Fifteen years ago we created the School of Communication Alumni Academy and an External Advisory Board.

The individuals recognized this evening represent the fifteenth group of inductees into our Alumni Academy.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that we honor them for their career accomplishments and community engagement.

Curtis Cunningham
Dana Harville
Liza Keckler
Keith Thompson
Curtis Cunningham  
B.S., Communication, 1987

Curtis Cunningham is the Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Lawrence Productions, an electronic storytelling company in Kalamazoo. During his 19 years at Lawrence, Curtis has worked on over 2,000 custom projects for clients in West Michigan and all over the world. In addition to sales, marketing and public relations, Cunningham is also a writer, producer and last-minute voice over talent. During his tenure, the company has won over 150 national awards.

Cunningham began his career in media on the WMU campus with stints at the Western Herald, WIDR-AM and WIDR-FM. After graduation he worked briefly as an announcer at WKZO and then worked at Safety Services and WUHQ-TV. In 1990 he moved to Chicago and worked in the music business. He did national radio promotion for Windham Hill Records, sales and marketing for Feedback Distribution and marketing promotions for the 50-store music store chain, Rose Records.

Returning to Kalamazoo in 1997, Cunningham joined Lawrence Productions and began his significant involvement in community service. He has spent 18 years on the board of InterCom, the Association of Professional Communicators, ten of those years as President. He was instrumental in the annual Tony Griffin Golden Word Award for over 16 years. The award, named after former WMUK news director Tony Griffin, honors outstanding local communication professionals. Cunningham is also the Immediate Past President of the Southwest Michigan Chapter of the American Marketing Association. He spent 6 years on the board of MRC Industries, serving as chairman in 2004. He is also involved in the Telly Awards Silver Council, The American Advertising Federation, The Public Relations Society of America and the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Dana Harville  
B.A., Public Relations, 2000

Dana Harville came to Western Michigan University as a Higher Education Incentive Scholarship recipient with the dream of one day building a career in public relations. Following graduation, Harville started her professional career in Detroit, working at Franco Public Relations Group, the city's oldest public relations agency. Working primarily in the business-to-business practice, Harville worked on national and local brands to build awareness, manage corporate reputation and extend thought-leadership to key stakeholder groups.

Following Franco, Harville joined the very competitive world of pizza delivery as the national Public Relations Manager for Domino's Pizza in Ann Arbor. At Domino's, Harville led day-to-day brand communications for the pizza giant's corporate enterprise and franchise owners around the globe.

Leaving Domino's, Harville re-joined the agency world at Mullen/Lowe and The Zocalo Group leading brand communications and social media for many of the world's leading business-to-business, consumer packed goods, and quick service restaurant brands including SUBWAY restaurants, Skippy Peanut Butter, Coffee-mate and BASF.

Last year, Harville joined the team at AbbVie as a Senior Manager of Global Public Affairs for HUMIRA. In this role, she continues to work closely with AbbVie's team of international public affairs colleagues and brand teams in driving communications for the biggest pharmaceutical brand in the world.

Keith Thompson  
M.A., Communication, 2013

Keith Thompson is the Chief Meteorologist at WWMT-TV, in Kalamazoo, the CBS Television affiliate in the Kalamazoo-Grand Rapids market. He was hired at WWMT as weather anchor for the station's then-new weekday morning news program, which debuted April 24, 1989. In July 1995, he was promoted to Chief Meteorologist. Before coming to WWMT, Thompson spent four and a half years at WCJB-TV, the ABC Television affiliate in Gainesville, Florida, where his roles included news reporting and news anchoring, in addition to weathercasting.

Thompson is a three-time winner of the Michigan Association of Broadcasters "Best Weathercast" award, and in 2014, he was awarded an Emmy by the Michigan chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) for best weathercast. In 2015, he was inducted into NATAS Michigan's Silver Circle, an honor for broadcast professionals with 25 years or more of distinguished service to the industry.

In addition to delivering weathercasts on WWMT, Thompson speaks at numerous schools and organizations about weather and climate, and emcees many community events. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Goodwill Industries of Southwest Michigan.

While a graduate student, Thompson representing the School of Communication, presented work at annual meetings of the National Communication Association and the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics.

Liza Keckler  
B. A., Broadcast and Video Production, 1998

Liza Keckler is a media executive with expertise in digital, cable, nonfiction, documentary and lifestyle content creation. After graduating from Western Michigan University, Keckler began her career at KIRO Television producing documentaries. In 2000 she joined Screaming Flea Productions in Seattle, Washington. Screaming Flea Productions is the largest provider of non-fiction content in the Northwest. At Screaming Flea Productions Keckler served as Vice President of Development. Her credits include work as producer/writer/director/creator on various shows for Food Network, HGTV, Discovery Home Channel, A&E, National Geographic, BIO, Fuse & others. Her program credits include Hoarders on A&E, The Legend of Mick Dodge on National Geographic Channel and Project Afterlife on Destination America. Keckler has also served as an Executive Producer at Travel Channel supervising a diverse slate of production and development.

In recent months Ms. Keckler has embarked on a new media venture with ChefSteps, a leader in digital food content and kitchen innovation.

Liza Keckler is also the 2016 School of Communication’s recipient of the College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Achievement award.