

# Alumni Update: Dr. Alfred Mueller II, '93, former "Kinney's Kid"

By: Christine Lee

Dr. Al Mueller is professor and chair of the department of Communication Studies at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Md. He teaches courses in rhetorical criticism, persuasion, history of rhetoric, public speaking and political communication. He is a rhetorical theorist critic, nationally recognized scholar on apologia theory, or speeches of defense, and recognized as a scholar of Cicero. He also works on presidential rhetoric.

An active scholar, he is currently engaged in a long-term project looking at the rhetoric of the early Christian Church, especially as it applies to apologia. In addition, he is working on analyses of speeches given by Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama.

After graduating from Wilkes with triple majors in communication studies, history and philosophy, Mueller went on to earn a M.A. and Ph.D. in communication studies at the University of Iowa. Some of his best memories at Wilkes are his times as one of "Kinney's Kids" on the speech and debate team.

"When I came to Wilkes, I was a political science major and a philosophy minor. I wanted to be a lawyer because public speaking didn't freak me out," Mueller said. "Dr. Kinney taught me in the basic speech course and he recruited me for the debate team and I said 'I don't want to join until my junior year.' I said want to get my college career moving and then I'll join later and he convinced me to go to one tournament in Bloomsburg in October and I stuck with it and just kept on going with it."

He said after joining the team he learned Communication Studies didn't just deal with radio and newspaper but also dealt with rhetoric and public address, which allowed him to continue with speech things. It was emeritus history professor Harold Cox, the university archivist, who turned him onto the idea of publishing his work in academic journals in his junior year.



Photo Credit: Dr. Alfred Mueller

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*- Dr. Alfred Mueller*



Photo Credit: Christine Lee

"I combined the two ideas together and said, 'Well, I know what I want to do, I'd like to be a college professor, and I'd like to be a college professor in communications,'" Mueller said.

Mueller said the most rewarding things at Wilkes for him were classes with Kinney and Cox. Kinney taught rhetorical criticism, political communication, argument and public speaking. Cox taught history of foreign policy, American social history and American business history. He also enjoyed his Russian history course with history professor Dennis Hupchick.

"All of those courses combined really were exciting," Mueller said.

He added that he enjoyed professor of anthropology and sociology James Merriam's cultural anthropology course that anthropology became one of his cognate areas when he was working on earning his Ph.D. as well as his experiences with the debate team.

"Those kinds of courses, that was pretty exciting, some of the debate stuff clearly stands out in my mind as rewarding experiences," Mueller said.

Mueller's fondest memories with the team were the comradely and teamwork involved in going to a competition, particularly the team bonding as a team at dinners after competitions.

"You would start competing at about 8'o clock in the morning at some other college or university and you would end about 7:30 'o clock at night and you wouldn't get anything to eat all day," Mueller said. "But then you'd go out to eat afterwards and it's mostly the stuff we did afterwards. I thought there was a lot of bonding with other people and just having a good old fashioned good time just over a dinner table."

Mueller said being on the speech and debate team taught him oral presentation, research and writing skills, which he uses daily.