

Professor Bruce Austin please come forward to present the award for the best paper in the Professional and Technical Communication degree program.

Quantitative Research Methods is one of two required research methods courses for all communication majors. The course project insists that each student invent and develop a fully formed proposal for an empirical research study in communication. For many, this kind of thinking and this style of writing is novel. Project proposals must focus on phenomena associated with the communication discipline, carefully articulate the research problem to be investigated by stating hypotheses or asking research questions, offer a compelling scholarly and social rationale that legitimizes the enterprise, present a representative and critical review of the related empirical research literature, and specify precisely the scientific procedures to be followed to test hypotheses or respond to research questions. Students are reminded their proposals for research must be so clear that any "kid in the hall" will be able to implement the project and that in empirical research there is no such thing as "you know what I mean."

Rachel Pikus, a Professional & Technical Communication senior, created an engaging proposal entitled "Professional Tennis Players as Endorsers in Tennis Magazine: A Content Analysis of Advertisements Over 40 Years." Rachel's proposal is a model for clarity and precision that creatively and successfully weaves together her personal interest in the sport, her interest in classical rhetoric through an investigation of the testimonial as a form of persuasive evidence, her interest in one medium for mass communications, and her somewhat more recently discovered scholarly interest in creating procedures for a longitudinal content analysis. Her text engages the reader, convincingly demonstrates the research project's significance, and offers an incisive and thoughtful summary of previous research. Rachel's paper clearly lays out a valid set of content coding procedures with associated measures of scientific reliability, acknowledges methodological limitations and specifies her project's heuristic dimensions. Rachel's work and her writing are first-rate. She has chosen to pursue completion of this proposal for her Senior Thesis in Communication and we can all look forward to learning the study's results in just a few weeks.