

## *Meet the College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences 2015 Dean's Scholars Award Winners*

### **Cory Alexander Stidham- Social Science**

Cory Alexander Stidham is the Social Science Dean Scholar Award winner. Originally from Hiltons, Virginia, a town near Bristol, Cory knew at an early age that he wanted to go into education and it soon became clear that Radford University was the place to be. "It's the only place I applied. I've always wanted to go into education. It's always been my main goal. I'd always heard about Radford and education...Radford and education. So that was my main drive. I came here, fell in love with it here, and stuck it out- all four years." Cory double majored in history and social science. He marveled at how open and accessible the faculty is at RU. "It's unbelievable how you can walk into anyone's office and ask a question." Cory credits Donna Dunn, Advising Coordinator in the College of Education and Human Development, with helping him stay focused and on-target for his degree in education. "Donna Dunn laid out the road map for me and told me what to do."

For his history major, Cory felt an affinity for his classes and professors right away. "Something just clicked in my history classes. I learned to look at things differently than I did before. The History Department does an unbelievable job to produce students who can write well, communicate, and analyze pieces of data. So, in the History Department, they help you develop any skill you need to get a job."

Cory speaks highly of his history professors, particularly Dr. Oyos. "I loved any class with Dr. Oyos. I don't want to forget anything Dr. Oyos taught. Even his 100-level courses got my gears turning. Without him, I wouldn't be where I am. He was probably the most influential professor I had."

Cory has been very involved in student life while at Radford. He worked at the LARC (Learning Assistance and Resource Center) for three years, participated in the Appalachian Regional and Rural Studies Center, was a peer instructor for University 100, and served in many capacities at Quest. "One thing I'm proud of is being involved in Quest. Being the QA and a Student Director were the best experiences of my life. I got to know Dr. Minner on a first name basis and speak with the President."

Cory recently became involved with Greek Life, something he wishes he had done sooner. He admits that he spent most of his four years at Radford focusing on building his resume. "I wish I could have focused a little more on social life. I swore I would never join a fraternity. No fraternity was of interest to me." Because of a scholarship opportunity, Cory spoke with a recruiter for Sigma Phi Epsilon and became immediately interested. "I helped set that chapter back up on campus. I met my best friend there. I enjoy Greek Life for networking."

Cory's future goal is to teach history. Within the last week, he received a job offer to teach in the Floyd County public school system. As soon as he graduates in May, Cory also intends to go to barber school. He plans on putting his barber tools to use in the winter and summer months when school is not in



session. "I cannot sit around in the summers and winters. 'Idol hands are the devil's workshop,' that's what my Grandma said."



## Kaleb Eller Newago- History

Kaleb Eller Newago is the Dean's Scholar Award winner for History. Upon hearing the news, he first thought, "Oh what did I do wrong?" Then he quickly realized he did everything right. "It's quite an exciting time. (The award) was a very nice honor to receive."

Growing up in Williamsburg, Virginia, Kaleb attended Bruton High School where he developed his love of history and his future plans. "Living in Williamsburg, I was surrounded by history and I was always very passionate for (it). Since high school, I've wanted to be a park ranger. And I never changed my mind."

Kaleb was also adamant about attending Radford University. "Radford was the only choice I wanted to actually make. I like the environment around it. I like that it's a small school with a good history program.

When I came here, I never considered anywhere else. Everything that I wanted in a school was here at Radford." He also appreciated that Radford University offers a Bachelor of Science degree in History, as Kaleb wanted to also take anthropology classes.

Kaleb enjoys learning about all aspects of early American history. His particular favorite time period is western expansion. "I grew up watching westerns, so that got me stuck into it." The Revolutionary

War, however, was the topic of Kaleb's favorite history class. His 495 Seminar with Dr. Mary Ferrari made him reevaluate his opinions on the American Revolution. "I really enjoyed the subject matter. It was something that you don't necessarily grow up learning about. It was the Revolution from the bottom up." Kaleb also enjoyed Dr. Straw's Public History course. "One of our assignments was to go to a museum and report how well they do history. I went to Petersburg National Park."

Kaleb is also double majoring in Criminal Justice. He decided to add a second major during the first semester of his sophomore year. It was after speaking with Criminal Justice Professor Dr. Egan Green that Kaleb decided to expand his studies to Criminal Justice. "My career goal is to be a Park Ranger. (Dr. Green) told me that Criminal Justice would be a good compliment to history with the law enforcement side." Kaleb has completed two successful internships with the Virginia State Parks over the last two summers: one at Virginia Beach and the other at Hungry Mother State Park in Marion.

Kaleb's advice to history majors is to take History 295 as soon as possible. "That class introduces you to the major and how to write a paper well. In terms of developing a skill, that's certainly an important class to have." Kaleb also encourages students to build relationships with their professors. "The faculty-student relationships I've made are so important."

Along with bond he has built with the faculty, Kaleb never wants to forget the friendships that he has made at Radford University. He also cherishes his on-campus job of working in student activities. "I've enjoyed every minute of it. The friends I've made. The places I've worked." Kaleb is also president of the Student Activities Student Employee Association (SASEA), which acts as a liaison between employees in student activities and the department's faculty. From conference events, to clubs, to scholarships, Kaleb has taken every opportunity to succeed throughout his college career. "If you are looking at going to school in Virginia, Radford is an ideal place."

## Elaine Boone- Interdisciplinary Studies

Philadelphia native Elaine M. Boone is the Dean's Scholar Award winner in Interdisciplinary Studies. When she first heard she had won the honor, she said she was shocked. "I said, 'O.k. What did I do?' I'm not here to win awards. So, it really surprised me. I work very hard. Being an older student you have to work harder than most of the people on campus."

Elaine lived a full life before earning her GED in 2010. She dropped out of school in 6th grade and was married by the time she was 15. "It's been a heck of a ride." She has three of her own children and five step-children. "I wanted to get my GED because most of my life I've worked manual labor. And I discovered, through my path, that I always kept floating to the top: supervisor, manager positions. I've always been fairly intelligent and I promised my son that I would go get my GED. Then I promised him I would get my Associates." Elaine's son passed away at 18, just three days before she started community college. "Four years and it's still... I was going to college and planning his funeral at the same time...I don't honestly remember the first semester. I have no memory of it."

Elaine earned her Associates Degree from Virginia Western Community College. "(College) has kept me going. It has given me focus. So, I've kept going. Now I want to go get my Masters. I've come this far, why not take that extra step?"

Elaine's goal is to work in the special education field. For her undergraduate degree, Elaine switched from the Teacher Education and Leadership program to Interdisciplinary Studies. Elaine's Interdisciplinary Studies concentrations are Psychology, History, and Special Education. "I love history and I love learning about the workings of the human mind, and then how to apply that to working with children with special needs. Who could ask for a more cohesive group of concentrations?"

Elaine has certainly thrived during her time at Radford and she holds a tremendous amount of respect for the University. "It's an exemplary institution. I love the teachers and professors here. When I first started, I felt very inferior due to my lack of education. The faculty in the Education Department encouraged me...bolstered my confidence in myself. The small class sizes and the ability to talk with professors one-on-one is something you're not going to find in a larger class."

For Elaine her Child Psychology class was the most eye opening. Her most memorable on-campus moment came with her work with the On Campus Transition Program. "I'd been coming to meet with one of the students every day. He finally knew my name and he was willing to hug me. It was pretty awesome. I would totally work with that program again. Giving the students an opportunity to come to college and be with their age group even though they have cognitive or mental disabilities. That cemented for me my desire to work with kids with disabilities...at any age."



## Madeleine Reda- Sociology

Madeleine Reda is the Dean's Scholar Award winner in Sociology. She says she found out about this honor via email. "I was actually at the circus in Roanoke when I got the email." She explains that she was thrilled and excited to achieve this honor. "Last year it was my goal to get Dean's Scholar. I've been working really hard to build relationships with my professors. I've been working on my grades since freshman year. I was really happy to find out that all my hard work paid off."

Madeleine switched her major to sociology from biology early in her college career. "I had taken a sociology course and I really loved it. I added psychology as a double major. I found that they compliment each other really well."

Madeleine enjoys the small class sizes in the Sociology Department. She continuously applauds her professors for their dedication to the major and for the time they take to work with students. "Professors are passionate about what they do. This really hit me and made me passionate about (sociology) too."

She worked closely with Dr. Eppard on research they presented at the Southern Sociological Society's annual meeting in New

Orleans. Madeleine, Dr. Eppard, and fellow sociology major Deryk Jackson presented Status and Individualism. Madeleine and Deryk interviewed the housekeeping staff at RU to discuss the relationship between status and poverty. "We knew that individualism is a big concept and ideal in the United States and we wanted to see if people who should probably say poverty was because of structural things would still go back to the idea that poverty was individualistic." Madeleine noted that this project remains an on-

going one.

Madeleine currently works with New River Community Services as a direct service provider. "I work directly with people with mental illness. When I started that job, I said, 'this is what I want to do.'" Madeleine works part-time there now and intends to make this a full-time job after graduation until she transitions to graduate school. Madeleine's ultimate career goal is to become a licensed clinical social worker.

Originally from Virginia Beach, Madeleine visited Radford University and fell in love with it because of the area and its size. "I love Radford so much. I never would have gotten this close to my professors, or gotten to go to New Orleans, if I had gone to a bigger school." Madeleine is also involved in the Center for Social and Cultural Research at Radford University. "I would tell new Sociology majors to get involved in the CSCR early. There are a lot of opportunities there."

Madeleine is committed to the study of Sociology and feels that she has learned so many life lessons at Radford University. "I am able to see how and why other people react...the situations they were put in and how that shaped them in a structural way. That's the basis of sociology."

## Ashley Hobbs- Criminal Justice

Ashley Hobbs is the Criminal Justice Dean's Scholar award winner. Upon hearing the news that she is the 2015 recipient Ashley stated, "I was shocked; I was surprised. I had no idea at all. When I got the letter, I read it a few times and I said, 'is this for me?'"

Ashley's path to academic success was not an easy one. Originally from Princeton, West Virginia, Ashley's family relocated to Radford after living in Pearisburg. Ashley dropped out of Radford High School her senior year, earning her GED prior to turning 18. She then worked on the RU campus at Chick-fil-A. She entered New River Community College, eventually transferring to Virginia Western in 2006. "I wasn't mentally where I am at now. It has been a long road, but I wouldn't change anything about it."

Ashley came to Radford University in 2013 via the 2 + 2 dual enrollment program with Virginia Western. As a non-traditional student, Ashley took time off of school between earning her Associates in 2009 and entering the unique program in criminal justice that is taught at the Roanoke Higher Education Center. For this 32-year old, the program fits well with her full-time day job since most of the classes are taught in the evenings.

Ashley chose criminal justice as her major because of the complexity of issues and problems that are involved in the discipline. "I think there is so much that goes into criminal justice. There's some sociology involved, as well. So it's not just putting people in jail or prosecuting crimes. There's a whole system and network outside of it. I've always been fascinated by it."

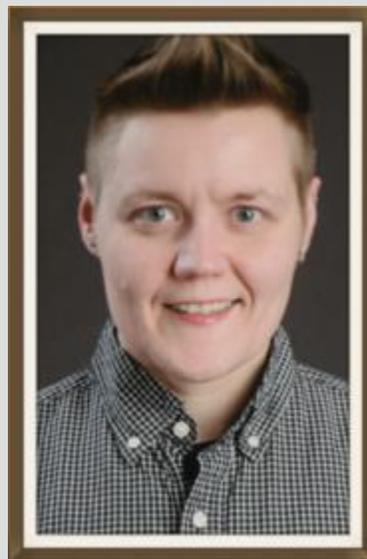
Ashley has been most inspired by Dr. Ellis. "I feel like I have learned an enormous amount from taking her classes. She has a lot to say. She has some interesting opinions and I like the way she teaches. Her tests can be difficult, but you learn a lot from her." Dr. Ellis has even influenced Ashley's decision to attend graduate school in the fall with future plans of becoming a professor. "I didn't come to that until later. Initially what attracted me to criminal justice was that it was just interesting to me...an inherent interest. Then the more I got into it, I thought there are so many things I'd like to research and find out more about. I want to research intensive education programs for high-risk offenders."

Ashley believes that for most students the biggest roadblock to education is knowing how to use your resources. "If I had to say anything to future students, I would say, 'talk to your teachers.' When you are younger, 18, 19, you are kind of scared and you are out of your element. But there are people who can help you. I started New River (Community College) when I was 18 and went back to school at 26. The difference at 18 is that I wouldn't have reached out like I did at 26. I wouldn't have made those connections. But you have to. You have to make connections. For me that's been one of the biggest keys to success. Getting to know the professors and saying, 'Hey, I'm not understanding.' Just knowing you have them in your corner increases the investment you've made in your education."

After graduation, Ashley's immediate plan is to drive to California where she wants to photograph Big Sur. Ashley's educational journey will last longer than her road trip to California. She has been accepted into Radford's Criminal Justice graduate program where she will also be a graduate teaching assistant.

Ashley does not plan on stopping until she earns her PhD.

"Coming from my background to where I am now, it's an incredible honor to be the Dean's scholar. I've worked hard for it, and I'm sincerely honored."





## Candace Rachel Saunders-Grewe- English

Candace Rachel Saunders-Grewe is the English Department's winner of the Dean's Scholar Award. She recalls when she first heard the news, "I was at the

Transitioning to a small school environment was crucial for Candace. "I was home schooled, so making that transition to RU was a lot easier than going somewhere big, like Tech or NYU." Candace also compared the English program at other schools to what Radford University had to offer. She noted that some English programs were primarily into poetry and more open-ended creativity. "Radford offered that, but it also offered more canonical text actually focusing on classical literature. That is what sold me."

Candace believes that she made the right choice. "There's so much to offer...the professors, the small classroom environment. You really feel like you can get that solid education. If you struggle a little bit, you can meet with your professor and they will sit there for two hours and help you out. Even though there are 10,000 students, you don't feel like you are part of that number, you feel part of the community." Candace enjoyed many of her poetry classes with Dr. Gallo. She has credits Dr. Napolitano with helping her hone her writing craft. "I

could write a good essay to pass the class with it, but he helped me push and take that one step further. That will lead me to graduate school."

Candace has been a life-long writer. "I've been writing stories since I was five...when you talk about something, you get your thoughts out in that moment. But when you have to actually write it down, you really are processing it and you are clarifying your ideas. When you come up with a thesis, you know what your idea is and you feel justified in it." Candace also enjoys writing poetry. "Even though I've written poems for most of my life, finding my voice as a poet was very important."

Although Candace comes from a family of teachers, it wasn't until high school that she realized she wanted to teach at the college level. "My friends would give me papers to look at and I would be like 'oh yeah, I want to look at it.' That's probably not normal for someone who is 15-years old." Candace solidified her desire to teach by becoming a tutor at the LARC. "Working with other students, students in my own classes, who were asking me about the assignments, reconfirmed that I want to teach."

Along with her English classes, Candace enjoyed taking German. "It was something that made me extremely nervous. I had a great professor, Frau Klaus. She made it really fun and we got involved in the German club. It was just kind of seeing something else and realizing there's more to the world and you aren't in your little bubble."

"At Radford University there is a community to welcome you and community of professors to teach you. You are definitely going to understand and learn your craft by the end of the journey."

### **The Heart of the New River Valley** **By: Candace Saunders-Grewe**

Seventeen-years-old,  
Strands of wavy, long red hair,  
I wait for "that feeling."

They tell me,  
When I set foot on the right campus,  
I'll know it's the one  
The same way  
I'll know who's "the one."

I applied to schools,  
From the east to the west,  
Got six acceptance letters,  
But still...no butterflies.

I tell myself,  
"That writers' school  
must be the one,"  
But when I visit,  
Something feels off.

I tell myself,  
"That private school  
must be the one,"

\$24,000 in scholarships,  
But it's just not for me.

Then I drive into the city of  
"The Heart of the New River Valley."  
The month of March, cherry blossoms,  
40 degrees, snowflakes tickling my nose.

This is it: the feeling.  
This is where I belong.

## Jason William Drinkwater- Philosophy and Religious Studies

Jason Drinkwater is the Dean's Scholar Award winner for Philosophy and Religious Studies. Jason took about 22 years off before returning to school. He was working at the Walmart distribution center in Southerland, Virginia on September 11, 2001, a day that changed so many lives. Seeing the devastation on that terrible day, Jason joined the Navy, taking a leave of absence from his job. After serving for four years, Jason went back to his position at the superstore in order to acclimate himself to civilian life. "One of the big reasons I went into the Navy was to go back to school at the end of that (using the GI Bill). So in August 2011, I gave my two weeks' notice and I went back to the community college I started in the mid-nineties, John Tyler Community College. I started at RU in August 2013 and never looked back."

While at John Tyler Community College, Jason was exposed to two classes on the Old Testament and the New Testament. "It wasn't what I was expecting. Growing up, I was more used to Sunday school and how they teach. After the exposure to religious studies, I decided to find a school that offered a major in religious studies." Radford fit the bill.

When Jason visited Radford for Quest, he met Dr. Joe Jones. "Of course you know Dr. Jones just recently died. He was my first exposure to the Philosophy and Religious Studies department." Jason recanted how all of the department chairs/director introduced themselves and their majors to the families. "Dr. Jones was there and he said, 'I'm Dr. Jones. I'm the chair of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department, but nobody majors in philosophy and religious studies.'" After the large group dispersed, Jason approached Dr. Jones and introduced himself as a philosophy and religious studies major. "Dr. Jones turned to the guy beside him and was all excited and said, 'I got one!'" They went into a room by themselves and talked for an hour. "We talked about being veterans. We got to know each other. How many schools can you go to where the chair will give you individual attention like that? Meeting Dr. Jones at Quest is a moment I don't want to forget."

Jason credits Dr. Turner and Dr. Jones with opening his eyes to ideas that he did not know existed. He enjoyed all of the classes in his major, particularly those focusing on the ideas of religion in sports and religion in nationalism. "After learning what I've learned, I can't look at things the same way anymore." According to Jason, Dr. Jones also had a way of connecting philosophy to everyday life. "He'd be talking about Socrates and then he would connect that back to Vietnam."

Jason is very proud of his major and his degree. "You can do anything with that degree. Philosophy was the beginning of everything. There is not a job that you don't need critical thinking skills." At times, he regrets not coming to Radford sooner. "But then again, I don't know if I would have been prepared. I was 26 when I joined the Navy and in my 30s when I came to college. Ten years from now, I hope to be teaching something. Maybe ten years from now I'll be back in school again to work on my masters. Everything is open at this point...my options are still open."





## Tyler W. Lester- Political Science

Tyler Lester is the Political Science Dean's Scholar Award winner. Tyler, originally from Richlands, Virginia, chose Radford University because of the individual attention and sense of community that prevails on campus. "The personal atmosphere of RU is ultimately what sold me. The institution is large enough to offer a wide-range of opportunities and activities, but the professors know your name and take a personal interest in your life and pursuits."

Tyler's self-description matches his passion for his major. "I have always been a political geek...I suppose it spun out of a passion for history and as I grew older and started paying more attention to what was happening in the world around me, I realized how important it was to be aware of the issues and educate myself in order to make a difference."

Tyler credits Dr. Bill Hrezo for making a difference in his education. In fact, it's the in-class stories shared by Dr. Hrezo that Tyler never wants to forget. "No matter how outlandish they started, he always circled back around to relate it to class material."

Tyler transferred to Radford University after earning his Associates from Southwest Virginia Community College. In the fall of 2014 he

served as Legislative Action Coordinator for the Students Government Association. Tyler encourages any student to get involved with campus life at Radford. "Get involved! Whether it is in a campus organization or activity or an internship in an office, such opportunities will allow you to develop your leadership skills, make contacts, and apply some of what you are learning in the classroom and in the real world." Tyler also indicates that making an effort to get to know one's professor is vital for a successful college career. "(Connecting with professors) enhances the learning environment exponentially and drives you to be a better students."

In fall 2013, Tyler interned at the office of Congressman H. Morgan Griffith in Christiansburg, Virginia. "While I had been involved in state politics and government for a couple of years, I really had not been exposed to government at the federal level. The internship provided me with an opportunity to acclimate myself to federal issues and see how day-to-day operations carried out in a Congressional office."

Tyler also speaks highly of the welcoming and supportive atmosphere he found in Congressman Griffith's office. He acknowledges that the staff's team-building approach helped him learn and succeed during his internship. "Apparently, I made a decent impression on someone during my internship as I am now working as a field representative for Congressman Griffith in the at the office. "

## Valandrea Dillard- Psychology

Valandrea Dillard is the Psychology Department's Dean's Scholar Award winner. She first heard of the honor in an email from Dr. Willner. "I was like, 'Really? Me?'" Val is a transfer student from Patrick Henry Community College in Martinsville. "When I graduated from Patrick Henry Community College, I didn't know where I wanted to go. I had friends who went here. I'm very close to my family and Radford is close to home. So that is plus."

Initially, Val was uncertain which major to pick. She first wanted to be a social work major, but then she changed to psychology. "I got into my psych classes and I really liked the human interaction. Psychology helps you understand others. In order to be successful in life, you have to communicate. So psychology gives you patience and understanding. It helps you look at how different people look, act, communicate. In all honesty, it's a major that will help you with your entire life."

As a first generation college student, Val enjoyed many of her classes within her psychology major. The Psychology of Diversity class with Dr. Leake made a huge impression on her. Val also enjoys classes taught by Dr. Hayes. "She's challenging, but she pushes you to the point where she knows you can succeed. So she has faith in every one of her students. She doesn't like for students to do the bare minimum. Her tests are the hardest I've ever had here. But her class that made you think and made you study. For that, in all honesty, I want to thank her."

Val has been active in her life at RU, including being a member of the Social Work Club and the Wesley Foundation. "When I came to Radford I grew so much in my faith. I never thought it would happen here at Radford. People label Radford the party school, but there were so many religious organizations that took me in and helped me grow. I never want to forget those people who helped me within those



organizations. I want to give back and help others as much as they have helped me.”

She also continues to live on campus which helps to build strong relationships with other students. “Living on campus you don’t have a temptation not to go to class. You meet new people. That’s been one of my best experiences here...just meeting all different kinds of people. I’ve had four roommates. My first semester, I didn’t have a roommate at all. I wanted to get to know someone...it was lonely at first. But I had to step out of my own comfort zone, which I love. It pushed me as a person to find new friends and find people I have things in common with.”

Val’s future plan is to go to graduate school to become a counselor. First, she wants to take a year off and work for AmeriCorps. This mentorship program supported by the US Government provides community service work for adults who want to help others. Val has been given the opportunity to participate in AmeriCorps’ City Year program in Jacksonville, Florida beginning this July. “I want to take this as an experience to learn about different children and myself and just grow. I want to give back as much as possible.”

Val insists that the only change she would make to her time at Radford University is to forgo her time at the community college and to come to Radford earlier. “I feel that two years limited what I could do. If I could have come here sooner, I would have been more involved. Two years wasn’t long enough for me at Radford.”

The people around me, professors and faculty, have all helped me get through college. I just want to say ‘thank you’ to everyone. If I can give back to the University half of what they gave me...it’s just so much.”



### **Kristina M. Contreras- Communication**

Kristina Contreras is the Dean’s Scholar Award winner in Communication. She will be the first to proudly tell you that she is not a traditional student. After graduating high school, Kristina attended college for a short time, but then, “life got in the way.” As a mother of two children, a wife, and a full-time administrative assistant at Radford University, Kristina certainly has her hands full. She began taking one class in the fall of 2010. “It wasn’t until 2011 that I started going back to school full-time. I went back because I want to do more. I was tired of hearing ‘well, you don’t have your degree.’ So I’m getting my degree.”

Being a full-time Radford University staff member, Kristina took classes during her lunch hour, after work and evening classes. Initially, she thought she would major in something in the field of information technology. Then, she realized that was just a hobby. “So I kind of felt lost for a while. I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do. I really wish they had a degree for someone who really likes to talk a lot. Then I thought, ‘wait a minute that’s called communicating.’ Perfect! I know where I need to go.”

Kristina took the Introduction to Communication class with Dr. Dunn and fell in love with it. “It was through his class and the way that he taught it that made it exciting and interesting. That’s when I knew this is what I wanted to do. I had a lot of questions, he and I would email back and forth. In an intro class that size to be able to ask a question and get one-on-one attention is phenomenal.” Kristina has also completed an independent study with Dr. Dunn and they have written and presented papers together on political communication. “This April at ECA (Eastern Communication Conference) we are presenting a paper we wrote together. (Dr. Dunn) has been a constant, encouraging, mentor. I feel that I can go to him and say, ‘what do you think of this idea?’ He’ll say, ‘let’s talk about it.’ He’s been a wonderful, wonderful person. All my instructors have been.”

Kristina moved with her young daughter to Roanoke from California where she had lived for many years. She remarried, this time to her high school “sweetheart”, and they now have a 2 ½-year-old son. “My mom lives with us and takes care of my kids when I’m in class. If I didn’t have her there, I wouldn’t have been able to do this. They have all been very supportive. In the end, (getting a degree) is going to benefit all of us, my kids, my husband, my mom.”

When asked about her future plans, Kristina is very determined. She is currently taking graduate classes in the Corporate and Professional Communication Master of Science program. In ten years “I will have my masters and I will have my doctorate and, hopefully, I will be back here teaching. I love this campus. I love the size of it. I love the program here. I love the instructors. For so long I knew I needed to work. I knew I wanted to have children. But I didn’t know what I wanted to do. It’s very exciting to finally know what I want to do.”

## Taylor Newman- Media Studies and Foreign Languages and Literatures

Taylor Newman is the winner of the Dean's Scholar Award in both Foreign Languages and Literatures and Media Studies. "I've been working hard, so it's nice to see that it is paying off." Taylor's interest in sports journalism was first sparked at an ESPN camp her parents discovered. "I learned to do play-by-plays and write stories. That got me interested in sports journalism." She knew upon entering Radford that she would pick media studies as a major. As for Foreign Languages, Taylor took Spanish all throughout high school, so continuing to study it in college seemed natural. "I think journalism and Spanish paired together work really well, especially if I want to go into sports where a lot of athletes speak Spanish."

Originally from Maryland, Taylor came to Radford University as a tennis player. She has thoroughly enjoyed being a student-athlete. "It has been an unforgettable experience. At times it can be tiring, but I couldn't imagine going through college without being an athlete." Taylor indicated that being a college athlete helped her develop time-management skills. She uses these skills to help her with additional activities.

As a member of the tennis team, Taylor is also part of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. Taylor is currently completing an Honors Capstone Project that centers on how the field of journalism has changed. During her sophomore year, Taylor was the sports editor of *The Tartan*. "I liked being in control, managing a staff of writers. Then every week I saw that my work had been published in *The Tartan*. Although it was a time-consuming task, it gave me a chance to see the other side of the newspaper, not just as a writer, but also as an editor."

Taylor also participated in one independent internship and one total immersion experience. During her sophomore year, she interned with USA Today in Northern Virginia. "I loved every minute of it. I worked with the tennis, golf, and Olympic section, which was perfect for me because of my background. I got to have about 20 by-lines published." Taylor also completed a full immersion trip to Spain as part of her Spanish major requirements. "I didn't take any classes there. One of my teammates is from Barcelona. So I went with her and taught tennis at her club. I was able to practice my Spanish there while teaching."

Taylor admires her Spanish professor, Dr. Martin. "She loves teaching and loves language and she instilled that in me. She also loves the culture aspect." Taylor commented that Dr. Martin spent time getting to know each student. "We each felt like an individual in her class which is nice." Taylor's journalism professors, Mr. Staniunas, Dr. Kasoma, and former RU faculty member Roland Lacenby, each helped her grow in her field. "They've been willing to help and they have a passion for journalism." Her most memorable class was perhaps Electronic News Gathering, which was her first exposure to video. "It was a lot of work and I was frustrated a lot in that class, but in the end I got some results that I can use in my portfolio."

Taylor credits small class sizes with helping her succeed in both majors. "For me, especially, small class size has helped tremendously. Once you get into sophomore, junior, senior level classes you have 10-15 people in a class. The professor gets to take time to analyze your work and give you feedback and see you grow throughout the next few years. They have a better understanding of who you are."

Taylor says her love of sports comes from her dad. Her love of writing, however, developed as a young girl as she learned to express her emotions. "I liked expressing my emotions in writing rather than talking it out." Taylor's ultimate goal is to be a sports reporter. "I always have a dream of working for ESPN. But I don't know if that will happen in ten years. You have to start at the bottom and work your way up. I'd also like to work for a newspaper." Taylor understands that internships are the key to getting a job. "I'm just trying to make connections and see where they lead me."

