Drs. Tom Hallaq and Ian Punnett, together with colleague Shreepad Joglekar from the Department of Art, are the recipients of seed funding from the Chapman Grant that enables them to continue their Hungry Heartland media project this summer.

Access to fresh food has a significant impact on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals. When access to fresh food is limited, populations are more susceptible to heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and other life-threatening concerns. The Hungry Heartland media project focuses on investigating and voicing food accessibility issues of Kansans in both rural and urban settings known as “food deserts.”

Approximately one-third of Kansans live in these areas where it is difficult to obtain fresh foods such as unprocessed vegetables, fruits, and meat. Vulnerable populations within these areas include, but are not limited to, school children, minorities, and the elderly.

The Hungry Heartland media project is a long-term, multitiered, multimedia effort concentrated on food deserts across Kansas, the nation’s breadbasket, and the Midwest at large. At the heart of the campaign are three Kansas State University classes: Art 563 (Intermediate Photography), ENGL 510 (Professional Writing), and an advanced documentary video production class (MC 471).

In this latest stage, the Hungry Heartland media project has produced a high-quality, broadcast-ready, engaging multimedia documentary, The Empty Breadbasket: When the Land that Feeds the World Cannot Feed Itself, that raises awareness about food access designed to appeal to a wide television audience. Through an active relationship with KTWU-TV, the PBS affiliate in Topeka, Kansas, The Empty Breadbasket is scheduled to air in April 2022 and be picked up by other PBS stations throughout the Midwest in the months that follow.
Faculty Spotlight

Having nurtured a research interest in health communication since her undergraduate years as a research assistant, Dr. Nancy Muturi has become an experienced scholar in the field, focusing on HIV/AIDS in Africa and the Caribbean, and health disparities in the United States. Many students have invited Dr. Muturi to be their major professor, committee member, and co-author for conference papers and publications. This academic year alone, Dr. Muturi has been serving on almost 10 thesis and dissertation committees that focus on contemporary health issues, such as vaccine hesitancy, mental health, and raising awareness about human nutrition.

Along with colleagues, alumni, and students at K-State, Dr. Muturi has had almost 80 papers accepted for conferences and about 60 publications in high-profile peer-reviewed journals and book chapters.

She is presenting three papers this semester at the 2022 AEJMC Midwinter and ICA conferences that focus on COVID-19. In one study she examined the influence of information sources and health behaviors, and in another one she focused on the influence of religiosity and religious leaders on their followers’ motivations to engage in self-protective health behaviors.

Prior to joining the A.Q. Miller School, Dr. Muturi worked for the Ministry of Health in Kenya, where she is originally from. Over the years, with exposure to several health transnational organizations’ procedures, she acquired both practical experience and management skills in the field of health communication. Several years after completing her graduate studies at the University of Iowa, Dr. Muturi secured a position at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), where she performed a wide range of health communication tasks and designed programs and campaigns specifically on occupational safety and male reproductive health. She later “expanded her wings” to teach and also be a health communication specialist at the University of the West Indies. Eventually, she landed at K-State in 2005.

To be a well-rounded graduate student, Dr. Muturi suggests finding an area that you are passionate about and building comprehension not only of the topic itself but also of the applicable theories and research methods. “Be curious about what is going on around you, about the world, and always try to develop yourself,” she said.
MASTER'S STUDENT MICHAEL ASHFORD HOSTS PODCAST AND DELIVERS TEDx TALK ON FINDING COMMON GROUND

**What are your research interests?**
I am particularly interested in conflict communications and bridging divides across political and social ideologies.

**What projects are you working on?**
I am most excited about the work that I do with my podcast, *The Follow-Up Question*. I am putting my education from K-State and my background as a journalist to good use to try to find the answer to how we find common ground at a time when it is increasingly harder to do so. My podcast explores how we find common ground by asking more questions. I’ve interviewed non-profit leaders and former U.S. ambassadors, professors and philosophers, authors and poets, all in search of the answer to how we find common ground. I’m trying to bring as many perspectives and experiences to the table on this topic to show just how complex, nuanced, and interconnected our beliefs can be.

It is phenomenally meaningful work for me, and it helped land me a spot on the TEDx stage to give a TEDx Talk late last year: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAC09gbmQSY.

My work, including my podcast, can all be found at www.MichaelAshford.com.

**What are your long-term plans?**
I am currently writing a book based on the research and interviews I’ve done on my podcast, and I hope to one day get into teaching. The book that I’m writing is an extension of my podcast and my TEDx Talk. In all the research and interviews I’ve done, I’ve stumbled on a framework of sorts of how and when to ask questions about divisive issues and topics. It’s definitely a work in progress, and I plan to spend 2022 writing it.

**Any hobbies or fun facts about yourself that you’d like to share?**
I am a certified personal trainer and online fitness professional. I love to hike and exercise, I really enjoy cooking, and I am currently going back and reading through classic literature, starting with Charles Dickens.

---

**GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT**

**Michael Ashford** is originally from Bonner Springs, Kansas, and currently living in Denver, Colorado, with his wife, two kids, and a dog. He is a 2006 graduate of K-State JMC and a first-year master's student in the online program. Michael spent several years at *The Emporia Gazette* after graduation. He is now entering the technology world yet still refers to himself as an "independent journalist." He applies his journalism education and skills every day, both in his full-time work as a marketing leader and in his podcast. Recently, Michael was invited to be a TEDx Talk speaker.

**Why did you choose K-State and JMC?**
I’ve loved K-State all my life. Generations of my family have attended K-State, and when it came time to begin a Master’s program, it was an easy decision.

---

**RECENT GRADUATE TO PRESENT HER CAPSTONE PROJECT RESEARCH AT THE AEJMC SOUTHEAST COLLOQUIUM**

**Rachel Esses** graduated with her master’s degree this spring, under the supervision of **Dr. Dani LaGree**. She submitted a paper based on her master’s capstone project to the **AEJMC Southeast Colloquium**, to be held March 7 - 19 at the University of Memphis, and it was accepted for presentation.

Titled “Creating a place brand management strategy proposal for Emmitsburg, Maryland,” Rachel’s paper draws on focus-group research with diverse community members in an effort to help a small town who has been struggling for half of century with reinventing itself after suburbanization.
K-STATE JOURNAL OF MEDIA LAW & ETHICS INVITES SUBMISSIONS

The Kansas State University Journal of Media Law & Ethics (ISSN 1940-9389) invites 6,000-8,000-word theoretical and analytical manuscripts that advance the understanding of media law and ethics in society. Submissions may have a legal, historical, or social science orientation, but they must focus on media law or ethics. All theoretical perspectives are welcome.

All manuscripts undergo blind peer review. Access to JMLE is available to the public online at no charge.

Published by the A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications as a quarterly or occasional journal since fall 2021, JMLE has previously published articles spanning defamation, privacy, copyright, censorship, licensing, reporters’ privilege, news accuracy, bias, and media literacy. Submissions in these and similar areas that explore legal, policy and ethical issues facing the media are welcome.

Manuscript preparation rules and past issues of JMLE are available for reference online. Manuscripts should be submitted by email to Dr. Nikhil Moro, Editor, at nmoro@ksu.edu.