



KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY

NORMAN J. RADOW COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

FOCUS ON FACULTY



SEPTEMBER 2024: FEATURING
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September 19, 2024

Creating A Career Frame of Mind Through Language and Opportunity



Robin Mathis, Ph.D., Interim Associate Director for Strategic Communication and Assistant Professor of Communication in the School of Communication and Media (SOCM) shares a moment of school spirit with Scrappy.

Robin Mathis, Ph.D., interim Associate Director for Strategic Communication and Assistant Professor of Communication in the School of Communication and Media (SOCM), brings together areas of expertise that, combined, offer a powerful approach to teaching and preparing students for life after college. Consider her undergraduate degree in communication, sprinkled with her theater studies, mix in a master's degree in instructional and organizational communication, and top it off with a Ph.D. in human resource development. Her students are not just being taught; they are being coached to a higher performance level that will help them succeed in their chosen field. What's more, this coaching approach is evident not only in the classroom but also in the way she engages her community and discipline.

Mathis' attentiveness to promoting career success by focusing on development is clear in the way she approaches the classroom. She described how her approach manifests with students saying "It was probably 10 plus years ago. I was telling a story about something that happened in the classroom to a family member, and I said, 'I think that's a colleague question, not a supervisor question.'" The family member stopped her to ask about her use of the term "colleague" rather than student or classmate. She went on to explain that her focus on helping students prepare for their careers meant approaching her classroom as a place where colleagues engage one another much as they would in their professional environments. She wanted her students to be ready for the types of conversations and issues they would experience in their day-to-day work environments.

Back then, she may have been ahead of her time with this mindset, but today she is right in step with her focus on career readiness. Ensuring students are career-ready and have the necessary skills to succeed in their chosen field after graduation has gained traction at KSU, in the University System of Georgia (USG), and nationwide. As Mathis notes "...the USG is saying that there's a reason why you're here and a reason why the organization wants you to have a degree. It's part of our job to communicate that, and so [it is] kind of like HR development approach to higher ed. I've always had [this approach] is for this next step."

Mathis is very active outside the classroom, which opens other avenues for her to support her students. She is an active member of the Eastern Communication Association (ECA), which having been founded in 1910, and is according to their website the country's oldest professional communication association. During an ECA conference where Mathis presented on senior capstone projects. She recounted what one conference attendee said about her presentation, "Another faculty member said, 'I really like how you are not so much a teacher or facilitator. You move into a coaching model.' She used that language," Mathis added.



Robin Mathis, Ph.D., with her husband Chris Mathis, enjoy a day out at a KSU home football game.

Mathis received valuable guidance from her mentor, a Northwest Airlines executive who was instrumental in inviting her into the ECA. She credits him with helping her develop a foundation at ECA that "grew into a professional home," and has remained a constant through her move for her husband's job in 2014 From Texas to Atlanta. Today, she is on ECA's ballot as one of two candidates in this October's elections for the vice president elect position.

Her passion for theater, her organizational communications skills, and HR expertise have led to a seat on the Board of the City of Sandy Springs Theater Company. It is this role, with connections to other Board members and within the organization itself that she is constantly on the lookout for ways to connect students with internships and job opportunities.

“They’ve got their own costume shop and scene shop, the crew has jobs, and so I’ve said ‘What do you need help with?’ We could use interns and PR and video production all of these things. I work in School of Communication Media,” says Mathis suggesting SOCM as pipeline for student engagement.

The way she sees it “we’re solving people’s problems through scholarship also student opportunities I’m passionate about this [and theater has] need that creates an opportunity for our students.”

For Mathis this more than just checking box As students go on careers look ahead she excited see when students succeed If sees LinkedIn one students got promotion reach out congratulate them According Mathis they usually surprised remembers them but really does care In fact when asked what would most want people know about personally professionally would be matter what educator think comes parenting everything So when sees students succeed after college there certain sense pride having been part journey development along way

