

Professor produces films in free time

By Chandler Hall
Staff reporter

When he isn't teaching, Jason Knowles, visiting instructor of communication, digital arts and new media, creates films.

He works on independent films, making sets around the country, and has experience on a professional film set. The professional set he worked on was a promo pilot episode for a television show. He has worked in television and 3D animation and had an internship in KTKA in Topeka.

Knowles' film, "Relics of the Modern Vena," won an award at the Hollywood Independent Motion Pictures Film Festival for best trailer in 2016. He has also been an official selection in seven festivals.

After seven years of research, Knowles and his partner Shawn Spears, a theatre director at a small college in central Missouri, started filming. They continue to work on a feature length project and a documentary.

Knowles said, "I am finishing up short films and hope to get them entered into a few festivals this semester."

Knowles learned about Southwestern College in the past year and a half from researching to stay current on what the college media departments are doing.

He wanted to move back to Kansas to be closer to his parents, who are retired and need more help from family.

"I thought this would be a great fit," Knowles said. "I'm glad I got the position here, because I think it is a very good fit."

Michelle Boucher, associate professor of English, was on the team that hired Knowles.

"There were two teaching positions to fill," said Boucher, who was open to combinations that would meet the needs to fill both positions.

There were 12 applications and out of those, three were interviewed.

"He had done filmmaking and video. He had taught in a similar program and similar classes offered here," Boucher said. "He was excited about what he did. He likes being in Kansas. His research is in the Ozarks."

These qualities made Knowles the prime candidate for the job.

Boucher likes that Knowles is refocusing video production programs, both the production of formal and informal video, that he is reestablishing the studio, and has a lot of skills with different equipment.

Knowles loves this area and his favorite restaurant is Biederman's. "They have a great cobb salad there," said Knowles.

Tanner Carlson, communication senior, is in one of Knowles' courses this semester.

"Jason has done a lot in such a short amount of time. He has been extremely efficient and effective," Carlson said. "In

only a month or two, we are going to have more done in the studio and more upcoming projects than I've had in my two previous years here. I think that's a testament to his determination and his want to help us."

His goals for the department are to have a regular newscast going. He has bought a new switcher in order for that to be possible.

He wants to be involved with athletics to broadcast more games and create sports shows. Long term, he wants to have a full-fledged station. Knowles

is the E-Sports advisor.

He hopes the team will win a bunch of competitions to put that program on the map.

On the film side, he wants to involve students in film projects, and to boost the number of students on the broadcasting side

of the program in order to accomplish those goals.

Knowles teaches the gaming courses, digital sound, two video broadcasting courses, digital media, and 3D animation, which is one of his passions.

Next semester he is teaching a narrative film course.



"It's a great school. The program has a lot of potential," Knowles said. "I'd love to see that potential come into reality. I'd love to be a part of that."

Knowles went to Kansas State University to sing in the concert choir and to study radio and television.

He transferred to Kansas University for filmmaking, to explore the imaginative side of creating video.

He earned his masters of education with an emphasis in instructional design from Emporia State University.

He earned an MFA in digital filmmaking (which is equivalent to a PHD in film) from the University of Central Arkansas.

Knowles has taught at Georgia Southern University and was the director of interdisciplinary film studies minor for about two years at Georgia Southern.

He helped coordinate course delivery and taught lighting and cinematography, post-production, and digital media writing.

Jason Knowles grew up in northeast Kansas in a town called Ozawkie. He is from a family of educators.

His father was a principal and his mother was a family and consumer scientist teacher.

In his free time, Knowles loves to play "Indiana Jones." He loves to find old abandoned towns to research and photograph. He is into caving and he loves to ski in Colorado.

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Bethel graduate creates positive energy as head cheerleading coach

By Lauren Sieh
Staff reporter

Making the crowd get loud and pumped up is something Erin Doerksen know all too well.

Doerksen is the head cheerleading coach here at Southwestern.

Doerksen is from Newton and graduated from Bethel College, where she majored in art, and Doerksen still creates art in her free time.

Her favorite medium is ceramics, but she enjoys all types.

At Bethel, Doerksen played basketball and was a cheerleader, and she was given many leadership opportunities.

Her cheer coach trusted her opinion and gave her many chances to grow within the cheer world.

This is Doerksen's first year as a head coach in cheerleading. She previously

was the assistant coach for Bethel's cheerleading program, and she loves the opportunity of starting a program from scratch.

Doerksen said, "Being a new program, it is hard to get people to want to help build the program. But, there are also kids that want to be a part of something that is growing."

SC has had cheerleading for a while now, but they are moving toward a competitive program.

"The first step is growing the program so we have enough athletes to compete," said Doerksen. "The minimum number for competitions is eight, but teams usually have 14-20 because it allows for group skills happening at one time along with bigger pyramids. We also get scored on showmanship – the more people you have on the mat, the flashier you can be. After we get numbers up, we can declare as a varsity sport within the KCAC and

compete," said Doerksen.

A member of the cheer team, Essence Ratzlaff, elementary education sophomore, said, "Coach Doerksen is an amazing coach. I think one of the most important things I've learned from her is to always keep trying."

"She has the mindset of a young adult, so it is really helpful when relating to us. The 6 a.m. practices are not the easiest to rock, but she is very understanding, especially when people are sick or have emergencies they run into," said Taryn Walter, elementary education freshman.

"I love working with kids in general, so being able to help kids, not just younger ages, but in the college level, learn new skills and progress in something has always been a fun aspect," said

Doerksen.

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