

I graduated from U of I with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and English in 2003 and a Master of Arts in Communication in 2005

Current Position:

Some of you may remember me as an instructor and academic advisor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois. Two years ago, I moved to Colorado and transitioned from working with undergraduate students in Communication to advising graduate students in a completely different field—Mechanical Engineering. The change in scenery and position was much easier than anticipated—all because of the superb training I received from the Department of Communication.

As the Graduate Program Coordinator for the Department of Mechanical Engineering (ME) at Colorado State University (CSU), I am the main point of contact for prospective and current students of the ME Graduate Program. I work very closely with students, faculty, and staff to ensure that our students have the tools and support necessary to complete the graduate program. My focus at CSU is on student success, and I have found that managing such a variety of roles at a large, fast-paced institution requires effective communication, teamwork, attention to detail, flexibility, and a commitment to excellence in education. Advising, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, has taught me that playing an active role in the lives of students will help them be more successful while on campus and creates a sense of family that will likely help them to be more successful after graduation.

Although my position at CSU is extremely rewarding, nothing compares to my time at Illinois. As an advisor and instructor, I was lucky enough to work with students and faculty who were truly passionate about making a positive impact on the world around them. My greatest accomplishment was my involvement in launching the CMN Department's first Registered Student Organization, the Communication Association. I could not have been more proud of the founding members—students who created an organization that allowed other students the opportunity to network, hone professional skills, and provide support for one another.

My greatest fear in taking on a new position in the College of Engineering was that my lack of technical knowledge would make it difficult to connect with students and faculty. To my surprise, in the field of Engineering, having a background in communication is like having a superpower. Within my first month, I was asked to craft a departmental newsletter, make improvements to the website, create recruiting materials, and complete a number of other communication-related tasks. Needless to say, my background in communication came in very handy and helped me to hit the ground running and create a connection with those around me.

Best Class:

One of my favorite courses that I took as an undergraduate was CMN 277, Introduction to Mediated Communication, with Professor Tewksbury. Professor Tewksbury's animated presence and passion for the course inspired me to explore all that the Communication major had to offer. This course pushed me to reevaluate my goals, declare a second major, and ultimately change my career path. After taking this course, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in higher education—to inspire and connect with students just as Professor Tewksbury had done for me and so many others every Tuesday and Thursday morning that semester. It was CMN 277 that taught me not what to think, but what to think *about*.

Advice to current students:

My advice to current students is to be kind, genuine, and present. Seek out mentors, ask questions, get involved, and lead by example. This is your time to figure out what is important to you and to make a difference in the lives of those around you—and there is no greater place to do this than the University of Illinois—just be sure to have a slice of Papa Del’s in hand—there is no guarantee that where you’ll end up will have good pizza—sigh!

