicity, photographers and staff writers. It would have been a lot easier

if there were more people to help. It would have flowed a lot easier but luckily, the jobs are here now. At this point in time though, Cory doesn't think that there is much to change about The Agency.

"There are great students who are willing to be involved and who have great ideas, and we have a great adviser. "I just hope whoever takes over will have as much fun as I did," she said.

Cory is currently a senior journalism major. She will graduate in May of this year.

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