Making Lives Better

The Homecoming Project

Theatre Department
Cleans Up

Music Camps
Ambassador Robert Jordan Visits Campus

“I am from Tulsa, Oklahoma but I came to Texas as quickly as I could,” Ambassador Robert Jordan joked during his visit to Commerce. “I have always been interested in foreign affairs. My parents met in Trinidad—international topics were dinner table topics in my family.” After earning a B.A. from Duke University, an M.A. from the University of Maryland while serving in the U.S. Navy, and a J.D. from the University of Oklahoma College of Law, Jordan took a job at the Dallas office of Baker Botts, the law firm of James Baker.

In 2001, President Bush appointed Jordan as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Jordan held the position until 2003 when he resigned and returned to Baker Botts where he is currently a senior partner in charge of the firm’s Middle East offices, dividing his time between Dubai and the United States. A member of several organizations, he serves as Diplomat in Residence and adjunct professor of political science at Southern Methodist University, where he teaches a course on the Middle East.

During his visit to Commerce, he gave an enlightening speech entitled, “Crisis in the Middle East,” in which he discussed the different cultures and issues facing multiple countries, including women’s issues, the oil industry, and universities. The Political Science Department ran a live Twitter feed so that students and guests could comment on the experience and ask Jordan questions. “You should commit to making other people’s lives better if you want to become an ambassador,” he said in response to a question, “There are a lot of threats out there but there are also many opportunities. You have to take advantage of them and you can’t do that without paying attention to the world around you—you have to be informed.”
feeling my way through partially blindfolded. Ten years later, it felt nice to have my eyes wide open and impart some of that knowledge on the current students."

After college, Trieb worked as a freelance photographer for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram while working at a flower shop. "I shot everything I was assigned by newspapers in order to make money, from house fires to baseball games. If you want to pursue any line of work that's difficult, it's a marathon not a sprint. The key is to keep pushing for what you want, never stop, and never give up on your dreams."

Trieb has taken pictures since childhood. "My mom used to let me use her camera on vacations and at parties and camp. I have about 50 albums that I created throughout grade school. In college, I was lucky to have had one of those 'voila!' moments, when I realized I was made for something. I was 20-years-old visiting a black and white Holocaust exhibition at a university gallery. It had a profound effect on me. I remember thinking, 'I want to be a witness to important issues, and maybe I can do it with a camera.' I was awe-struck and completely transformed by the images I saw; I wanted to pursue a life where I could photograph issues that would impact others in the same way."

Trieb's projects range in length from long-term stories over the course of several years, and shorter projects spanning a week. "When I was first starting out, I wanted to take pictures that would change the world. Along the way, I've realized that one of the beautiful gifts gleaned from my line of work is the relationship I form with my subjects and the surprising influence we have on each other. I use the camera as a tool to get close and form a connection with other human beings. To me, the connection is the most important part."

Trieb credits her boyfriend and her family with her success, "I truly believe my family is what made everything possible. Their love, support, and encouragement kept me going."

For more information on Erin Trieb and her work, visit her website at www.erintrieb.com

Alumna Erin Trieb presented her collection of photographs, The Homecoming Project, in the University Gallery. "The Homecoming Project grew out of a desire to give my images of US service members a second life and to create further conversations about PTSD outside of traditional media platforms," said Trieb. "Since its inception in 2011, the vision has morphed but the mission has stayed the same: to use visual journalism and media to raise awareness of veteran issues related to war and trauma. I've had the privilege of displaying my work, the work of my colleagues, and of US veterans in exhibitions all over the United States and Europe—we've had over 50 exhibitions which have reached thousands of audience members, and the project has gathered considerable media attention from outlets such as Time.com, The New York Times, and Newsweek. It's definitely a labor of love. I get emails from strangers saying, 'your exhibition helped me to understand what veterans are dealing with when they come back from war,' which is why I keep doing it."

Erin Trieb graduated from A&M-Commerce's Art Department in 2004. "My time at A&M-Commerce was a life-changing experience and a touchstone. It is where I solidified my passion for photography. Program director, Stan Godwin built a legacy of excellence and Professors Craig Buck and Chad Smith heavily influenced my work ethic. My class had a good group of photographers and we pushed each other to be better, to work harder. I still keep in touch with many of my college friends today. Being named Alumni Ambassador was a great honor, as well. I loved getting to see the campus again. When I was in college, I felt like a sponge, soaking up the experience, knowledge and advice, but also "your exhibition helped me to understand what veterans are dealing with"
Author Mark Busby Visits Campus

Author Mark Busby visited the university for the release of the 2015 issue of The Mayo Review. After teaching a writing workshop in The Writing Center, Busby had a luncheon with the students and then read from his book, Cedar Crossing, at the release party. In his talks, he focused on encouraging writers in their own work, telling them to “read, read, and read some more.” Graduate student, Darina Davis commented on how easy it was to talk to Busby, “we discussed the benefits of blending historical novels into a history course and how that literature can enhance historical periods for students, making learning more entertaining.”

Alumna Publishes First Novel

Alumna Katlin D’Ann recently published her first novel, Rebel Spirit. She received both her BA and her MA through the university. “Dr. Stewart and Dr. Reid changed the way I approach young adult literature, reading and writing it. They really helped me define the commentary I want to make about the society these kids live in today—I want my writing to mean something.” For more information, check out her website at www.katlindann.com and visit her on Facebook.

Remembering the Holocaust

With touching presentations from survivor Margaret Furst and Dr. Charlotte Decoster, from the Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance, the political science department celebrated the 3rd Annual Holocaust: Days of Remembrance event. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe and the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps by the allied forces.

Journalism Students Receive Internships

The Hopkins County-based Front Porch News website will offer two internships to journalism students giving them the opportunity to work many angles of news gathering, from shooting photos and writing copy, to gaining practical experience in developing content for an electronic, online publication. Dr. Hunter Hayes said, “These skills will further enable our students to have the preparation to cover all areas of news reporting, especially for smaller communities compared to large, metropolitan areas, and they will also develop their skills as independent news reporters.”

New Department of Liberal Studies

The Liberal Studies program will soon be its own department. “We currently have 120 majors and by becoming our own department, those students will have even more opportunities. There are things we can do as a department that we can’t do as a program,” says program head, Dr. Donna Dunbar-Odom. The Liberal Studies major allows students to create a degree and conceptualize their own specialty. “Our inter-disciplinary degree allows for a compilation of interests and prepares students for master’s and Ph.D. programs.”
THEATRE DEPARTMENT WELCOMES REBECCA WORLEY

The Theatre Department welcomes its newest faculty member, Rebecca Worley. With an MFA in Performance and Pedagogy and as a current PhD candidate at Southern Illinois University, her primary interests are political theatre and feminist theory, focusing on protest-as-theatre and theatre-as-protest. “Every play carries the human condition,” she says, “you never know who you will touch with your story. Educational theatre has the opportunity to bring these stories and ghosts to life. Theatre has the power to change lives—to help people see the world in a different way.”

After working with many A&M-Commerce graduates, Worley knew she wanted to join the university’s staff. “Students here are faces not numbers. ‘That moment’ is everything to me; I love seeing that moment when something clicks and the student’s face lights up. That’s why I do what I do.”

COMMERCE USITT GIVES BACK

The A&M-Commerce Chapter of The United States Institute for Theatre Technology has joined the list of organizations involved in the Adopt a Highway program. The USITT is a worldwide networking organization for professionals and pre-professionals in design, production, and technology for the performing arts. As one of their service projects, the USITT students, along with alumni and faculty, visit their two-mile stretch of Highway 71, just north of downtown, four times a year. For more information and clean-up days, check out the A&M-Commerce Theatre Alumni Facebook page.

NINE PLAYS FOR THE SCREAMS OF ONE

The theatre department presented Don Nigro’s play, Further Adventures of Tom and Huck and Other Plays. The night consisted of nine plays directed by nine student-directors, with 19 stage managers, five student designers, and 13 actors from the university and the community. The plays explored the macabre, cannibalism and the minds of the insane in a terrifying collection. Student director, Kati Barrett, said, “Having the opportunity to direct as part of the season has been a great experience. To see the entire department come together to put on this production has been an uplifting, exciting and memorable few weeks. Theatre is family, and I know we are all blessed with an incredibly talented theatre family here at A&M-Commerce.”

Art History Professor Attends NEH Seminar

Dr. Emily Newman, art history professor, was selected to attend a National Endowment of Humanities Seminar on Buddhist Asia. Nationally, only 25 professors were selected to attend, Dr. Newman being one of only two art history professors chosen. “I have two goals: one, to expand my knowledge of Buddhist art, to better prepare myself for my classes and give the students a well-rounded experience, and second, to develop lectures on Buddhism, spirituality and contemporary art for those classes. This year, I’ve spent time working on undergraduate teaching and research. I have had three students present their research at conferences and many of my students helped on the Patrick Dougherty project—those successes pushed me to think of other ways to help our students learn.”
Honors Luncheon Celebrates Excellence

The 2015 Honors Luncheon hosted students from every department of the college, celebrating scholarships, endowments and many noteworthy accomplishments.

General Douglas Fraser Addresses Banquet

“The banquet was the ultimate fusion of the project’s mission,” said co-founder Haley Hasik about the East Texas War and Memory Project banquet. “Working with veterans every day, we have come to understand that everyone has a unique story. The banquet helped to illuminate the big picture and highlight the value our work has,” she continued. General Douglas Fraser addressed the audience and shared his story with the project. Senior intern, Austin Baxley was amazed by the number of lives this project touches. Freshman intern, Rachel Branch said, “My favorite part of the whole day was sitting down to lunch with General Fraser. Really getting to know the people we interview is important to me, and I love that it’s such a priority of the project.”
Help Us Grow

Texas A&M University-Commerce, formerly East Texas State University, has grown by 30% since 2008. This makes us one of the fastest growing universities in the country. The reasons are simple: our students are attracted by the quality of our academic programs, our small class sizes, the convenience of our multiple locations and online programs, and above all by the individual attention to the students which has earned us the nickname of the “university that cares.”

The College of Humanities, Social Sciences & Arts is one of the key players enabling this growth. We offer 65% of the core curriculum for the whole university, as well as more than fifty graduate and undergraduate programs.

You can help our students grow both academically and professionally by making a gift to the College of Humanities, Social Sciences & Arts. Your gift of any amount will impact our students’ lives.

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Criminology News

Alumni Make a Joyful Noise
Alumni from the Music Department came together for a special concert this year.

History Professor Visits Capitol
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Music Department Offers Summer Camps
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Criminal Justice Student Interns for MTC
Senior criminal justice major, Elizabeth Soeder was selected as an intern for the MTC Correctional Facility in Centerville, Utah. She is now blogging her experiences through the Criminal Justice Department’s website, detailing her work and experiences. Soeder said, “MTC (Management and Training Corporation) does so much more than corrections; they do things like education and training in medical, economic and social development.” To read about her experiences, check out the Criminal Justice Department’s website.

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