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"Shonice will Participate in a Project that Explores the Role of Social Media in Developing and Terminating Romantic Relationships"

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Research and Creative Experience for Undergraduates (RCEU) Program

Faculty Mentor: **Pavica Sheldon**, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Arts, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Morton Hall 342, Huntsville AL 35899; ps0027@uah.edu, 256-824-2305

Project Summary: Shonice will participate in a project that explores the role of social media in developing and terminating romantic relationships. According to the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, in 2010 81% of divorce attorneys surveyed said that they had seen an increase in the number of divorces caused by something that happened on social media (Dolan, 2012). Another study (Clayton et al., 2013) found that high levels of Facebook use among college students could be attributed to Facebook-related conflict and break-up and divorce.

To our knowledge, only one study, authored by Fox, Warber, and Makstaller (2013), has tested how technology may be related to the way users experience and progress through the stages of relationship development as conceptualized by Knapp (1978). According to Knapp, most individuals go through five stages in order to develop a relationship. While a widely cited model among communication scholars, there has been little research empirically testing Knapp's model. Therefore, in this study we want to test the role of social media in the five stages individuals go through to develop the relationship and five stages they go through before they terminate relationships.

Student Prerequisites: The student needs to have a good understanding of social science research methods. An A grade in a social science research methods class is desirable.

Student Duties: The student will start the work by reviewing the relevant literature regarding social media's role in romantic relationships. Under my supervision, the student will conduct the

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surveys and focus groups with UAH students. After collecting and entering data, the student will assist with writing the results and discussion sections. At the end of the project, I expect that the student will have a 20-page scholarly article ready for presentation at a conference. Three students who worked with me on the RCEU in 2013, 2014, and 2015 presented their research results at a conference.

Mentor Supervision and Interaction: Shonice and I will meet in my office once or twice per week, and more often if necessary. The last two years we used a shared Dropbox folder to facilitate interpersonal communication, and that worked great. Every year I teach the student how to enter data into SPSS, and I show them how to analyze data. I will also provide additional material on how to write a scholarly article, including a literature review, methodology, and the results and discussion sections. I will help the student with the final presentation of the project. We will send the paper for presentation at a national conference.