

# PRIME TIME *Players*



*From far left, professor William Dulaney is interviewed for a documentary about motorcycle gangs while students Phillip Chandler and Janna Gurtler work behind the scenes. In a second video project, students Ian Vigstedt and David Ward prepare to record a concert by the Cypress String Quartet as professor Padraig Acheson supervises in the control room. The national projects are possible because of the quality of equipment in WCU's television studios (above).*

## Broadcasting Students Work behind the Scenes and behind the Cameras on Several Large-Scale, National-Level Video Projects

By JOHN KENYON

As Western's broadcasting program continues to grow, so do the scale and complexity of video projects offered to students, including some that provide hands-on learning while also creating finished products that will be viewed across the nation. A multi-camera project that involved approximately \$15,000 worth of specialty video and audio cables loaned to WCU by Turner Broadcasting and an on-location video shoot for a History Channel program recently provided students with advanced practical knowledge in how the broadcast industry really works.

When the Cypress String Quartet was scheduled to bring its performance "Inspired by America," a blend of chamber music and multimedia images, to WCU's Fine and Performing Arts Center, the group wanted the concert videotaped to use for promotional purposes. "The quartet got in touch with me because they had seen what our facilities were like online," said Padraig Acheson, director of studio operations at WCU.

Acheson and a crew of students assembled an elaborate setup

that involved thousands of feet of triax video cables and audio cables provided by Turner Broadcasting. The crew interconnected the control room of the television studios inside the Center for Applied Technology with multiple cameras in the FAPAC. The live performance was then videotaped by student camera operators, while another student crew worked in the control room switching between camera feeds and recording the performance, a process commonly referred to in the broadcast industry as "live to tape." "This was the first time any of our students had been involved in a project of this size, and I am excited to have been able to give them this opportunity," said Acheson. "The same issues were involved that would be involved in a network broadcast."

Another endeavor that had WCU students working behind the scenes on a project designed to be seen by a national audience was an all-day video shoot at the Wheels Through Time motorcycle museum in Maggie Valley. Producer Bernie Dudek conducted an on-camera interview with William Dulaney, WCU assistant

professor of communication, for documentary programs about "outlaw" motorcycle clubs that will air on the History Channel and A&E Network. Students worked with the producer and a freelance videographer, took care of lighting and sound on the set, and operated a second camera.

"It was an amazing experience to work with a producer from the History Channel and a professional videographer," said Snellville, Ga., resident Phillip Chandler, director of operations at TV62, WCU's student-run closed-circuit television station. "We spent a lot of time learning from them. It was really valuable information about everything."

Part of the value of working with industry professionals comes not only through the sharing of knowledge, but also from establishing contacts and networking. "It was real exciting to have made those contacts because I am graduating soon and contacts are a big part in getting your foot through the door," said Franklin resident Janna Gurtler, broadcasting student and news director for TV62.

A recent graduate found herself in the position of being one of those industry contacts. "The communications business is all about contacts and networking," said Sarah Kepley '06, who

works freelance in sports video production in the Charlotte area and was recruited by Acheson to be part of the "Inspired by America" project. "It was great to go back and not only help with the project, but also become a contact for the students," Kepley said.

Students say the projects provided valuable experience and were great preparation for life after college. "Those two events overshadowed everything else I have done," said Joe Mullins, WCU broadcasting student from Denver, N.C., and general manager for TV62. "My resume looks like a professional's and I haven't even graduated college yet."

The professional contacts established through these and other projects continue to pay off for Western's broadcast program as two WCU students recently were recruited to work as production assistants on a music video for country-music singer Rhonda Vincent. The video was shot in Bryson City and the Los Angeles-based production company contacted Acheson after getting a referral from the videographer who worked with WCU students on the Wheels Through Time project. "It's all part of learning how to network and staying in touch with people you worked with in the past," said Acheson.