The DeWitt Wallace Center for Media & Democracy now occupies a full wing in the Sanford building. If you walk down the hallway and peek inside the offices, you’ll see lots of activity.

In the first office on your left, students working for Prof. Phil Napoli are compiling data for his research comparing news content on Facebook with the New York Times. On your right in Prof. Phil Bennett’s office, students meeting with research manager Katie Fernelius are annotating videos from the Rutherfurd Living History program.

At the far end of the hallway, students in the Reporters’ Lab are sitting at desks or sprawled on the couch with their laptops, collecting data on fact-checking websites or writing blog posts about the Tech & Check Cooperative.

The busy hallway captures the energy and growth of the DeWitt Wallace Center. Our faculty are engaged in important research about journalism and our students are deeply involved.

Our courses attracted more than 300 students; we hosted an impressive series of speakers ranging from NBC News White House Correspondent Hallie Jackson to Pulitzer winner Emily Steel of the New York Times; this summer our students landed jobs and internships at the Times, NBC News and CBS News, among others.

There’s a lot happening in our hallway – and beyond.

Bill Adair
Director, DeWitt Wallace Center for Media & Democracy
Knight Professor of the Practice of Journalism & Public Policy
DeWitt Wallace Center
2017-18 BY THE NUMBERS

57
Total students enrolled in our Policy Journalism & Media Studies (PJMS) certificate program

19
Journalism courses taught in the DeWitt Wallace Center

90
Total donuts served at Monuts Friday speaker series

37
Students hired as research assistants for our programs

18
Graduating seniors receiving the PJMS certificate

275
Least favorite donut: maple bacon bourbon

New Faces in the Center

Megan McArdle
Washington Post columnist
Pamela and Jack Egan Visiting Professor

Cathy Clabby
Former reporter
NC Health News and News & Observer

Lynn Owens, Ph.D
Former reporter
WRAL-TV

Bronwen Dickey
Author
Freelance magazine writer
The walls in the Reporters’ Lab are covered with posters from movies that celebrate famous journalism of the past – *Spotlight* and *All the President’s Men*. But the Lab is focused on building apps and tools for the future.

In September 2017, the Lab launched the Duke Tech & Check Cooperative, a two-year, $1.2 million project to automate fact-checking funded by Knight Foundation, the Facebook Journalism Project and the Craig Newmark Foundation. In collaboration with computer scientists and academics around the world — and with the help of our own student researchers — the Lab is developing tools and apps to make automated fact-checking a reality.

Among the new tools: Tech & Check Alerts, which are bots that automatically scan transcripts of speeches and TV interviews to find statements that fact-checkers might want to examine. The most promising statements are automatically emailed to fact-checkers every day. The alerts were developed by senior Asa Royal and sophomore Lucas Fagan. Naman Agarwal and Helena Merk — also sophomores working in the Lab — are developing other versions of Tech & Check Alerts that will work with Twitter and Slack.

The Lab also developed an iPhone/iPad app called FactStream that provides a roundup of the latest fact-checks every day as well as real-time fact-checks during live political events. More than 3,000 users took part in a beta test during the State of the Union address in January.

The Lab also keeps a database of fact-checkers around the world. The latest fact-checking census, led by co-director Mark Stencel and student researcher Riley Griffin, found that the number of fact-checkers around the globe has increased from 44 to 149 since the Lab began counting in 2014.
In 2017-18, the Rutherfurd Living History program, led by Phil Bennett, Eugene C. Patterson Professor of the Practice of Public Policy Studies and Journalism, debuted an interactive interview platform to showcase new interviews and present the existing collection of oral history interviews. The program hired eight student researchers who transcribed 16 interviews, wrote blog posts about their research and performed background research ahead of new interviews. Some of those Q&A subjects include Nobel Prize winner Abdus Salam; Duke University’s first African-American faculty member, Dr. Samuel DuBois Cook; Senator Cory Booker; and civil rights activist Jesse Jackson.

In December, Katie Jane Fernelius joined the program as the new research and program director. She works with the student research team to oversee the digitization and growth of the archive. The team added two new interviews to the archive—former congressman Barney Frank and former Durham mayor Bill Bell. Both of these interviews are fully annotated and available on the website. Prof. Fritz Mayer conducted the interview with Frank about his political career, with a special focus on the financial crisis. David Graham, a research fellow and journalist in residence, conducted the interview with Bell, who looked at pivotal moments in his own career as a county commissioner and mayor.

Looking ahead to the coming year, they plan to digitize 20 more interviews from the archive. The team also will be premiering a new blog platform on the website and building new collections in the Rutherfurd archive. The Rutherfurd interviews can be found at livinghistory.sanford.duke.edu.

**News Measures Research Project**

Philip Napoli, the James R. Shepley Professor of Public Policy, spent the school year writing a book that explores the intersection of traditional media policy with contemporary social media platforms. He also worked with current and former undergraduate students on an analysis of New York Times content, which will be presented at an October 2018 conference in Montreal.

Napoli’s research paper, “Assessing Local Journalism: News Deserts, Journalism Divides, and the Determinants of the Robustness of Local News,” was published in August 2018. He also received the Barry Sherman Teaching Award from the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication.
ALUMNI

Whether they took journalism courses at Duke, or discovered their passion for writing and reporting after graduation, hundreds of university alumni have gone on to carve out impressive careers in the media industry. Here's a closer look at a few Duke alumni working in journalism.

Sean McManus T’77
Chairman
CBS Sports

Sanette (Tanaka) Sloan T’12
Interaction designer
Google

Amrith Ramkumar T’17
Markets reporter
The Wall Street Journal

Rachel Chason T’17
Metro reporter
The Washington Post

ACADEMICS

Courses offered in 2017-18 included:

- Newswriting and Reporting
- Magazine Journalism
- News as a Moral Battleground
- Watchdog Reporting in Politics
- Journalism in the Age of Data
- Video Journalism
- Op-Ed Persuasive Writing
- The Art of Profile Writing
- Gerrymandering and the Press
- Political Communications in a Social World
- Algorithms, Journalism and the Public Interest
- Politics, Policy and the Media
- Crisis Communications and Higher Education
- Feature Writing Master Class
- Science and the Media
- Advanced Multimedia Production

In Fall 2018, we will introduce an Advanced Reporting Lab. Led by Bill Adair, students will cover Durham and produce news and feature stories for a public website.

Top: Durham Mayor Steve Schewel, a candidate at the time, speaks to a class during the election.
Bottom: Duke’s new president, Vincent Price, addresses students’ questions shortly after his inauguration.
Over the summer, our students interned at an impressive list of news organizations: NBC News, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Miami Herald, the Tampa Bay Times, the Center for Public Integrity, StoryCorps, PolitiFact, the Charlotte Observer and CBS News, among others.

“My summer internship with the Tampa Bay Times taught me how to be a professional journalist,” said alum Shaker Samman, who now writes about sports and culture for The Ringer. “It allowed me to put what I’d learned in my PJMS classes to use, and showed that some of the key lessons — from ‘always get the dog’s name’ to ‘you can never make too many calls’ — weren’t just catchy lines, but vital in everyday journalism.”

Dillon Fernando (above) worked with the field department at the TBS late-night comedy series Full Frontal With Samantha Bee.

Matthew Riley (above) and Likhitha Butchireddygari (below) both worked with the investigative unit at NBC News.

Amelia Cheatham (above), a breaking news intern at the Orlando Sentinel, was one of many students to spend their summers with local journalism outlets. Others included Asa Royal, a general assignment reporter at the Tampa Bay Times; Hank Tucker, who covered sports for the News & Observer in Raleigh; and senior Sam Turken, who helped produce short news bulletins for WBUR, Boston’s NPR news station.
The Center hosted an extraordinary range of events, class speakers and lecturers in the past year — from NBC News White House Correspondent Hallie Jackson to New York Times columnist Ross Douthat to CNN Washington Bureau Chief Sam Feist.

In the fall, Jackson described the round-the-clock challenges of covering the Trump White House (and even recorded the audio for her latest Today show segment in the car on the way to the airport!). In the spring, New York Times journalist Emily Steel discussed how she and Michael S. Schmidt broke stories about sexual harassment settlements involving Bill O’Reilly — stories that helped them win the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

Megan McArdle (right), the Pamela and Jack Egan Visiting Professor who teaches an op-ed writing course in our program, held a conversation with Douthat titled “Conservatism in the Age of Trump.” (Photo by Kevin Seifert)

Hallie Jackson (right) with students Matthew Riley and Taylor Jones. (Photo by Shaun King)

Want to know more about the Center?

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