



2015 DPA Communicator of Achievement

Tracey L. Bryant

For 30 years, Tracey L. Bryant has been spreading news of the research of faculty, staff, and students at the University of Delaware not only through local, national and international media, but also by connecting directly with the public through print, presentations and social media, websites, and with K-12 students nationally and internationally through unique online adventures.

By the time she graduated as Valedictorian of her high school class, it was clear that Tracey had “the right stuff,” for she also was the winner of the Scholar-Athlete Award, the Science Award, the English Award, the Mathematics Award, and the Foreign Language Award. She went on to excel at Penn State where she received a B.A. with High Distinction in General Arts and Sciences and also earned a Certificate in Technical Writing. She polished her command of thought and language while working on a master’s degree in English with a concentration in non-fiction writing and editing – also at Penn State.

Excelling in Science and Research Communications at the University of Delaware

All of these skills have served Tracey well in various jobs at the University of Delaware, and her work has served to illuminate the university’s prominence in marine studies and research and to enhance UD’s visibility as a major research university, ranked in the top 3 percent nationwide.

When serving as director of the Marine Public Education Office in the College of Marine Science for five years, she and her close-knit team worked with marine scientists and marine extension specialists to translate complex scientific and technical information to share with people from all walks of life through their award-winning press releases, newsletters, and curriculum guides, as well as radio announcements and the “SeaTalk” radio series, videos, CDs, and websites. They also helped develop and promote the University’s Coast Day festival, the single largest educational event hosted by the university and attracting more than 10,000 people to the university’s Lewes campus each year.

A few years ago Tracey and her team provided Delaware middle- and high-school students and the public with the extraordinary opportunity to travel along, in a virtual way via their computers, on a UD marine research expedition in the ALVIN submersible to super-hot, deep-sea hydrothermal vents almost 2 miles deep on the Pacific Ocean floor.

Tracey has been with the university’s Communications and Public Affairs Office since 2009. Currently director of research communications for the entire university she serves on the executive committee of UD’s “Delaware Will Shine” Strategic Planning Initiative and the Community Engagement Commission. She serves as the university’s liaison with the national Science Foundation Office of Legislative and Public Affairs, the national Institutes of Health PIO network, and other federal science agencies.

When she was the Associate Director of Research, Graduate and Global Communications, Tracey was founding editor of two award-winning magazines — *UD Research* and *UD Global* — published in both print and digital formats. She also helped faculty develop outreach components for selected research projects, ranging from videos to blogs and educational online expeditions. She wrote articles on research, graduate and global activities for the UDaily news service, and she developed broadcast-quality research video series for the national Science Foundation knowledge network. She oversaw content updates for parts of the University’s website and also planned, developed, and edited the University’s Spanish-language site, one of the largest translated websites in the U.S.

A Passion for the Power of Research

“One reason why I am so passionate about my work,” Tracey says, “is because research is powerful; it has the power to change lives. As a major research institution, UD is a critical incubator, an economic engine, a place where new ideas are being born and tested, where students are being taught critical thinking skills for solving problems and navigating a changing world. From the physicists to the physical therapists, they’ve kept me on my toes as we’ve journeyed through fascinating subjects, from zippy space particles – neutrinos – to the chemical stew rocketing out of hydrothermal vents, to the latest prosthetics to help wounded warriors return to an active, productive civilian life. And did you know that UD researchers were crucial to the invention of the Internet? Or that the touch-screen technology on your smartphone or tablet was invented at UD?”

"We have major initiatives under way in energy, the environment, health sciences and cybersecurity—areas important to all of us. And what's more," she adds, "Americans want to hear more about it. Four out of five Americans say they are interested in 'new scientific discoveries,' according to a recent National Science Foundation survey.

"Yet, most newspaper science sections have gone away. What's especially troubling about that is that the drumbeat has been sounding for the U.S. to step up its educational efforts in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) if our country wants to maintain its role as a leading innovator in the future. So we have to keep reminding people of the discoveries we're making, and keep science in the news."

Tracey's community service revolves around her church, where she sings in both the ensemble and the choir, and also has assisted with food for fundraisers. "My other community and volunteer activities have had a distinctly scientific bent," she says, "and, like my job, have served to help keep scientific discovery and innovation at the forefront of state and national interest." She helped the Delaware Museum of Natural History plan marine education programs for their Ocean Hall, and from 2003 through 2006, she served on the Biodiversity Partnership Outreach and Education Committee for the State of Delaware. Tracey adds, "I very much enjoyed a stint as a volunteer for Tri-State (Delaware and adjoining states) Bird Rescue and Research, an organization that not only saves injured birds but, for decades, has been an international leader in oil-spill response to rehabilitate and release oiled birds. And I often have been a judge for several science-related organizations as well as for statewide communications contests of other affiliates of the National Federation of Press Women."

Awards and Honors

A loyal member of Delaware Press Association and the National Federation of Press Women since 1997, Tracey has won many DPA and NFPW communications contest awards individually and some together with David Barczak, Pam Donnelly, and other of her "dream team" members. The awards have been for work on News and Feature Press Releases, Web Site Editing, Single-Sheet Posters, Education and Workforce Training, and Individual Achievement. She also has won the DPA contest sweepstakes first-place award once and took third place at least once. Even more impressive, she has won the NFPW first-place individual national sweepstakes award once and the NFPW third-place national sweeps award three times.

Additionally, Tracey has received more than 50 awards and honors for excellence in communication and public education from a variety of science and communications organizations such as

- The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education.
- The International Association of Business Communicators.
- NOAA and the National Sea Grant organization.
- The Society for Technical Communication International.
- The University of Delaware: Merit Awards.