

# Student reporters earn praise for New Hampshire Primary reporting



Franklin Pierce University students had the opportunity to immerse themselves in New Hampshire's First-in-the-Nation Presidential Primary, serving as pundits, pollsters, podcasters, video technicians and contributors to YouTube's political footage.

Student efforts were affirmed by the presidential candidates and their campaigns (who granted access and interviews), by the mainstream media (who treated student reporters and technicians as peers) and by web-based media including YouTube (whose political editor praised the video footage provided by the University).

"I don't know of any other college or university across the state that had the number of reporters getting up close to the candidates, asking questions and generating the volume of coverage that we produced," said Steven Dodrill a junior from Hanson, Mass. who served as the Pierce Media Group's political reporter and director of Fitzwater Connections, the program at the Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication that focuses on student involvement with the 2008 Presidential Campaign.

During the past year, Franklin Pierce students tracked the political winds, participated in professional polling and followed presidential hopefuls around the state. Students also engaged in robust debate – and asked tough questions – when candidates visited campus. The flurry of activity preceding the primary included capturing hundreds of hours of video and audio, crafting words into news stories, sending countless e-mails, and building solid relationships with campaign staff and local media.

On the day of the Primary, students arranged space at Franklin Pierce University's Manchester Center to serve as headquarters for news production. The set-up was complete with a video editing suite, a set for filming interviews, an assignment desk and a whiteboard where students scribbled furiously to record unfolding events.

Under the leadership of Dr. Kristen Nevious, director of the Fitzwater Center, and utilizing the training they received through Fitzwater Center programs, they sought and obtained press credentials and fanned into the streets. New Hampshire had become the focal



Heidi Hesse, a recent graduate of Wartburg College, and Liz Reedstrom, a senior at Wartburg, joined Franklin Pierce University students on the streets of Manchester, New Hampshire where they spoke with candidates and national media on the day of the state's Presidential Primary.



Steven Dodrill '09 coordinates teams of student reporters who covered candidates' post-primary speeches.


point for candidates and media from across the nation, and students had little trouble finding candidates and analysts to interview. Their hard work paid off in several significant accomplishments.

- ★ Franklin Pierce student media were selected by New Hampshire Public Television to provide video footage of the Dennis Kucinich, Bill Richardson and Rudolph Giuliani campaigns on Primary Night.
- ★ Franklin Pierce student reporters and videographers were selected by WMUR-TV, New Hampshire's ABC affiliate, to provide video news clips for the television station's YouTube page.
- ★ The Pierce Media Group's Political Reporter and Fitzwater Connections Director Steven Dodrill '09 was featured in the Boston Herald along with George Stephanopoulos, chief Washington correspondent for ABC News, and former CBS News Anchor Dan Rather.
- ★ Franklin Pierce students participated in pre-primary polling for the University's polling partnership with WBZ-TV in Boston. These polls were quoted nationally by mainstream media and political bloggers.
- ★ The University's YouTube channel, containing footage of candidate interviews, was ranked in the Top 100 most viewed YouTube channels for most of Primary Day.



When John McCain's Straight Talk Express bus rolled onto Franklin Pierce University's Rindge campus in November, Pierce Media Group reporter Brittany Bonesteel '08 was able to speak with the Republican presidential nominee – who was then a party candidate. McCain filmed a television commercial in the Paterson Television Studio at the Fitzwater Center, then spoke to an overflow crowd in Pierce Hall.

- ★ YouTube's political editor was so impressed with the quantity, quality and fast uploading of students' work that he offered Franklin Pierce a position as a "branded partner" and content provider for the popular video portal site.

Dr. Nevious praised the students for their work and said she looked forward to working with them on continuing political coverage as the general election approaches. "The Fitzwater Center and the University couldn't be more proud of your contributions to the robust debate that is so essential to a healthy democracy," she said. "Our country's future is in good hands." 



New Mexico Governor and former Democratic Presidential Candidate Bill Richardson spoke at Franklin Pierce University during his campaign. Here he poses for photos with Zachery Weight '08, president of the College Democrats at Franklin Pierce.



Student reporters were fully-credentialed members of the press who worked alongside national media to cover the candidates on Primary Day in New Hampshire.