

All-School of Communication 2025 Reunion Breakout Sessions

The Lantern: Past, Present, Future

Panelists

1. **Cliff Treyens** (BA, Journ, '77), is a former Lantern editor-in-chief (Fall, '76) and a member of the team that won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Public Service (Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion-Ledger*). From 1985 to 1987 he was State Government reporter for *The Columbus Dispatch*. He later served as communications director for the governor of Mississippi and Speaker of the Ohio House and as public communications director for the National Groundwater Association, a non-profit professional association.

Now retired, he co-authored the 2025 book, *There's a Rock on Martin Avenue*.

2. **Christopher Amatos** (BA, Journ, '77), was editor-in-chief of *The Lantern* Winter Quarter 1977. After graduation he interned at the Rome *Daily American*, an English-language newspaper aimed at ex-pats living in the Eternal City. Sadly, Elvis and the *Daily American* died the same day the following August.

Upon returning to the States, he worked at the *Youngstown Vindicator*, the *Albuquerque Journal*, the *Columbus Citizen-Journal*, and *The Columbus Dispatch*, where he was assistant business editor. Following the *Dispatch*, he worked for a Columbus-based company that focused on investor relations for small-cap companies. He completed his employment career with a 17-year stint in corporate communications at American Electric Power Co.

Based on the knowledge he accumulated as a business reporter for 18 years, he opened the first Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa franchise in Ohio in 2014. He sold his H&S interests in November 2023.

3. **Sheridan Hendrix** (BA, Journ, 2018), is an award-winning Ohio-based multimedia journalist, most recently as the Higher Education reporter for *The Columbus Dispatch*, covering Ohio's colleges and universities and reporting on issues affecting college students. She launched *The Dispatch's* TikTok account, coordinates the newsroom's college intern program, and writes a weekly newsletter, "Extra Credit." She previously covered Ohio's rural and Appalachian counties for *The Dispatch*, where she had also interned.

Originally intending to be a photojournalist, she was drawn to long-form investigative reporting and served as the Oller Special Projects reporter for *The Lantern* in 2018, focusing on student physical and mental health and suicide rates. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Journalism from Kent State University.

4. **Akayla Gardner** (BA, Public Affairs Journ, 2021), is currently White House correspondent for Bloomberg News in Washington, DC. She travels with the White House press corps on foreign and domestic trips and authors a weekly Friday newsletter, "Washington Edition: Inside the White House." She frequently appears on CNN, MSNBC and NBC News Now.

As the Special Projects Director for Lantern TV in 2020-21 she won a college production award from a regional Emmy Awards chapter for reporting and producing an investigative documentary on the firing of a championship-winning Ohio State women's rowing coach. Before that she was Lantern TV's News Director and a Senior Reporter for *The Lantern*. She was also co-founder and president of the OSU chapter of the National Association of Black journalists.

The School of Communication is proud to name Akayla Gardner as Honorary Deputy Chair of this year's all-school reunion host committee.

5. **Lily Pace** (BA, Journ., expected Dec. 2025) is the current Managing Editor–Campus for *The Lantern*. She has previously served as a Senior Campus Reporter and Student Life/Greek Life beat reporter for *The Lantern*. With minors in political science and history, she has a deep interest in public affairs.

Moderator

John Oller (BA, Journ, '79) is the author of eight nonfiction books, focusing on American history, biography, and true crime. One of his books, *An All-American Murder*, led to the reopening and resolution of a 40-year-old murder "cold case" in Columbus, Ohio.

As a Wall Street lawyer for many years he represented Major League Baseball in many high-profile cases, including the Pete Rose gambling case.

For *The Lantern* in the 1970s he was an editorial page editor, a campus editor, and a special projects reporter. He interned as a reporter for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and *Rochester (NY) Times-Union*. Since 2008 he has sponsored *The Lantern*'s Oller Special Projects position, which allows a student to work on long-form investigative pieces.

Strategic Communication Alumni Breakout Session

Mary Sterenberg, assistant professor of Practice and the 2024 recipient of The Ohio State University Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching, will moderate a highly informative and interactive session that will feature the following:

Faculty Panel Presentation: “*Preparing the Next Generation*”

The session will begin by hearing faculty members explain key elements of the Strategic Communication course offerings and key program highlights:

- **Core writing Curriculum**—emphasis on multiplatform, audience-focused writing
- **Workforce Readiness**—Crisis Communication, campaigns, ethics
- **PRSSA and The PRactice** (OSU’s student-run public relations firm)—real-world client work, leadership and networking opportunities
- **Sports Communication Opportunities**—unique partnership opportunities with athletics, hands-on media experiences
- **Research and Scholarship**—undergraduate research opportunities, media effects, strategic messaging

Alumni Panel Presentation: “Where Are They Now”

Following the faculty panel discussion, listen to the stories of several of the school’s alumni—diverse in years and career paths—and how they feel their education and School of Communication experiences have helped positively influence and shape their careers. Alumni who will be featured on the panel include::

- **Linda Thomas Brooks**— Linda Thomas Brooks used her OSU degree in Journalism and her experience working on the *Lantern* to build a wide-ranging career across the communications ecosystem. Most recently, she was the CEO of PRSA, leading the national organization and guiding both professional and student chapters. Other key roles focused on advertising and media, including leadership of a consolidated media unit for General Motors. She also ran communications and marketing for Trilogy, a business technology company. She was one of the founders of the nonprofit Institute for Advertising Ethics. In addition to serving on OSU’s School of Communication Advancement Board, Linda is on the Dean’s Advisory Council for the College of Arts & Sciences and on the Advisory Council for the Buckeye Leadership Fellows Program.
- **Olivia Cohen**-- Olivia Cohen, a 2023 OSU Summa Cum Laude graduate with a major in Strategic Communication, is an account manager at Real Chemistry

where she leads public relations efforts for health and pharmaceutical clients. Outside of work, Olivia is a co-chair on the Awards Committee for PRSA Chicago's Board of Directors. While at OSU, Olivia served as president of PRSSA and an account lead for The PRactice. Olivia won the Walter W. Seifert Award and Hermanoff PRSSA/PRactice Leadership award from the OSU School of Communication in 2022 and 2023, respectively, as well as the Outstanding Graduate Award from PRSA Central Ohio in 2023. Olivia also earned the National President's Citation and Gold Key Award from PRSSA in 2023.

- **Shannon Littell (Reed)**-- Shannon is a strategic communications leader with 12+ years of experience shaping narratives at the intersection of cybersecurity, technology, and enterprise transformation. She drives initiatives that foster employee connection, engagement, and awareness across a global workforce. Her work spans high-impact internal and external communications, board-level reporting, and executive advisory—translating complex technical topics into clear, actionable insights. Shannon's communications expertise has supported C-level executives, driven cross-functional collaboration, and ensured alignment with strategic goals across regions and functions. She works closely with leaders to shape messaging that supports teams during pivotal moments—whether navigating change, scaling innovation, or building alignment. Shannon is also deeply passionate about mentorship and creating opportunities for early-career professionals—regardless of educational background or career path. She's committed to fostering inclusive environments where potential is recognized, voices are valued, and growth is supported through meaningful training and professional development.
- **Kevin Volz** -- Kevin is Senior Vice President of Strategy at MediaSource, an award-winning public relations and creative agency based in Columbus, Ohio. He leads the agency's strategy, media measurement and client experience functions, helping major healthcare brands tell impactful stories through earned media and multimedia campaigns. Kevin has advised academic medical centers, cancer institutions and healthcare startups on national communications initiatives that drive visibility and business growth. With a degree in strategic communication from The Ohio State University, Kevin brings a unique blend of news instincts and PR insight to his work. He's passionate about operational excellence, developing talent and helping the next generation of communicators navigate an evolving media landscape.

Faculty, Alumni and Student Roundtable Discussion: "The Future of PR and Opportunities for Engagement"



To wrap it up, all session attendees will be able to participate in small-group conversations around themes such as:

- Future of PR and strategic communications
- Artificial Intelligence and communication careers
- Mentorship and networking opportunities
- Guest lecturing or speaking in classes
- Supporting the student-run pr firm or PRSSA chapter

Graduate Research Breakout Session

“Curiosity-Fueled, Theory-Driven: The Buckeye Approach to Communication Research”

Faculty, graduate students, and alumni of the School of Communication’s graduate program conduct award-winning, high-impact research on topics that shape today’s media landscape—research with direct relevance to professionals in journalism, advertising, and public relations. Areas of focus include:

- Media effects and audience psychology
- Digital and social media use
- Political communication and misinformation
- Health communication
- Narrative and message design
- Human-machine interaction and AI

Matthew Grizzard (Scarlet and Gray Associate Professor) and **Shelly Hovick** (Associate Professor) will moderate a panel highlighting the School’s cutting-edge research and graduate education. The session will feature presentations and conversations with distinguished alumni, current faculty, and graduate students—all working at the intersection of communication theory and real-world impact.

Alumni Panelists

- **Brian Weeks** (Ph.D. 2014) is an Associate Professor of Communication and Media at the University of Michigan and Faculty Associate at the Center for Political Studies. His research focuses on how people engage with political information online, with an emphasis on misinformation, emotional responses to news, and strategies for correction. He publishes in top journals and teaches courses on political communication, digital media, and public opinion.
- **Matthew Sweitzer** (Ph.D. 2021) is a computational social scientist at Sandia National Laboratories and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the School of Communication. His research applies social scientific theory and computational methods—including machine learning, natural language processing, and psychophysiology—to challenges in energy and national security. His work appears in both communication and interdisciplinary science journals.

Faculty Panelists

- **Jesse Fox** is a Professor in the School of Communication, Director of the VECTOR Lab, and co-chair of the School’s Research Committee. Her research explores how emerging technologies—such as social media, virtual reality, and conversational agents—shape identity, relationships, attitudes, and behavior.



She applies a mixed-methods approach and engages with topics including online harassment, avatar embodiment, and user experience, with implications across media psychology, HCI, and health communication.

- **Matthew Grizzard** is a Scarlet and Gray Associate Professor whose research bridges media psychology and mass communication. He investigates how audiences make moral judgments about narrative characters, how those judgments shift based on context, and how such processes relate to larger social phenomena like polarization and schadenfreude. In addition to publishing regularly in the field, he serves as Associate Editor to *Journal of Media Psychology* and is a member of multiple editorial boards.
- **Emily Moyer-Gusé** is a Professor of Communication and Director of Graduate Studies here at OSU. Her research focuses on how entertainment media—particularly narrative content—can influence attitudes and behaviors around health and social issues. She examines emotional and cognitive processing of media and developmental differences in media effects, with work published in top journals across communication and psychology.
- **Shelly R. Hovick** is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication at OSU and is the immediate past Chair of the Research Committee. Her research focuses on how people perceive their risk for cancer and other chronic diseases, and how those perceptions influence information seeking and prevention behaviors. She examines the social and cognitive factors that shape health communication disparities and develops strategic messaging to promote early detection and risk reduction. Her current work includes evaluating family health history tools and designing communication strategies for conveying genetic risk information.