

A man wearing a dark winter jacket and a grey beanie with a red dragon-like pattern is looking directly at the camera. He is standing in a snowy city at night, with blurred lights and buildings in the background. The overall mood is cold and urban.

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**AMERICAN VOYEUR**

BENOIT DENIZET-LEWIS (BSJ97) REPORTS  
FROM THE FRINGES OF OUR NATIONAL CULTURE

VITAMIN IMC  
DAVID SIROTA  
ALUMNI FACULTY

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versus the kind of things that derail your entire project, [reflecting on] what went right and what were the obvious problems that could have been avoided."

Last quarter Gilbert invited a computer science class to collaborate on an interdisciplinary project with his students. He considers such partnerships the way of the future.

It's not just the classroom instruction but also the classmates that guide Gilbert. "One of the things that has

Marla Showfer brought Kim Oster Holstein (MSJ90) back on campus to offer her Consumer Insight undergrads an exciting charge: research the lifestyle of college consumers and provide recommendations to help her gourmet pretzel company enter the market. [See page 5 for more on Holstein's company.]

"They brought 400 big fat gourmet pretzels and my students are going out and doing the research," Showfer says. "They're totally into it."

## "There are days when it feels almost like time travel to be teaching in the place where you were a learner."

proven very valuable about a Medill education is that so many of the people you meet go off and work in the media and related fields," he says. "It's really nice to be able to draw upon these people. I've turned to some of my former classmates and asked, 'When you're hiring, what do you need? How can I train my students to be valuable to you?'"

For example, Gilbert chats with a former classmate who works in Gannett's new media division. "We've talked a lot about whether you should teach specific technologies. He feels strongly that the key is to teach the students how to be adaptable and self directed in their learning, rather than becoming an expert in one kind of technology."

David Nelson calls upon his former classmate and close friend Arthur Rotstein (MSJ68), who heads up the Associated Press bureau in Tucson, Ariz. "His bureau is located within The Daily Citizen, and I've been sending students down there for years. He's the mother hen. Anytime a student is down there and having a little bit of an adjustment issue, it's Art Rotstein to the rescue."

### ROLE REVERSAL

The initial shock of being back sometimes takes time to get used to.

"Sometimes I expect to see the people I knew populating the campus," says Gilbert. "There are days when it feels almost like time travel to be teaching in the place where you were a learner."

Showfer (MSJ88) had a flashback last fall, returning as an IMC lecturer 20 years after graduating. As she unpacked, she stumbled across two old snapshots: her final project team gathered around a bulky Apple II in a tiny apartment, and the same group popping a bottle of champagne in a parking lot after the presentation. Those twin experiences, work and reward, now animate Showfer's teaching.

Kumar (MSJ03), teaches in room #127 on the third floor of the McCormick Tribune Center, (or "McTrib" in current student shorthand) where he was once a student. "I always look to the back of the room, where I used to sit, and it reminds me that I was a student not so long ago and that makes me a little more serious about what I'm doing," he says.

Indeed, the literal observation "I've been there" cropped up in multiple interviews. The instructors are aware of here and there and the distance between those points. It is a mere 10 yards, a blink of an eye, a flash of time, yet it is also an eternity, an exhaustive series of hard knocks and late nights, projects and paychecks, trials and triumphs.

McCarron was struck by those dual sensations when he began teaching the urban seminar in 2000. "It was as though everything had changed but nothing had changed," he says.

### RIDING THE RECESSION

Those kinds of experiences, delivered by well-connected, deeply-committed teachers, develop young professionals who are indispensable—in the best and worst of times.

They combine old and new, a mastery of timeless fundamentals executed with modern media. And they possess crucial soft skills, instructors say: a good attitude, a strong drive and an entrepreneurial spirit.

"A recession-proof journalist is someone who's mastered the basic skills—or original story ideas, deep reporting, clear writing, strong ethical judgment, good visual sense—while having the ability and flexibility to learn different ways to tell stories as new technology becomes available," says Jon Marshall (MSJ91), a lecturer.

Likewise, a recession-proof IMC professional knows how to get bang for every buck. "Return on investment is so critical to marketers in this economy," Showfer says. "If I'm spending my money, I want to know I'm targeting the right consumer and spending that money in a way that's going to show a measurable return on sales and investment. That's what everybody needs right now."

Instructors can name a host of recession-proof graduates. Take Brad Flora (MSJ08), who founded social bookmark that is thriving. Dan Fletcher (BSJ09) just got a job with Time. And Albert Lin (MSJ08) parlayed his summer residency and fluency in Mandarin into a position at DraftFCB in Shanghai.

Ultimately, Nelson says, a strong will finds a way. "Some things," like the economy, "you don't control. But you do control your destiny. If journalism is what you're called to do, you will get there."

And the wild ride might just wind you back to the place it launched. [M](#)



Esther Kang

## Vitamin IMC—Fighting Marketing Scurvy

by Stacy Cohen (MSIMC09) and Marina Molenda (MSIMC09)



It all began with a question: how can current IMC students educate marketers, potential students and companies about IMC? We wanted to offer a "fresh squeezed" perspective on marketing topics while educating the business world on the true definition of IMC. We needed a platform to show that IMC is the new and best approach to marketing communications by providing insights and analysis, illustrating best practices and analyzing cases where IMC should have been implemented. We required a format that allows for an interactive relationship, uses a channel that directly reached our diverse audience and is easily accessible. The answer to our question was the "Vitamin IMC" blog.

In December of 2008 we began developing the identity, mission and overall editorial and promotional strategy for Vitamin IMC. After posting some juicy content, the blog was launched February 5, 2009 to IMC students and faculty. This was followed by promotion and outreach to influential marketing bloggers. The content is written primarily by members of the blog team, with guest contributions by current IMC students and faculty. Written through an IMC lens, the posts discuss marketing hot topics and trends as well as insights from class.

A key part of the promotion strategy was utilizing social media to help generate word of mouth. We created a Twitter account (@VitaminIMC) and began to

follow and interact with social media and marketing tweeters. Tweets include alerts about new blog posts, interesting social media and marketing news and responses to other Tweeters. The Facebook fan page started as a way to get current and past IMC students involved. We post similar links as we do on Twitter, but we also encourage discussion by fans. Facebook provides an opportunity for Vitamin IMC to interact with readers and also for readers to interact with each other.

In just three months, Vitamin IMC acquired several hundred followers on Twitter from IMCers to social media marketers to companies such as TalentZoo, HubSpot, WeddingWire Deep Focus and Lotame. The blog is on the radar of and received positive feedback from top marketing bloggers (see sidebar). Vitamin IMC has a growing fan base on Facebook and a steady growth of email subscribers.

We're excited at the success we've seen in just a few short months and look forward to expanding our readership and influence. We hope the blog continues to grow along with the program and reflect the changing state of marketing. We want Vitamin IMC to establish a place in the marketing world as an interactive resource for both IMC students and innovative marketers. So visit the blog, leave your comments, and let us know what you think. We look forward to hearing from you.

Don't forget to take your vitamins! Stacy Cohen and Marina Molenda are the managing directors of Vitamin IMC.

Visit [vitaminimc.blogspot.com](http://vitaminimc.blogspot.com) or email [vitaminimc@gmail.com](mailto:vitaminimc@gmail.com).



[vitaminimc.blogspot.com](http://vitaminimc.blogspot.com)

## Vitamin Love

Nice job with the blog! And thanks for adding us to your blogroll. I tweeted a link to the blog earlier today! Keep up the great work!

Jackie Huba (author of *Citizen Marketers*) - Church of the Customer

It's a great blog and I added it to my own blogroll (while pruning some other dead links). I look forward to getting my RDA of IMC.

David Berkowitz (Director of Emerging Media & Client Strategy for 360i) - Inside the Marketers' Studio

Want to keep an eye on what your replacement is thinking about? Follow @VitaminIMC for dispatches from NU Medill's marketing grad students.

Greg Verdino (Chief Strategy Officer at Crayon) - GregVerdino.com

Great stuff! I'm especially interested because my son is in his first year at Northwestern in the School of Communication. Keep sending me stuff!!

Barbara Lippert (Editor at Large & Columnist) - AdWeek