

*Hello and welcome to COM-Versations: Your School of Communication podcast. Here in the School of COM, we know how to make Fell Hall fun. Tune in often to hear the latest COM-Versations among faculty, staff and students. After all, we're the best in the Midwest for a reason. I'm Julie Navickas, one of your hosts. And today I'm joined by Dr. Lance Lippert, Professor of Communication Studies, and Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott, Director of the Graduate Program here in the School of Communication.*

JN: Welcome, Aimee!

AMO: Why, thank you, Julie. I'm happy to be here!

JN: Happy to have you!

LL: And we know Aimee's better than the rest because she tries harder, and she's talented, and you're a good colleague.

AMO: Why, thanks!

LL: And we asked Dr. Steve Hunt this, who two of his favorite colleagues are.

JN: Guess the answer.

AMO: Well, now it's...

LL: Us!

AMO: I was gonna say. Did he really say that?

LL: Yep!

AMO: I thought you were going to say me.

LL: Nope, it's us, it's us, it's us! Here's what we're gonna do. Since her research is about relationships and media, I'm gonna text her the questions.

AMO: Lance is currently phubbing me.

LL: I'm doing what?!

AMO: Phubbing, Lance.

LL: Do you know what that means? I heard of FOMO.

AMO: It sounds like a bad word, but it's not.

LL: Yes, I know. Where I come from, your mom would have sat you down! But, FOMO is Fear Of Missing Out. Now, we're going to talk about the Graduate School in just a second, but I want to know, since you study relationships and she's been, like quoted, in like magazines and journals around the world, last time she was in *The Atlantic*, but, which is cool, so what are you doing to me?

AMO: Well, I'm phubbing you. I can't take credit for the term because it's not mine, but we use it in research. You are "phone snubbing" me as we speak.

LL: I'm sorry, what?

AMO: Exactly. I did a Ted X once in Decatur on phone distractions, which is hilarious because you are literally staring at your phone now.

LL: I wonder, so you studied this, so I'm having trouble. Reggie Redbird and my relationship has changed, but I don't know, because I feel like since we just text each other, we don't see each other face to face. Does this social media stuff sometimes affect relationships? How does it change your relationship? Should I get FaceTime with Reggie, should we like go out and have a cup of coffee? Just not always social media.

AMO: Well, here's a fun fact. Relationships are more successful if they, what is the language? If they engage in seamless transition between online and offline formats. So, if you and Reggie were to create a relationship where you can start conversations - like, if you're walking on campus and you have your phone out, you were texting or FaceTiming Reggie, and then you see Reggie and you get off your phones and you continue that conversation in person, so it doesn't, so it's, you know, like back in the day, it was like, are you long distance or in person or are you, do you talk through computer mediated communication or in person and, now, it's the best relationships kind of incorporate both without it being, like awkward, when you go from in person to distance.

LL: So, next time Reggie and I go out for a cup of coffee, we shouldn't sit there texting each other.

AMO: No, but when you leave the coffee....

PHONE NOTIFICATION

LL: Did you hear that?!

AMO: He just got a notification. Is it Reggie?

LL: I think so, yeah. Oh my gosh, Reggie. Yeah, I don't know, that's a little fowl to me. But, the point is, that certainly changed how we do relationships, but, communication, efficient communication is efficient communication regardless of the channel right, Julie, and you study that as well.

AMO: And she (Julie) teaches that over at Heartland, too, right? Don't you teach courses in lots of different things? I see your name on that program all the time.

JN: Yeah, lots of different things, but that's not one of them.

LL: Obviously, she needs to check her media. We'll talk about the truth and the mistaken information, so can't believe everything I read.

AMO: I mean, it's hard when her name is everywhere!

LL: So, Julie, we have Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott, and her title is Director of our Graduate Program. Is it director now?

AMO: Coordinator? I think my door says Director, which I like, but coordinator is cool.

JN: Well, it gives you more credibility, more clout.

AMO: Yeah, a lot of people, it's fun, because, especially people who aren't here, who don't know I'm faculty here often email me, call me Mrs. Miller or Mrs. Ott.

LL: Well, people don't know what to call people with titles. Sometimes, they go Ms. Navickas, Mr. Lippert. I really don't care, but I do think it shows respect, at least initially, but I, especially, for, I think, women over the years in the workplace. This is something we talk about in another time, but, yeah you're lucky that's all they call you. I won't even go into what they call me. So, you've been here, what were we thinking, about 10 years, Julie?

AMO: I was trying to figure out earlier. I started in 2014, I think, yeah, 2014. So, what is that, 8 years? 9 years? It's gone by really fast.

LL: Well, it feels like you've been here for.....9 years?

JN: What a nice thing to say, Lance.

LL: Well, my students never call me nice, that's for sure.

AMO: Yeah, but do they tell you that you've got good dance moves? They all probably saw you on that TikTok!

LL: Actually, my future daughter-in-law just said something about that this weekend.

AMO: Did they vote you as the best dancer?

LL: On that TikTok, that means several of the young people on there with me dancing in my classroom should be worried. I was trying to be hip but not too hip, you know, and I, just, but then it hurt when I move.

AMO: That was the look on your face? I always point when I dance and my kids hate it.

LL: What are you pointing at?

AMO: The sky. The roof. Just raising it.

LL: And how did you end up here with us?

AMO: I was at my previous institution, and it was fine, it just wasn't the best fit for me. And I went to ISU for two years as an undergrad, actually, and loved COM and knew that it has a good program and then you know, honestly, I went to grad school at Nebraska with some people who went through the master's program and so I knew the history and the reputation and then the job came out, the job posting. I was like *OMG, that's like the perfect job*, you know, and my husband at the time was like *yeah, apply for it, apply for it* because I've been looking around and not being offered much for other jobs and then got interviewed and came out here and actually was offered the position. So, I was like dream come true, so, so exciting so yeah here I am, and I'm from here originally, the area, Peoria.

JN: And what kind of classes do you teach?

AMO: I teach grad level dark side; interpersonal but it's called the dark side of interpersonal communication and family communication.

LL makes Ghost Sound

AMO: I like that, that was good, you sound like a ghost. The ghost of Jesse Fell. And then undergrad I teach interpersonal like the 325, used to teach methods haven't taught that in a while and aging. human COM and aging. which I haven't taught much either since I became coordinator.

LL: She asked me to come in. I used to teach that with Dr. Metts before me and she brings me in and I wasn't sure what she was going to use me for, but she had a picture, a young picture from me in college, and then now having me stand *before and after* and then you can watch the aging process. But, that's a great course and that's an example of things that we teach here that are relevant and have a very practical aspect to them and we talk about theory, conceptual stuff, but in grad school and this idea of aging, let's take, for example, some of the dark side. What does it offer to graduate students do we continue to be lifelong learners? What do you think?

AMO: Yeah, I would say that if you look at the difference between undergrad and grad; undergrad, you take a lot of different courses, so you get a lot of breadth. And there's some depth there, too, but in grad school, you take fewer courses, but the courses you take have more depth so you are diving way deeper into the different content, you know, and, I don't know, I think people are as focused as much potentially at the grad level on like *what job can I get from this* it's more like *how can I expand my knowledge and then take over all this skills and knowledge I've learned in all my classes and make it transferable to any job* so it's just a little different fewer people in the class, more conversations. I've heard people say that, you know, even the faculty member's, like, a learner in that class, so there's things absolutely that students will share with me that I didn't know that I'll go look into or things they learned from other classes, so it's kind of more of a collaborative environment. So, like, the dark sides are really popular, probably the more popular class that I teach and aging. I've taught a life communication through the lifespan at the grad level which is super popular and really fun where you just learn about the different types of interpersonal communication that you would engage in throughout your life. Anyway, that's my answer - grad school is great!

LL: Now, Ms. Navickas went to grad school here and I would have if I knew about it.

AMO: That's how I feel too, absolutely.

LL: So, why our program, I guess? Did we win an award or something, a national award?

JN: Yeah, there was this award. I believe it was from the National Communication Association. Do you happen to remember what year?

AMO: I do, I remember it because it was given to us at a conference where I was there, and I think I had recently been hired or was about to be hired and thought like *oh my gosh, now I'm in a program that's the top program*. It was 2013.

LL: And it was for what, it was from the National Communication Association which said we, Illinois State, has the best master's program in communication in the country.

JN: Absolutely.

AMO: And the cool thing, I think, about program, I know, I have, like students, who apply who also are looking to get a PhD which is not what, you know, we don't only have people in our master's programs who get PhDs, many of them don't, but I always say some of them will look at master's programs that also have a PhD and, honestly, my experience is having gone to a master's only master's program and

then having gone to a PhD program that had a master's program, I would 100% recommend that people go to a program that only has a master's degree because then you get all the attention of the faculty. So, like, I loved my doctoral program, but I also felt bad for the people in the master's program while I was in the PhD program because they were in classes with us, so it was a little more advanced probably than it should have been for them and we got all the attention of the faculty, you know, and, so, I feel like the master's students kind of got lost in the mix. And, so, I think at ISU we do a really good job of giving our attention to the grad students, to the master's students, and all the resources we have or research opportunities or teaching opportunities or whatever, all of the people who get those experiences and opportunities are the master's level students, and I think it changes your experience drastically.

LL: And our footprint at Illinois State is quite large because our graduate teaching assistants also teach the basic course that all incoming freshmen have to take. One semester, we had 3,000 students that took it so but we aren't sure when the program started. So, what's the trivia question?

JN: So, the trivia question is, when did our graduate programs at Illinois State University.....what year did that start?

AMO: We said 1943, I think it was, but we guess that COM was probably, I'm going to guess 60s or 70s, because that's really when a lot of the research started.

LL: We'll get our crack research crew checking that out.

AMO: Do we have it?

LL: Oh, we do. Ok, yes, on this budget?

AMO: They're currently, right now, looking into it.

LL: And, again, I use the phrase 'lifelong learner' ....I think it's important; we'll see how higher ed changes over the years, but I do think a graduate degree, continued study, it is something that is available to students and it's an option and even people will come back but we have a lot of students that do come back and take advantage of that. Here's a question. Jesse Fell – would he have gone to grad school if it was offered? Jesse Fell, the founder of the university. Would he, you think, have gone to grad school?

AMO: I think everyone should go to grad school.

LL: Well, there you go. Jesse Fell would be coming to grad school. If he were alive today, he would say *sign me up!*

AMO: Well, because, you know, what with the job market the way that it is today and the influx of all people, right applying, for jobs so, I would say, a huge way to stand out is to have a master's. Any sort of advanced education or advanced degree, as I always tell, I've talked to your capstone students about this, that the difference, I would say, between undergrad, getting out of an undergrad program, and a grad program is that when you're an undergrad graduating you look for entry level positions when you're a grad student graduating with a master's degree, you look for supervisory or management positions and you're better suited for those, you're better skilled. So not only, hopefully, does that translate to more money, which is, better title, more job growth, better opportunities.

JN: That's a really good distinction. I hadn't thought about it like that.

AMO: We did, on our website, there's actually a document that I created for a book chapter that Dr. Hunt and I wrote for a grad school book and I had interviewed, surveyed, sent a big survey to a lot of our former students, grad students, and asked them *what are the job titles that you got after getting into our program* and then I put it all together in a list and a lot of it's managers, supervisor, people just in higher level positions so I always like to direct people to that and to those of you listening and would like more information our website is very helpful.

LL: Reggie just texted me.

AMO: Oh, thank goodness. He's not on spring break this week?

LL: Well, he is. He texted me from somewhere in Sarasota, Daytona... be safe out there, people! But he texted me, he said he'd love to hear more about the graduate program, and he texted me the Redbird joke. So, you know his father and his father before him, they all crossed the road, so why did Reggie act like his dad and cross the road? .....Like feather, like son. I know we're coming towards the hour out here.

JN: Well, you got the Redbird joke in, and you mentioned Jesse Fell. So, I think we hit our marks.

AMO: And we have trivia! I didn't know trivia was a part of this. This is exciting.

LL: I've been looking at my phone, the whole thing, time. This is what our faculty do - we teach, but we also research and we ask and have this conversation with people in the workplace. We've got some great graduates of our master's program, Julie one of them and a lot of other good folks so it means a lot to our program. Thank you for being who you are and directing that.

AMO: Well, thanks for having me. It's fun! I love, my favorite thing in the world, actually, not in the world but with this position, is when I give offers to people for the program because I remember, not to be cheesy, but, like, I remember getting an offer for my master's program and thing and that was probably like a huge turning point in my life because it opened up so many more doors for me so it's fun to be able to be the person that gives those offers to other people so we're still accepting applications if anyone's interested.

LL: Reggie Redbird said his application's in the mail.

AMO: It's not 2000. Tell him there's an online portal! Online portal, Reggie. Is 2000 even the right reference, I don't even know.

JN: Mine came in the mail and that would have been in 2008.

AMO: Wow, ok! So, maybe Reggie's not that outdated.

LL: Holy cow, mine's STILL in the mail. I got mine online somewhere. It was a certificate, that and I became a professional, there are all kinds of things online. You haven't checked my credentials then, have you?

JN: Thank you both for joining me and, on our next episode, we'll be knocking on the door of Dr. Byron Craig, and we are excited to share another fun, fabulous conversation with him. As always, thanks for listening