HerCDM offers opportunities for female students in the college to network, socialize, volunteer and more. Read about the organization on page 3.
The 2014-15 academic year is the 20th anniversary of the College of Computing and Digital Media (CDM)—as measured from its origins as the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems (CTI), which itself developed out of the Department of Computer Science—and it’s fair to say that the college has come a long way.

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When it comes to programmatic excellence, both The Theatre School (TTS) and the School of Cinematic and Interactive Media (CIM) regularly make the cut. This year, The Hollywood Reporter placed TTS on its list of the 25 Best Drama Schools and named CIM to its list of the nation’s Top 25 Film Schools for 2014 as well. Yet students from the two schools rarely collaborate on projects, in part because The Theatre School focuses primarily on stage work, and in part due to the difficulties inherent in scheduling courses across colleges. Recently, CIM sought to overcome these challenges by revamping Directing Actors for camera, a popular course for CIM directing students, in tandem with TTS. With that in mind, he’s already planning for future cross-college projects. “There was a lot of experimenting with the scripts and teams, but it was always in service of making the best film possible,” he says. “It may be that the best way to teach this material is through really intense collaboration.”

Reflecting on the course’s success, Irvine points to the students’ creative drive and willingness to learn from each other. “There was a lot of experimenting with the scripts and teams, but it was always in service of making the best film possible,” he says. “It may be that the best way to teach this material is through really intense collaboration.”

Brandon Carlyle (CDM MS ‘14) spoke for all the directors when he called his actors “super-talented.” In his short film, “Love and Zombies,” scripted by Jared Pettit, actors Jason VonRohn (THE MFA ‘14) and Maureen Mizener (THE MFA ‘14) argue about the future of their relationship while fighting ravenous zombies. “My goal for the project was to create (audition) reel-worthy material for each student who worked on the film,” he says. “I think I accomplished that.” The process was not without risk and uncertainty, but Carlyle and his crew pushed through. “You could tell everyone wanted to be on set to see how it would all come together, and how we were going to pull off some of this stuff,” Carlyle recalls, thinking in particular about dressing his actors in fake blood.

Interviews with the students revealed a number of reasons for the project’s success. “I think they were as dedicated to their characters as we were to getting the film made,” Carlyle explains. “It was a great opportunity for them to work with creative people who bring their own ideas to the table.”

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“I wanted to collaborate with peers who have a similar passion for quality performance,” says directing student Kevin Endres, summarizing the appeal of the class. Those peers included not only fellow directors and the MFA students from The Theatre School, but also other CIM students focusing on screenwriting, cinematography, production, sound and related specialties. In the fall quarter of the 2013-14 academic year, two sections of Storytelling for the Screenwriter produced upward of 60 short scripts. Five of these scripts became the basis for the directors’ short films, including “Off We Go,” written by screenwriting student M. Scott Perles and selected for production by directing student Ward Crockett, who described the story of a down-on-his-luck racecar driver as “off the wall, funny and over the top.”

Irvine also directed a single scene for their first projects. “My adapted scene turned out to be a film in its own right,” says Crockett. His scene, entitled “Playing Cards at Dawn,” received nominations in four categories at the Premiere Film Festival (see page 8), including Best Directing; Crockett’s director of photography, Eric Liberacki, won Best Cinematography for the scene. These initial works proved formative for the directors. “We were as dedicated to our first projects as our second projects,” Endres shares. “There are no ‘trial runs’ in filmmaking.”

Nathan Strefel (THE MFA ‘14), who starred in both “Off We Go” and director Theophilus Jamali’s scene adaptation, “Appel Jax,” found that acting for film differed in significant ways from stage acting. “In a stage production, the rehearsal process gives you time to work through your character, their arc in the play and their relationship with other characters,” he explains. “For a film, you have to go onto the set polished.” Nonetheless, Strefel enjoyed the entire experience so much that he plans to pursue more on-camera work in the future.

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Watch “Riverside” at bit.ly/RiversideCiolek.
As a young adult, Angelika Coghlan (CDM ‘85) wasn’t sure what she wanted to do with her life. “I got bored very easily and wanted to find something challenging,” she recalls. “My dad thought the technology field would suit me because tech is always changing and you have to stay on top of it.” This suggestion ultimately led Coghlan to a satisfying career at the intersection of business and technology.

While Coghlan liked the idea of working in technology, she also wanted to develop a robust set of business skills. DePaul offered the possibility of taking courses in both areas. “Back then, we were learning mainframe technology, COBOL and PUL in the computer science courses,” Coghlan notes. “Things have changed a lot since then!” After graduation, Coghlan worked for several large corporations, including Baxter Travenol (now Baxter International), Quaker Oats and Leo Burnett, but she soon found a way to combine her two passions. “I was hired as a programmer for a consulting firm, but I have very good communication skills, so I was able to talk to the business people and then translate their needs into tech speak,” she explains. “That was partly due to my DePaul education.”

After her employer was bought out, Coghlan and her husband started their own technology consulting business in 1998. Now known as Catwalk Consulting, the company generated more than $1 million in revenue during its first year in business. Then the financial market turned, and everything changed. “We thought we were done,” Coghlan remembers. “But we learned to be flexible and open, to try new things and to keep making new plans.”

Today, Catwalk Consulting also mentors entrepreneurs in Kenya. As a trustee of Kiva, a nonprofit that allows lenders to make microfinance loans directly to borrowers, Coghlan reviews applicants’ business plans and provides ongoing training. “One man was able to buy better feed for the chickens that he’s now selling to restaurants and hotels,” Coghlan says. “Another individual started an art school where she teaches widows and orphans how to make soapstone plates and decorative items, which they sell in the market.”

“Empowerment Through Community Crime Prevention Technologies”

For two years, Assistant Professor Sheena Erete immersed herself in conversations about crime. She attended community meetings, interviewed residents and analyzed online content pertaining to crime in five Chicago neighborhoods. Through these investigations, Erete found that the racial and economic composition of a neighborhood, as well as its crime level, affects how residents use technology to combat criminal activity. For example, in areas that exhibited less crime, community members were less likely to engage in anonymous reporting tactics, whereas residents in high-crime areas typically preferred to remain anonymous because they feared retaliation. By providing insight into the role of technology in supporting collective action against localized crime, Erete’s study offers a basis for development of effective technological tools to fight crime.

School of Computing colloquiums showcase leading research

Each week during the academic year, a classroom in the School of Computing transforms into a community space where students, faculty, alumni and members of the public can learn about cutting-edge research projects based at DePaul and other academic institutions. “The colloquiums promote the research environment at CDM and encourage collaboration across different areas,” says Professor Iyad Kanj, the organizer of the 2014 winter and spring sessions. Below, three recaps of presentations from the spring quarter offer a sneak peek at the range and complexity of topics discussed at the colloquiums.

“Assessing Diagnostic Complexity: An Image Feature-Based Strategy to Reduce Annotation Costs”

The medical community has come to rely on computer-aided diagnosis (CAD) and digitization to analyze vast quantities of data in a more efficient and, hopefully, effective manner. Assistant Professor Alexander Rasin discussed efforts to improve the process further by using CAD to classify CT lung scans into evaluative categories. Using images from the Lung Image Database Consortium, Rasin extracted image features, built a decision tree classifier and created an automated diagnostic tool to characterize images as easy or difficult cases. Depending on the categorization, the number of radiologists evaluating the images could range from three for an easy case to five for a hard case, rather than the default number of four. This approach has the potential to save time and reduce costs without sacrificing the accuracy of the diagnosis.

“Examining the ‘Nothing to Hide’ Consumer View of Online Behavioral Tracking”

When Assistant Professor Janine Spears leads discussions about online behavioral tracking in her classes, several students always respond by arguing that they don’t care if the government or other entities are viewing their click searches or video visits. This stance made Spears wonder how consumers who claim they have “nothing to hide” manage online privacy risk. While the topic has been researched from a legal perspective, the dearth of empirical data inspired Spears to conduct a survey of 300 consumers to test her hypothesis that awareness of online tracking is a key motivator for protecting one’s privacy. Through statistical analysis of the data, Spears found that this was indeed the case. She noted that the “nothing to hide, nothing to fear” approach appears to be a proxy for “hear no risks, see no risks,” which could be harmful for consumers.

Alumna finds success at nexus of technology and business

Alumna spotlight | IN THE LOOP

Articulate your value proposition.

Learn how to talk about yourself. Explain why you’re valuable to an organization. If you can communicate your value proposition, it will set you apart from other similar candidates.

Surround yourself with people who believe in you.

You will always be able to find people who say that you’re going to fail, but those aren’t the people you want around you. Find individuals who will constantly push you, believe in you and challenge you.

Volunteer with a professional organization.

As a young person, you’ll feel what it is like to work and what it is like to be judged by your peers. You’ll learn how to network, how to manage money and how to approach others.

Get a BHAG.

A BHAG is a big, hairy, audacious goal. If you’re setting goals for yourself that don’t make you nervous, you’re not thinking big enough. You need to step out of your comfort zone. You’re the one who can push yourself the most, but you’re also the one who can block yourself the most. That’s why you need a BHAG.

Angelika’s top tips for recent graduates:

Angelika’s top four tips for recent graduates:

...
CIM held its Premiere Film Festival at the Music Box Theatre on June 6. This annual showcase and competition highlights some of the best student film work from the past year. Judges included DePaul faculty members and short-film festival programmers from across the country. This year, judges reviewed several hundred submissions in 20 different categories.

The School of Computing (SoC) recently introduced a new graduate program to prepare students for information technology careers in the health sector. Students in the MS in health informatics program will gain the technical and management skills to design and support IT systems and processes in the areas of health care delivery, information processing and exchange, health care analytics, enterprise management, and information storage and security management. Additionally, the college now offers a certificate in analytics. Alumni who enroll in a graduate degree program automatically qualify for the Double Demon Scholarship, which covers 25 percent of tuition costs. Both full- and part-time students are eligible. Learn more at bit.ly/vasvideos.

On June 15, actor, director and producer Jon Favreau (DHL ’14) delivered the commencement address at the combined graduation ceremony for CDM and the College of Communication. “Story is another word for the myths of our time,” he told graduates. “Figure out what your story is and tell it.” Favreau, an executive producer of the “Iron Man” film series and director of the holiday favorite “Elf,” also urged students to “be brave, be bold.” Photo credit: DePaul University/Jamie Moncrief.

CIM’s Visiting Artist Series (VAS) continues to bring in top talent who speak candidly about working in the film profession. In February, VAS partnered with DePaul’s President’s Signature Series and the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity to present the Illinois premiere of the documentary “Hate Crimes in the Heartland,” followed by remarks from Rachel Lyon, the film’s producer and director (see photo). Other 2014 VAS highlights included Mark Dippé, a director, animator and visual effects expert who has worked with Steven Spielberg, George Lucas and James Cameron; artist David McDonnell (MUS ’99, MM ’09) on computer-generated music; and the Page One Entertainment Writers Conference. Watch the VAS YouTube channel at bit.ly/vasvideos.

On May 30, three SoC research teams presented preliminary results of their work in the college’s Medical Informatics Lab at the annual MedIX Workshop. The research projects included the creation of a software program designed to record the movements of a worm used in neurological studies, as well as attendant image analytic data; the development of a mathematical model to depict 3-D images of the torso to reduce the use of CT scans, which increase cancer risk; and the implementation of computer-aided diagnosis processes to identify lung cancer. Learn more at bit.ly/SocMedIX.

The third annual Page One Entertainment Writers Conference convened students, faculty, and artists and writers from the larger community for a daylong crash course in screenwriting. Featured speakers at the May 3 event included Lenny Beckerman, head of film and television at the production company Hello!; Severiano Canales, a staff writer for ABC’s “Scandal”; Steve Conrad, whose screenplays include “The Pursuit of Happyness,” “The Weather Man” and “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”; and Aisha Muharrar, a writer and producer for NBC’s “Parks and Recreation.” The highly anticipated free conference attracted 500 participants who learned about writing the Hollywood blockbuster, breaking into the business, genre writing and more.
DePaul was ranked 12th on The Princeton Review’s 2014 list of Top Graduate Schools for Video Game Design and 20th on their list of Top Undergraduate Schools for Video Game Design. Selection criteria included the quality of the curriculum, faculty credentials, facilities and infrastructure, and career opportunities. Read more about CDM’s renowned computer game development programs in the latest issue of DePaul Magazine at bit.ly/depaulgaming.

Senior Amanda Pflieger served as an associate producer for former Theatre School student David Dastmalchian’s film, “Animals.” The film garnered Special Jury Recognition for Courage in Storytelling at its premiere at SXSW 2014 in March and also received the Audience Choice award at the Chicago Critics Film Festival in May.

The Hollywood Reporter named CIM 17th on its list of the nation’s Top 25 Film Schools of 2014. This ranking, a jump from 21st place last year, was the second highest for universities in Chicago. The article commended DePaul for utilizing the city’s rich resources, such as Cinespace Chicago Film Studios, and for bringing in top talent as both visitors and instructors.

CDM student Matt Kula and Val Litvak (CDM ‘14), along with two students from the University of Michigan, took second place out of 238 teams in the MHacks III competition, a 36-hour hackathon in Detroit. Using Oculus Rift and Nintendo Wiimote technologies, the team created an immersive experience based on Quidditch, the flying broomstick game from the Harry Potter series. The Wiimote allows players to tilt, sreeve and roll on a real broomstick, while the Oculus Rift enacts a virtual reality universe filled with recognizable Harry Potter landmarks, such as the Quidditch pitch, Hogwarts and the Forbidden Forest. Get a taste of Oculus Quidditch at bit.ly/oculusquidditch and watch an interview with the creators at bit.ly/mhacksinterview.

Documentary filmmaker and Instructor Anuradha Rana and Assistant Professor Doris Rusch received a 2014 Chicago Digital Media Production Fund grant of $8,500 from the Voqal Fund and Chicago Filmmakers for their interactive mental health project, “For the Records.” The project also won a silver medal at the International Serious Play Awards in the Games for Good category. Read more about “For the Records” in the spring 2014 issue of In the Loop at bit.ly/IntheLoopSpring2014.

To support students like Brown today, please visit giving.depaul.edu.

"This scholarship made my goal a reality.”

When Ashon Brown (CDM ’11, MS ’13) decided to attend school full time after eight years in the U.S. Navy, he sought a university that would allow him to explore different options in the computer science field. DePaul offered that flexibility, as well as a combined bachelor’s/master’s degree program that Brown found too good to pass up. “My time at DePaul was filled with fast-paced, up-to-date, nonstop learning,” Brown says. “It was a fun, challenging environment that pushed me to new heights.”

As a former U.S. Navy aircrewman, Brown qualified for tuition assistance under the GI Bill, which he put toward his bachelor’s degree. However, the funds were not enough to fully cover the expenses of his master’s program. “I feared that my goal of obtaining a master’s degree would have to be put on hold,” he recalls. Determined to complete his secondary education, Brown applied for and received the Dr. Curtis J. and Mrs. Gina Crawford Endowed Scholarship. “This scholarship made my goal a reality,” he says. “I want to thank the donors for their generosity and kindness in helping me reach my true potential.” Today, Brown uses the knowledge and skills he developed at DePaul in his position as a technology analyst at JPMorgan Chase.

Brown is not the only DePaul student whose dreams of a college education came to fruition thanks to scholarship support. Each year, more than two-thirds of students rely on financial assistance to support their academic ambitions. Alumni are directly responsible for many of the scholarships that provide a lifeline for students who may not otherwise attain a college degree. The generosity of alumni helps motivate students like Brown. “My scholarship inspired me to work even harder,” Brown says. “I could go to class with a clear head to study and learn without worrying about my finances. Thank you for believing in my education.”
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