College Awards

Ruth and Rae O. Weimer awards for outstanding graduates of the College

The College’s top awards each year are the Weimer Awards, named for Rae O. Weimer, the founding director and first dean of the College, and his first wife, Ruth.

A man who had no college degrees, Weimer led the College to national prominence by the force of his personality and vision. He came to UF in 1949 and by the time he retired as dean 19 years later, he had transformed the College from a three-man academic unit into the second largest college of its type in the nation and sent almost 2,000 graduates on their way.

He spent 25 years in the newspaper industry before coming to UF and was the managing editor of the New York PM, the nation’s first modern newspaper without advertisements.

Weimer was beloved by students, alumni and faculty alike; he was known to fight for his students and faculty, and to hire top journalists as faculty members even when the University objected to those who didn’t have top degrees in their field.

At Weimer’s memorial service, H.G. “Buddy” Davis told a story about the time when Buddy and his wife had contracted to build a house and Rae insisted (Davis thought somewhat foolishly) on visiting the site.

According to Davis, “We met him and Ruth there, under a roof supported by a few bricks and sticks, with this spot going to be the living room and this spot a den and this spot a bath. At that point, from a paper bag, Rae whipped out a bottle of champagne and four plastic goblets for a toast to our good fortune. Now I ask you, to a boss like that, would you give a hard time.”

Weimer died in November of 1996 at the age of 93 and is survived by his wife, Wùma, and a daughter, son and two grandsons. His wife, Ruth, preceded him in death in 1979. She was a force in the community and an outstanding journalist in her own right.

Advertising Department Awards

W. Robert Glafcke award for leadership

The award for leadership in the department of advertising is named for Robert Glafcke, who was on the College faculty in the early 1970s and was active with student organizations building young leaders. He was named publisher of the Houma Daily Courier, a New York Times regional newspaper, in Houma, La., in 1982. After leaving the newspaper business, Glafcke moved to Atlanta and opened a printing facility. He died in the late 1980s.

Marshall Respess award for the outstanding advertising graduate

The department of advertising’s top award is named for Marshall Respess, a printer from Jacksonville who was a strong supporter of what was then the School of Journalism during the Weimer era. Records are limited, but it is believed he owned Respess Printing & Engraving and died sometime in the 1960s.
Richard W. McGinnis award for professional promise in advertising
Richard William McGinnis, ADV 1958, is a major donor to the advertising department and the department’s professional promise award is named for him. From 1956 to 1958 Richard McGinnis and his wife Shirley lived in Flavet 3, which was married student housing for military veterans at UF. While a student, McGinnis worked for the UF sports publicity department. After his graduation, he worked in the advertising field, including 21 years with Turner Advertising and Turner Communications in Atlanta. He retired in 1983 and then ran a small advertising agency for five years before retiring.

Joseph R. Pisani award for service in advertising
Joe Pisani, who joined the advertising faculty in 1973, served as chair of the department for a record-breaking 18 years. He was extremely popular with students, and was noted for being kind and giving. Pisani managed and scheduled the department at a time of record high enrollment (nearly 600 majors compared to today’s 450). He retired from the faculty in 2005. A native New Yorker, Pisani still visits the College often and lives in Gainesville.

Journalism Department Awards
John Paul Jones award for magazine/feature writing excellence
The magazine/feature writing excellence award is named for John Paul Jones, JM 1937, who was the third faculty member hired by the College in 1948. He had received his master’s degree from Wisconsin and was teaching at the University of Illinois. Shortly after Jones arrived at UF, then university president J. Hills Miller began forming a School of Journalism and named Rae O. Weimer as director of the new school, then housed in the College of Arts and Sciences. Jones followed Weimer as dean, serving from 1968-76, and it was during his tenure that the College broke into separate departments and plans began for a new building that would become the current Weimer Hall. Jones was a leader in the newspaper industry, serving as the secretary-manager of the Florida Press Association for 16 years. A prolific writer, he created Guide to North Florida Living magazine in 1981 and ran it until 1997. He died in 2001.

Elmer Emig award for professional promise in journalism
The professional promise award in the department of journalism is named for Elmer Emig, the first head of the department. When journalism became part of the UF College of Commerce and Journalism in 1927, then Dean Walter Matherly hired Emig. He headed the department for nearly 25 years. In a history of the College written by Dean John Paul Jones and published in the 1976 communicator, Jones described Emig as a “true professional” who treated the students with “consideration and patience with dullards or students who were not weeding out the earth to help a student who showed promise.” In addition to his faculty work, Emig wrote editorials for Florida newspapers, including the Florida Times-Union, and helped organize UF’s chapter of Sigma Delta Chi (now the Society of Professional Journalists). He died in 1956.

H.G. “Buddy” Davis award for promise in reporting and editing
Most alumni from the 1950s through the 1980’s have an H.G. “Buddy” Davis, JM 1948, MA 1952, story to tell. The award for promise in reporting and editing is named for Davis, who taught almost every course in the journalism curriculum at one time or another. Everyone remembered him – some because they were locked out of class for arriving late, others because they earned the dreaded “crown of thorns” for an ethical lapse. But nearly all remembered him because they learned from him the importance of journalistic standards of accuracy. On the journalism faculty from 1954 until he retired in 1985, Davis also wrote editorials for the Gainesville Sun from 1962-1989. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1971 for a series of editorials he wrote in 1970 calling for tolerance during school desegregation in Alachua County. He died in 2004 at the age of 80.

Public Relations Department Awards
Frank F. Rathbun award for service to PRSSA
Frank Rathbun, JM 1936, MA 1971, joined the faculty in 1968, primarily teaching public relations, magazine and feature writing, and writing for mass communications. He was a longtime faculty adviser to the UF Public Relations Student Society of America chapter and retired in 1978.

Charles Wellborn award for service in public relations
A beloved faculty member for over 19 years, Charlie Wellborn was the “Guru of magazines.” The public relations service award is named in his honor. Wellborn was the architect of many courses in the College, including editing and graphics, and business/technical communications; the Florida Magazine Association created the “Charlie Award” to recognize the top entry in each category of its annual magazine contest. He stayed connected to many students after they graduated from the College and was active in the Florida Public Relations Society for many years. He was a retired Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army and often shared stories from World War II. Executive Associate Dean Linda Children’s Hon is his stepdaughter. He died in 2002 at the age of 77.

Jack Detweiler award for professional promise in public relations
The public relations award for professional promise is named for Jack Detweiler, JM 1952, Ed.D, 1969, who was a longtime faculty member of the public relations department and served as department chair during the late 1980’s/early 1990’s when the number of students in the major grew substantially. He joined the faculty in 1965 and retired in 2004. In his early years, Detweiler was known more to the College’s journalism majors, serving as the director of student publications who helped advise the Alligator during the years immediately prior to the newspaper becoming independent and moving off campus. Before joining the College’s faculty, Detweiler worked at both the Jacksonville Journal and the Orlando Sentinel.

Telecommunication Department Awards
Major Garland Powell Award for service in broadcasting
Major Garland Powell was the first station manager of WRUF, which went on the air as an AM station in 1928; it was among the first five radio stations in Florida. The state of Florida had just been hit by fierce hurricanes in 1926 which washed away an era of statewide prosperity and land speculation and a group of businessmen wanted to use the radio waves as a way of luring people back to the Sunshine State. Powell was faced with the daunting task of commercializing the station and keeping it on the air after the Great Depression hit in the early 1930s. In a 1988 communicator article, Kenneth Small who served as the WRUF station manager from 1956-1974 said of the Major as everyone called Powell, “He was the pioneer. People at the time were as hungry for radio as they later were for television.” One of Powell’s earliest finds was Red Barber, who went on to become one of America’s most beloved and popular radio sportscasters.

F. Leslie Smith management award for telecommunication
The top award for students in the telecommunication management track is named for Leslie Smith, TEL 1964, retired telecommunication department chair and faculty member. Smith joined in faculty in 1962 and taught in the management sequence until his retirement in 2005. Like Buddy Davis, Smith was known to lock students out of class who showed up late, but since he was such a great teacher, most students were there on time. The award was created in his honor in 2003.