

SPEAKERS

THOMAS BROADUS

Thomas Broadus serves as Chief Marketing Officer for Mississippi State University, where he leads institutional brand strategy, digital transformation, and integrated marketing initiatives for the Office of Public Affairs. With 20 years of communication experience across marketing, brand development, media production, and strategic communications, he has guided large scale campaigns that strengthen national visibility and has been an early adopter across the digital marketing landscape.



At Mississippi State Thomas oversees centralized storytelling across platforms, aligning research driven strategy with authentic campus narratives that resonate with students, alumni, faculty, and national audiences. His leadership focuses on measurable performance growth, cultural relevance, and platform specific optimizations and trends.

In addition to his professional leadership, he is pursuing a doctorate in Strategic Media, researching algorithm driven communication and audience behavior. He is passionate about equipping communications professionals to compete in an algorithm dominated environment through disciplined strategy, creativity, and data informed decision making.

**“SUCCESS USUALLY COMES TO THOSE WHO
ARE TOO BUSY TO BE LOOKING FOR IT.”
~ HENRY DAVID THOREAU.**

SPEAKERS

KARYN BROWN, APR

Karyn Brown is the assistant dean for communication and media for the Mississippi State University College of Arts & Sciences. She is a longtime public relations and broadcast educator in the MSU Department of Communication with 30-plus years of experience and is an MSU John Grisham Master Teacher. She is co-founder of MSU's PRSSA chapter where she currently serves as the Mississippi State professional liaison.



In addition to her role leading communication efforts for the College of Arts & Sciences, Brown serves on the MSU Brand Education Steering Committee educating MSU staff on how to best implement the university's brand identity in public-facing communication.

And, nationally, she leads the Council for Colleges for Arts & Sciences Communication Community. This is a group that assists communicators of liberal arts programs across the country. Locally, she volunteers her time serving on Starkville Academy's Public Relations and Marketing Committee.

In her first professional jobs, she was a reporter and producer for KWQC-TV in Davenport, Iowa, served as the executive director and spokesperson for MADD-North Carolina, and worked at the public relations firm Mediacall Services in Macomb, Illinois. Brown worked as a reporter, producer and anchor for WCBI-TV in Columbus and is currently hosting several segments of WCBI-TV's "On the Beat".

She has been a member of the Public Relations of Mississippi since 1993 and is a member of PRSA since 2014.

**"EVERYTHING YOU CAN
IMAGINE IS REAL."
~ PABLO PICASSO**

SPEAKERS

DAN FARKAS

Professional Wearer of Many Hats isn't something you can put on a LinkedIn profile, but it may be the best way to describe Dan Farkas.

Dan is a Professor of Strategic Communication at Ohio University, where he teaches research, strategy, content creation, and analytics courses. His PRSSA advised chapters have earned Chapter of the Year, Agency of the Year, Star Chapter, and Pacesetter awards.

Dan also travels the country training organizations better share their story in a world of communication.



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cluttered

Dan's been called "A recognized thought leader in PR....drawing on his collective experience as a former journalist and current practitioner and instructor."

His book, Strategic Content Marketing: Creating Effective Content in Practice, is out now. You can also hear him on The Strategic Communicator Podcast, part of the Marketing Podcast Network.

In a former life, Dan earned more than 20 awards for his work in television news. His work appeared on CNN, MSNBC, and SI.com.

**"TALENT HITS A TARGET NO ONE ELSE
CAN HIT. GENIUS HITS A TARGET NO
ONE ELSE CAN SEE."
~ ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER**

SPEAKERS

LISA FRAZIER, APR

Lisa Frazier, APR is Founder and Principal of Camellia Strategic Communications, where she helps organizations communicate strategically, manage crises, and engage their communities with purpose. An accredited public relations professional, university instructor, and communications strategist, Lisa brings extensive experience in strategic communication, leadership coaching, and ethics. She has served in leadership roles at the local, state, and regional levels of the profession and is committed to advancing ethical public relations practice.



J. SUZANNE HORSLEY, PH.D.

J. Suzanne Horsley, Ph.D. (UNC-Chapel Hill), is an associate professor in Advertising and Public Relations at The University of Alabama. Her research focuses on crisis and disaster communication in the public and nonprofit sectors. She has published in public relations, public administration, qualitative methods, and communication journals and handbooks. She co-authored the 6th edition of *On Deadline: Managing Media Relations* (Waveland Press, 2021) and *The Media Relations Training Handbook* (Waveland Press, 2023).

Horsley's excellence in teaching and service has been recognized on campus, regionally, and nationally. In 2012, she was named the Public Relations Educator of the Year by the Public Relations Council of Alabama and by the Southern Public Relations Federation. Her work to engage students in the response efforts after the April 2011 tornado outbreak was recognized with the White House Champions of Change award in 2012. Prior to teaching, Horsley was a PR practitioner in Virginia, primarily in state government and university settings. She has volunteered as a national spokesperson with the American Red Cross, deploying to several national-level disasters. She has also trained communicators in emergency management agencies and nonprofits around the country.



SPEAKERS

PAUL KATOOL

Paul Katool joined the Mississippi Department of Transportation Public Affairs Division in 2016 as the agency's first Social Media Strategist. In 2019, he was promoted to Digital Media Manager, where he led the creation of MDOT's nationally award-winning Extra Mile Podcast. In 2022, Paul assumed the role of Deputy Director of Public Affairs, which includes helping to run the day-to-day operations of the division and leading content strategy.



SAM KEALHOFER

Sam Kealhofer is the Coordinator of Communications & Research Support for the College of Arts & Sciences at Mississippi State University. His work spans content creation, social media management, podcast and video production, media relations, and grant development. Sam hosts and produces Vision Podcast and Vision TV, which highlights faculty accomplishments and stories. He also spearheads the College's annual Spring Research Symposium initiatives, highlighting faculty research across campus in interesting ways. He holds a Master of Arts in English literature with an emphasis in creative writing from Mississippi State University and has previously taught composition courses, served as an editor for literary publications, and worked as a high school English teacher. An active member of Mississippi's literary community, Sam serves as a juror and workshop leader for different writing organizations and leads a local book club focused on contemporary fiction.



SPEAKERS

ANGELA LEVINS

I started my career in 2002 as a news producer at my hometown station, WLOX-TV in Biloxi. From Biloxi to Norfolk to Mobile, I've been behind the scenes of some major stories. Awards from 10 years in local news include an Edward R. Murrow and Peabody for Hurricane Katrina coverage and a Virginia Broadcasters Award for breaking news of a Portsmouth Church Fire. The most rewarding moments in my career are when I've been able to step out of box. I've created a half hour special for Habitat for Humanity (2008) and Fugitive Files (2012). From TV to print, I enjoyed the opportunity to cover a variety of human interest stories and dig through the archives of the Mobile Press-Register. Today, I use all I learned in 13 years of newsroom time at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. I share research news, education opportunities, hands-on learning experiences, and more. There's never a boring day at the office.



**“IF THE ONLY TOOL YOU HAVE IS A HAMMER, YOU
TEND TO SEE EVERY PROBLEM AS A NAIL.”
~ ABRAHAM MASLOW**

SPEAKERS

MIKALA MCCURRY, APR

Mikala McCurry, APR, is an award-winning Accredited public relations practitioner with a passion for empowering others with information and building mutually beneficial relationships. She currently serves as the Public Affairs Coordinator for the Alabama Securities Commission, a state agency that oversees the financial securities industry in Alabama. She leads the Commission's She Can initiative, a financial empowerment program for women in Alabama. Mikala also serves as an Adjunct Professor in the Hall School of Communication and Journalism at Troy University and a Public Relations Consultant for several small businesses in Alabama. In her professional career, Mikala has worked in the media, insurance, accounting, nonprofit, state and federal government sectors to gain a well-rounded view of public relations and communications in many industries.



Mikala earned her bachelor's degree in communication studies with a minor in public relations and master's degree in strategic communication from Troy University. She has also earned her Accreditation in Public Relations credential, placing her in the top 6% of professionals in her field.

A dedicated steward to her profession, Mikala has received several recognitions throughout her career, including 2022 Outstanding Employee of the Year, the Southern Public Relations Federation 2023 Young Practitioner of the Year, and Central Alabama's inaugural 40 Under 40 in 2023. Her work has been highlighted through statewide and regional competitions, including a Judge's Choice award at the state level and a Best of Show award at the regional level.

Mikala is heavily involved in her professional community, serving as the 2026 President of the Public Relations Council of Alabama; the VP of Accreditation and Ethics for the PRCA Montgomery Chapter; a representative on the Southern Public Relations Federation Board of Directors; President of the Troy University Hall School of Journalism and Communication Alumni Chapter; a graduate of Leadership Montgomery's Torchbearers Class XII, and a member of the Public Relations Society of America. In the community, she has served on Junior Boards for the Family Sunshine Center and the Child Protect Children's Advocacy Center and is a member of the Brewtech Magnet High School Business and Finance Advisory Committee. She also supports the PR and communications role for her church, Unity Worship Center, and pours into others through her platform, "Walk by Faith – I'm Walking, too" – a community dedicated to helping others build their relationship with Christ.

SPEAKERS

ROBIN MCKINNEY, APR

Robin McKinney, APR, is the Digital Marketing Strategist for North Mississippi Health Services, where she has led a comprehensive website redesign and implemented new digital strategies for the region's largest health care provider. She also brings more than a decade of nonprofit marketing and communications experience to her work.

An active leader in the profession, Robin serves on the boards of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi, her local PRAM chapter, the Early Childhood Coalition of Tupelo/Lee County, and the Gumtree Museum of Art. She was named Person of the Year in the Daily Journal's 2020 Top 40 Under 40 class and has spoken at state and national conferences on digital strategy. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Mississippi and a master's degree in nonprofit management from Northeastern University.

She lives in Tupelo, Mississippi, with her husband, Brad; their son, Jacob, a senior at Mississippi State; and their cats, Darwin and Claude.



LORI MILLER, APR

In her career, Lori Miller has been a corporate spokesperson, media relations trainer, radio talk show host, research director, and news director for two Army TV stations in Germany. She's earned many awards for her work including two Best of Show awards and the Department of the Army's Civilian Broadcast Journalist of the Year.

For nearly 40 years, she's been a member of Public Relations Council of Alabama and currently serves as PRCA's Association Manager for the state.



SPEAKERS

REBECCA TODD MINDER

Rebecca Todd Minder has more than 35 years of experience in marketing and publicity. She is the Director of Alabama Heritage magazine and cohost of the weekly podcast “Coffee & History: A Conversation with Alabama Heritage,” which also airs on Alabama Public Radio. A dedicated community leader, Rebecca serves on the executive board of the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Foundation and the Alabama Historical Association. Rebecca’s extensive civic involvement includes roles with the Arts & Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa and the DCH Regional Medical Center Patient & Family Advocacy Council. A graduate of Leadership Tuscaloosa, she holds an MA in American Studies and a BA in Public Relations, both from The University of Alabama.



SARAH NICHOLAS

Sarah Nicholas is the communication specialist for Mississippi State University’s College of Arts and Sciences, where she is now in her ninth year. A proud MSU graduate with a bachelor’s degree in communication with a concentration in public relations, Sarah spent four years as a PR specialist for the Institutions of Higher Learning in Jackson before transitioning to remote work during her children’s early years. For a decade, she served as an editor for EditMyEnglish.com, helping international students refine academic writing for English-speaking institutions.



At MSU, Sarah writes news releases and feature stories highlighting the accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students, manages the college’s annual Vision magazine, and collaborates closely with the Office of Public Affairs to promote the people and programs of Arts and Sciences. She and her husband have been married 25 years and have two children—one a senior at Mississippi State and one a freshman at Mississippi College.

SPEAKERS

STEPHANIE PETTIS, APR, CPRC

Stephanie Pettis, APR, CPRC, is the Associate Director of Communications for Strategic Initiatives and Analytics at The University of Alabama. In this role, she leads measurement, reporting, and data-informed strategies to assess the effectiveness of institutional communications. With more than twenty years of experience across higher education, agency, and corporate communications, she has developed expertise in analytics-driven storytelling, executive communications, integrated campaigns and organizational reporting.



At The University of Alabama, Pettis guides key performance indicator (KPI) reporting and co-leads the development of award-winning publications, such as the University's Year in Review and the Division of Strategic Communications' annual report. Prior to this role, she was Vice President at 25th Hour Communications, advising colleges nationwide on enrollment growth, executive positioning, crisis communications and social media strategy.

As an accredited public relations professional, Pettis brings extensive experience in strategic communications leadership, analytics, and integrated planning within higher education and agency settings. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in strategic communication at The University of Alabama.

“I’VE LEARNED THAT PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU SAID, PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU DID, BUT PEOPLE WILL NEVER FORGET HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.”
~ MAYA ANGELOU



SPEAKERS

SUSAN POOLE, APR

Born and raised in Vernon, Ala, Susan is the Corporate Marketing and Public Relations Director for The Westervelt Company, based in Tuscaloosa, Ala. She has an M.S. in Marketing Management from the University of Maryland, and an M.S. in Human Environmental Science from the University of Alabama. Susan is accredited in Public Relations.



As the Corporate Marketing and Public Relations Director, she is responsible for public and community relations, internal communications and overseeing corporate marketing efforts. She is the President of the Westervelt Foundation, which implements the Company's charitable giving strategy. She is a certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, having focused on projects that improve communication within organizations and that demonstrate project and program effectiveness.

Susan has almost 30 years of experience in marketing, communications and public relations. Prior to joining Westervelt in 2017, she was the global manufacturing communications manager for International Paper. Her experience also includes roles as a public affairs director, marketing manager and positions with embassies in Croatia and Chile with the U.S. Department of State.

During her career, Susan has been involved in many organizations, including the United Way, Leadership Tuscaloosa and Leadership Autauga County, the Prattville-Autauga Character Coalition, YMCA, Rotary, and United Way of West Alabama and the Family Support Center of Prattville. She is a former Board member for the Southern Public Relations Federation and the Public Relations Council of Alabama.

Susan is married to Jeff, who she followed around the world during his U.S. Marine Corps career, and they have three children and two grandchildren.



SPEAKERS

SARAH TRIPLETT

A 2024 graduate of Mississippi State University with a degree in Integrated Digital Marketing, Sarah Triplett currently serves as the Social Media Strategist for Mississippi State within the Office of Public Affairs. In this role, she helps support the university's marketing efforts by overseeing MSU's social media presence and shaping a cohesive, campus-wide digital strategy that advances brand awareness, recruitment objectives, and institutional storytelling. She works closely with the Chief Marketing Officer and senior leadership to align platform-specific execution with broader institutional priorities. Her work emphasizes thoughtful storytelling, cultural relevance, and performance-driven growth across evolving digital channels.



Before joining Mississippi State full-time, Sarah built her experience in the tourism and destination marketing industry and with multiple marketing agencies, where she led reporting for advertising and social media campaigns, conducted competitor analysis, and developed data-informed digital strategies. Her passion for analytics and performance measurement continues to inform her approach, ensuring that marketing initiatives are guided by audience insights, strategic evaluation, and measurable outcomes.

In addition to her professional role, Sarah serves on the Public Relations Association of Mississippi Board of Directors for the Starkville chapter. She is passionate about mentoring emerging communicators and helping organizations transform content into meaningful connection through strategy, creativity, and data-informed decision-making.

**“NO. TRY NOT. DO. OR DO NOT.
THERE IS NO TRY.”**
~ YODA

SPEAKERS

PAUL WOLF

Paul Wolf is an award-winning destination marketing professional passionate about bringing communities to life through people-centered storytelling. With experience leading initiatives that enhance brand visibility, he specializes in SEO-driven website content, destination public relations, and podcasting. He oversees and manages content strategy and creation, and hosts travel journalists to highlight local culture and experiences.

As the founder of a successful destination marketing brand, he brings expertise in publishing, content creation, and integrated marketing. Recognized with honors such as the US Travel Association ESTO Destiny People's Choice Award for websites, he is dedicated to crafting narratives that connect, inspire, and drive engagement.



STAFFORD WOOD, APR

Her friendly face and casual demeanor about all things business are merely a decoy - there is no one else you want on your side for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity or defending you in a crisis. Stafford Wood is a deadly combination of strategic brains, mystical intuition, humor and corporate marketing intelligence. As the Founder and President of Covalent Logic for twenty years, Stafford leads a team of thirty corporate communications experts in internal communications, graphic design, web development and public relations. Stafford is an Emergenetics Associate leading professional development, team building and organizational transitions through mergers and acquisitions all over the country. As an Accredited Senior Practitioner of Public Relations, she's received two lifetime achievement awards from the American Advertising Federation and the Public Relations Association of Louisiana and has been inducted into the Southern Public Relations Federation Hall of Fame. Stafford holds a Master of Arts from St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she is currently pursuing a second Masters in Eastern Classics and learning Sanskrit.

