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The School of Communications hosted its annual “COMS Week” event last week.

Communications is a competitive field that offers dozens of opportunities to thousands of students. With so many options from public relations to television reporting, from advertising to film production, it can be difficult for new students to know just which areas they should want to pursue.

This event, spanning five days with a ceremony on the last day, was intended to give Radford students a look into careers in Communication and the kinds of problems that come with the field, while also the preparations they should make by the time they are applying for jobs.

The events were mostly comprised of presentations by notable people within the field. Every one of them was very open about their careers, pasts, mistakes, things they learned, and even things they wish they had known while they were in school.

WDBJ anchor Neesey Payne told the story of how rough it was for her to get her start after finishing college.

When she graduated, during the 2008 recession, the economy and job market were in far worse states than they are now. It took months for her to secure her first job in the field as a writer for a newspaper, and only after years was she able to achieve her dream of working on TV.

Delegate Chris Hurst has found himself in an interesting position as well.

Hurst initially went to school for TV journalism and now has several years of experience that that field. He became a WDBJ anchor at a very young age but didn't then and still has not lost his passion for seeking out the news.

However, some tragic personal events, the details of which won't be discussed here, led to

him reconsidering his position in life.

The main point Hurst got across in his presentation was just how similar journalism and public office are. He believes that both are forms of public service, and in both ways, he has contributed to his community.

In the same way that a communications degree helped prepare Hurst for state office; it paved the road for Johnathan Sweet's career as a county administrator.

With the skills he learned at Radford, Sweet has made lasting impressions and even won awards for the work he has done for Pulaski County. One such project is an advertisement for the county that shows off all the most attractive qualities of the area in one cleanly made video.

Filmmaking skills are invaluable in the communications field, as are many others. Jeremy Butterfield, Director of Public Relations at the advertising agency Access, explained how his job as Director of Public Relations is only one out of many jobs he has had throughout his communications career.

Butterfield describes just how vital "one-man branding" is, the multimedia approach a journalist can take. Very often now, jobs will expect one person to do all of the reporting, interviewing, filming, editing, and social media posting.

That was not all there was of Access to be seen, as Todd Marcum, president/copywriter at Access, showed his documentary of ad men and women of the advertising industry in Roanoke.

Along with his co-producer, Dave Perry of Dave Perry Cinematographer LLC, Marcum tracked down relatives, co-workers, and clients of these people to create "Shine: The Legacy of Roanoke Ad Men and Women." The documentary was very well made and evoked a 50s advertising aesthetic that gave it a period-accurate feel.

Access has inherited that legacy as an advertising company based in Roanoke. Marcum himself has hired students from Radford before. His advice to communications students fits in well with the common theme. "Get the first job. You can't get a better job till you have one," said Marcum.

However, getting that first job requires a good résumé and excellent interviewing skills. That is what Hunter French's "Résumé do's and don'ts" presentation was all about.

Along with some good advice like remembering names, shaking hands, and dressing appropriately, he gave some more detailed information as well, such as refraining from asking about salary on the first interview and asking questions that demonstrate an interest in both the company and the interviewer. He told a story about how he once got a job just by getting the guy interviewing him to talk about himself for an hour.

This year's COMS Week was the fruit of months of planning and social media advertising by communications students.

Over the course of the semester, the work that went into making this event happen taught valuable communications skills like event planning, advertising, and connecting with people from around the state to come and speak. Full-time Instructor Kathleen Degnon instructed them, but the event was primarily student organized.

The whole week was not just suits, ties, and career advice, in any case. Towards the end, they hosted a carnival with games, a mechanical bull, and raffled off prizes.

After all, that is how you get people's attention.

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