

Partners, innovators in education, digital sports media earn Collaboration breakfast spotlight

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The word “smartphone” would have sounded alien to just anybody in 1988, the year University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumnus Patrick Stiegman earned his journalism degree.

Today? Not the case.

The smartphone is Stiegman’s portal to the media battlefield that is the web. He and a legion of approximately 400 ESPN digital journalists, data masters, programmers and storytellers that he oversees are constantly trying to develop a home-field advantage, and globally so. If the internet and mobile data and media-consumption scoreboards they pay attention to are right, they’re doing a pretty good job.

“When you’re serving sports fans, you have to go where they want to be,” Stiegman, the Emmy-award-winning vice president of digital media for the sports colossus ESPN, told an audience of about 200 guests at the UW Oshkosh Foundation 8th Annual Community Breakfast Sept. 17. “What they are telling us in droves on any given day is that they want to be digital and they want there to be choices.”

Stiegman served as keynote speaker at the Foundation 2013 “Report to the Community” breakfast, adding to a list of distinguished alumni entrepreneurs, industry executives and thought leaders who have graced the event’s podium.

The breakfast also featured the presentation of the annual “Collaboration in Action Leadership Award,” this year recognizing the work of Joan Wade, Ph.D., agency administrator for Cooperative Educational Services Agency (CESA) 6, is responsible for the professional development of 42 public school districts in Wisconsin.

Educational leader honored with Collaboration in Action honor

Wade was recognized for her work as “an advocate for PK-12 education” and as “a promoter of collaborations with higher education institutions.” The Foundation and University lauded her collaborative work with the UW Oshkosh College of Education and Human Services in “helping establish teacher and principal mentoring programs; facilitating College of Education and Human Services-sponsored courses in the local school districts; and assisting with the coordination and development of the first Rural Schools Association in the state and the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance, of which the college is a founding member.”

Most recently, “Wade led CESA 6 in developing a new system to help K-12 school districts improve the effectiveness of educators in the districts that, in turn, leads to improved student learning.”

“Makes it easy to partner when you have good people to partner with,” Wade said in accepting the award.

The Foundation and University also credit Wade’s support and leadership with helping the COEHS’s leadership program grow to “span the state,” positioning it to become a force in rural economic and educational development throughout Wisconsin.

Wade, a former state Representative in the Wisconsin Assembly, is also involved in several local and state service and volunteer activities including the UW Oshkosh Chancellor’s Council of Advisers—Oshkosh.

Journalism, radio-TV-film alum at bleeding edge of digital media with ESPN

Stiegman ’88, graduated from UW Oshkosh with a journalism degree and minors in radio-TV-film and political science. His wife, Brenda, graduated from UW Oshkosh in 1988 with a major in radio-TV-film and a minor in journalism. He is a 2011 winner of an UW Oshkosh Distinguished Alumni Award and continues to offer student and faculty seminars in the journalism department, helping keep the program attuned to the never-ending revolution in digital media and communications.

“To innovate, you can’t always be in the grind,” Stiegman said, stressing the need for effective leader to regularly take a “balcony view” of digital-age developments – an age when, he said, nine out of 10 Americans identify themselves as sports fans.

“More people in this country know that ESPN exists than who know the Olympics exist,” Stiegman said, emphasizing the consumer culture that continues to grow around sports media.

But it’s not just an American uprising.

Stiegman is responsible for ESPN’s digital presences around the globe, including a growing soccer audience in the United Kingdom. He is helping establish the network’s digital HQ in Brazil, host of the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Stiegman said he is also helping the sports-media giant strengthen everything from ESPNW (a site catering to women’s athletics and female audiences) and ESPN’s online and mobile cricket (the sport, not the insect) content, which is a hit from India to the Caribbean.

“The world’s changing,” he said, emphasizing not just sports-entertainment’s globalization but also its digitization across platforms and continents. “... We’ve done more about cricket in the last year than we ever could have imagined.”

Before joining ESPN in 2004, Stiegman spent nine years as vice president and director of Internet operations for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Journal Communications. His real newspaper roots, however, were established in the offices of the Advance Titan, student newspaper at UW Oshkosh, and the Oshkosh Northwestern, where, Stiegman said, the monotony of logging bowling scores in the fine print of the sports section gave him a crash course in the value of community journalism.

After joining ESPN as senior director and executive editor for the Insider, Sports Nation and editorial integration, Stiegman was promoted to vice president of digital media in 2006. In 2007, he was assigned the responsibilities of executive producer.

He credits his UW Oshkosh education with “providing the foundation on which all success is built. I perfected my editorial blocking and tackling in the lecture halls of the journalism department, stretched my skills in a series of professional internships and discovered my journalistic instincts—instincts later forged with experience into a true editorial voice and perspective.”

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh Foundation](#)