

# Communication Talks

Department of Speech Communication Newsletter. February 28, 2011

## Social Media Research Fuels Graduate Students

By. Brian Donahoe

Jealousy, love, and social media aren't what people think of when they hear speech communications. But, research on social media are progressing the department ahead of the curve. The department of speech communication is improving by leaps and bounds. From adding new classes to research in social media, the graduate program is better than it has ever been.



Unless you have been living under a rock for the past 10 years, you have dabbled with some form of social media. From social websites like Twitter and Facebook, to public relations oriented sites like PitchEngine and LinkedIn, social media is everywhere and is only gaining more ground. That being said, the speech communication graduate program is on top of their game in terms of being on the cutting edge of social media research.

Playing a major part in the research process are graduate students Alex Leith and Trisha Hoffmann.

Though their research topics are different, their overall results pertain to Facebook and the effect it has on its users. Leith is working on his thesis paper, which covers the parasocial effect Facebook has on individuals.

Dr. Jocelyn Brown, assistant professor and communication generalist, says, "The parasocial effect refers to an individual's perception of who his friends truly are." The view the user has of his friends is altered. Though one may have 900 friends on Facebook, it does not necessarily mean that all of those 900 friends would recognize him/her on the street.

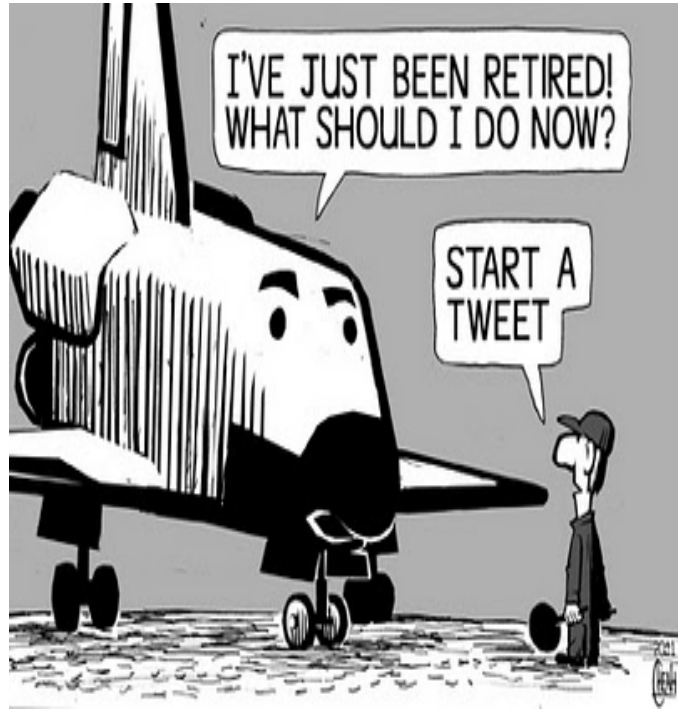
One of the goals currently being implemented to strengthen the interpersonal track is the addition of new classes. The paperwork to solidify the classes is working its way through the provost's office. While talking with Brown she said that the department is always working to fix or improve anything the students feel deserves attention. "Whatever the students want, the department tries to accomplish," said Brown.



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