Throughout its long history, Northwestern’s School of Communication has attracted leaders and innovators to its faculty. And that is why it has been so successful in educating leaders and innovators across the creative economy.

We have no better example of this than Mary Zimmerman (C82, GC85, GC94), the Jaharis Family Foundation Professor of Performance Studies. Mary came to Northwestern as a freshman and stayed to earn not just her bachelor’s and master’s degrees but also a PhD in performance studies. Both as a student and a young alumna, Mary adapted a wide range of texts for performance, showing an unusual aptitude for seeing how even the most unlikely source — such as the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci — might make exciting theatre. Mary’s career has been marked by extraordinary achievements, from her 2002 Tony Award for Metamorphoses (which she wrote and directed) to her recent successes as a director for New York’s Metropolitan Opera: Lucia di Lammermoor, La Sonnambula, and, last year, Armida (above).

Of course, much of the extraordinary work our faculty and students do depends on resources made available through generous gifts from our alumni, friends, and community. Through these contributions and the leadership role you take, you make it possible for the School of Communication to lead the way.

Barbara J. O’Keefe, Dean
Leaders bring artistry to all they do, and they appreciate — and develop — artistry in others. The Department of Theatre’s dance program celebrated its 30th-anniversary season last year with a special Danceworks performance that brought together students, faculty, alumni, and guest artists. The show featured student dancers but also gave faculty dancers an opportunity to show off their eclectic styles. Faculty performers included Billy Siegenfeld, Jeff Hancock, Molly Shanahan, Joel Valentin-Martinez, Meghann Wilkinson, Brandi Coleman, and program director Susan A. Lee, who donned go-go boots to join students for a ’60s-era piece celebrating the program’s beginnings.

The talents of our alumni and faculty are often displayed on the stage — or on the screen. At the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival, no fewer than three films by alumni directors grabbed audience attention. David Schwimmer (C88) brought Trust, based on his play of the same name as premiered by Chicago’s Lookingglass Theatre. Rabbit Hole, directed by John Cameron Mitchell (C85), generated awards buzz for its star, Nicole Kidman. Barney’s Version, directed by Richard Lewis (C83) and starring Paul Giamatti and Dustin Hoffman, had already picked up a Golden Lion nomination at the Venice Film Festival the previous week.
L E A D E R S H I P  R E A C H E S  O U T

When Evanston-area day care centers lost funding for speech therapy, the Speech and Language Clinic in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders stepped forward. Now Brandon Miller (above) and other children at several sites have easy and affordable access to evaluations and therapy for speech and language issues such as stuttering, articulation problems, and swallowing disorders. The program is a boon not only to Evanston children and their parents but also to communication sciences students, who use the clinical practice in the day care centers to gain real-world experience.

Leaders make connections that pay wide dividends. Radio/television/film junior Jingyang Cheng got more than a good grade for a documentary that is now used for fundraising by the animal shelter it featured. Theatre students learn storytelling and other skills working with local middle school students. Our alumni — as well as students and faculty — contribute their talents to the vibrant Chicago theatre community and to theatres across the nation. They also pay forward their success by coming back to campus: last year the school enjoyed visits from alumni such as producer-writer Josh Shader (C’99), actor Stephanie March (C’96), director Greg Berlanti (C’94), and a panel of alumni and friends at our annual Festival of Writing.
Leaders listen more closely, think more deeply, and see differently. They reimagine.

Take the Theatre and Interpretation Center’s musical exploration of A Midsummer Night’s Dream (above). The show combined Shakespeare, 1950s New Orleans jazz, and a steamy original score, courtesy of a group of our students. The Theatre and Interpretation Center gives students opportunities to work closely with their peers, faculty, and guest artists such as — in this, its 30th-anniversary season — directors Sean Graney and Derek Sanders, actors David Catlin (C88) and Ann Whitney (C52), and actor-playwright Regina Taylor, who curated a campuswide mixed-media project.

Imagination is a skill you can develop early. This year the center invited community families to share the wonder of performance through Imagine U, a backstage tour of the kid-friendly fare that is a longtime signature of Northwestern theatre. That tradition began with alumna and faculty member Winifred Ward (C1905), who developed improvisational theatre as an educational tool for children. She founded an organization that evolved into the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, which today presents the Winifred Ward Outstanding Children’s Theatre Company Award. Last year the Purple Crayon Players, a student-run Northwestern company producing theatre for young audiences, proudly brought the award home.

Give every year, make a difference every day.
LEADERSHIP BUILDS LOYALTY

Last May hundreds of alumni, students, faculty, and friends gathered on campus to honor retiring Department of Theatre faculty member Dominic Missimi and his 30 years of teaching at Northwestern — and to witness one great night of music theatre. Headliners of “Starry Starry Night: A Celebration of Music Theatre and Dominic Missimi” included (above, from left) Heather Headley (C97), Brian d’Arcy James (C90), Kate Shindle (C98), and Gregg Edelman (C80) as well as Janette Zillioli (BSM01) and Willis White (BSM02, WCAS02). With the participation of other gracious alumni, Chicago theatre professionals, students, and faculty, the event raised more than $350,000 for an endowed fund to support music theatre programming.

Our generous and enthusiastic alumni and friends wear their purple pride on their sleeves. Why do busy people like entertainment executive Laverne McKinnon (C87) make time to speak at the school’s convocation? How do donors like Jane Steiner Hoffman (C86) and Michael Hoffman (WCAS72, G73) decide to fund an endowed junior faculty position in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders? Maybe it’s because the School of Communication’s programs attract those who see the long view and who inspire others to do the same.
LEADERSHIP SHINES

John Logan (C83) wrote for film and TV for years, garnering two Academy Award nominations and other recognition. But then he returned to writing for the stage — and got to stand on one. When Logan’s Red won the 2010 Tony Award for best play (above), among those also celebrating were Red producers Ruth Hendel (GC75) and Barbara Whitman, a friend of the school.

When our alumni, faculty, and students get good news, we share in it. The celebrating is continuous — our alumni and faculty have won Tonys, Oscars, Emmys. Familiar names appear frequently among the nominees and winners of Chicago’s Joseph Jefferson Awards. Last year’s Primetime Emmy ceremony was a big night for alumni Emily Gerson-Saines (C86), Stephen Colbert (C86), Peter Grosz (C96), and Ann-Margret. Early last year, stage productions by faculty members Anna D. Shapiro, Mary Zimmerman, and Rebecca Gilman were named to Time magazine’s “best of the decade.” And the awards keep coming: Faculty members Darren Gergle, Estzer Hargittai, Paul Leonard, and Patrick Wong all celebrated prestigious professional accolades last year, and E. Patrick Johnson, professor and chair of the Department of Performance Studies, finished 2010 by winning the National Communication Association’s Leslie Irene Coger Award for Distinguished Performance.
Leadership creates

Last summer’s American Music Theatre Project production flooded Northwestern students with opportunity. Two special classes were dedicated to developing Not Wanted on the Voyage with its director, Department of Theatre faculty member Amanda Dehnert, and its Broadway writers in residence, Neil Bartram and Brian Hill, in preparation for the show’s summer run. Northwestern students appeared as animals, demons, and a family on the brink (above) in a musical based on a famous Canadian novel that was itself a modern retelling of the Biblical great flood.

Leadership in the arts gives collaborators a chance to make something old new again. That’s what Dehnert also did last fall with Peter Pan, taking the beloved Barrie classic to new heights at Chicago’s Lookingglass Theatre in a production featuring alumni as well as current students. But new ways of thinking and leading can turn around any kind of production, even on ice. Last year communication studies alumnus Rocky Wirtz (C75) instituted a turnaround that made sports history. Thanks to some savvy changes to his Chicago Blackhawks franchise both on and off the ice, the hockey team started filling the house again and, after a drought of 49 years, won the 2010 Stanley Cup.
LEADERSHIP IS GLOBAL

Department of Communication Studies senior and Communication Century Scholar George Bajalia came back from Morocco last year with new friends, ideas for his thesis, and an eye for Chefchaouen blue. Buildings in the old walled portion of Chefchaouen (above) are regularly repainted a fresh, startling blue — year in, century out. It’s a beautiful stage for traditional Moroccan life, but figuring out what that means is why Bajalia was there. “I’m attempting to see how essentialized images of Moroccans and the cultures of the Middle East and Mediterranean circulate back into the cultures they objectify,” he said, “and how people use these representations in performing their own identities.” In a society that knows Morocco primarily through the movie Casablanca, Bajalia wanted to see the real thing.

School of Communication students learn leadership skills by striking out into the wider world. They study abroad and take research trips sponsored (like Bajalia’s) by the school. They might go to Paris for the International Media Seminar or visit Northwestern’s campus in Qatar. They also make their own opportunities. Last year the school celebrated three winners of the prestigious Fulbright travel grant: David Wille (C10), Rebecca Donaldson (C08), and Victoria Fortuna, a PhD student in performance studies.
Leaders in academia do more than teach classes. They blaze a trail of inquiry, shining a light on issues and problems — historical or emerging, artistic or scientific — not yet fully understood. In the School of Communication we have the privilege of working with colleagues whose keen insights are worthy of both the classroom and beyond. Among last year’s published books by our faculty (above): Department of Radio/Television/Film professor Laura Kipnis’s tantalizing study on America’s relationship with disgrace, How to Become a Scandal: Adventures in Bad Behavior; Department of Communication Studies professor Pablo Boczkowski’s News at Work: Imitation in an Age of Information Abundance; and Department of Theatre associate professor Harvey Young’s Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body.

That’s just the work on our bookshelves. Across the school our growing faculty produces a wealth of outstanding scholarship and creative work that keeps us at the forefront of the communication arts and sciences. In the Department of Radio/Television/Film, for instance, the new documentary Fast Talk by assistant professor Debra Tolchinsky looks at the intersection of intercollegiate forensics competition — featuring Northwestern’s debate program — and today’s speed-obsessed society.

Give every year, make a difference every day.
LEADERSHIP POINTS THE WAY

School of Communication students have big ideas. Our role is to prepare the way for these creative thinkers, in the classroom and beyond. Consider, for instance, the needs of film students in the Department of Radio/Television/Film. Filmmakers need space, state-of-the-industry equipment, and mechanisms for finding peers to perform and crew their projects. When they get these things, along with instruction from professionals who are themselves active in filmmaking, amazing things happen — like senior Jac Reyno’s short film Yellow Room (above). Through haunting images, Yellow Room tells the story of a man who discovers his mother’s life playing like a film behind a patch of torn wallpaper. Reyno’s work was among several films funded and screened last year by Studio 22, a student-run production company sponsored by donor gifts.

Students in the department’s MFA Program in Writing for Screen and Stage come with big dreams, too. Big dreams that keep coming true: In the last year, alumni of the program have won prestigious playwriting fellowships, found jobs with major TV networks, landed tenure-track faculty positions at universities, placed films at festivals and plays at workshops, and seen their work take the stage, light up the screen, and go viral on the web.

Give every year, make a difference every day.
Last year the Theatre and Interpretation Center staged Mass (above), a work by Leonard Bernstein (HS7) that is seldom produced because it requires 200 cast members — including a rock band, a marching band, and a choir. An intimidating project? Not for Dominic Missimi, emeritus professor in service, who directed it for the second time in his career. When Mass lyricist Stephen Schwartz came to see it, he said Northwestern’s was the best production he’d seen. Based on Catholic liturgy, Mass is tradition itself — and yet could still be fresh.

The School of Communication has a number of long-standing traditions that derive energy from new players, new ideas. The annual Waa-Mu Show celebrates its 79th year with a new director — David H. Bell, the Donald G. Robertson Director of Music Theatre — succeeding Missimi, who staged 17 Waa-Mus. WNUR-FM celebrated its 60th anniversary on the air with a regional news award. The Debate Society and the Speech team continue to enjoy support through the Hardy Scholars Program, funded for 75 years by the late Owen L. Coon (C15) and the Coon Foundation. The teams also continue to dominate in regional and national competition — another Northwestern tradition.
Leadership is a Journey

Last October a group of our students visited Chicago’s famed Steppenwolf Theatre to enjoy a backstage tour, meet organization leaders, and see the evening’s featured show. The visit was the School of Communication’s first Leadership Journey: Instead of the professionals visiting campus, the campus visits the professionals so students anxious to join the real world can hear how others made the trip. The program is one of a set of new initiatives undertaken by the school last fall to draw students more intensely into their Northwestern experience and to see them off into the world with more resources. We also started offering an all-school fall welcome party on the lake, freshmen-only introductory courses, and receptions for graduating seniors.

Leadership is a journey that never ends, and exciting things continue to happen. For instance, new curriculum changes will allow students to study specialized topics more deeply and prove their knowledge in ways that prepare them for the leadership roles they seek. We also have plans for a project that will help facilitate the School of Communication’s continued growth and leadership status, a project that will take the school to new heights. We promise to share it with you, and soon.

Give every year, make a difference every day.
The following individuals and organizations made donations of $1,000 or more between September 1, 2009, and August 31, 2010. We apologize for any errors or omissions.
The following individuals and organizations made donations of $100 to $999 between September 1, 2009, and August 31, 2010. We apologize for any errors or omissions.
You make a difference for us. Every day.

Our faculty, students, and alumni continue to spark innovation on stage, in the laboratory, on camera, at the podium, and in clinics.

Your generous support enables us to develop groundbreaking approaches to the study of communication.

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