

Lunch: Keynote & Awards**Friday, 12:15-2:00 pm****Stories with Purpose: Connecting Students with Communities through Film and Technology**
MICHELE FORMAN*Birmingham Ballroom*

Before we worried about screen time and social media consumption, we worried that our students were cloistered in the classroom and disconnected from the communities outside of campus. Telling stories has long been a way for us as humans to break down barriers, create connection, and foster understanding of another's experience. In a set of experiential courses at UAB, Media Studies students learn how to master the digital media tools they consume daily to make socially meaningful films, oral histories, and multimedia stories in partnership with communities in the Greater Birmingham, Alabama, region.



Michele is a documentary filmmaker who got her start as an executive in feature films. As Director of Development at Spike Lee's 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks, she was responsible for the acquisition and development of new projects, including *New Jersey Drive*, *Girl 6*, *Sula*, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, and *Summer of Sam*. In addition, Forman served as associate producer on Mr. Lee's Academy Award-nominated film *4 Little Girls*, a feature-length documentary for HBO about the bombing of the Sixteenth Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963.

Michele co-founded the UAB Media Studies Program in 2003 with the aim of using new media technologies to connect students with crucial community issues in the Greater Birmingham area. She loves teaching media and film history, as well as using the methods of documentary filmmaking, digital storytelling, oral history, and multimedia-based research to give students the chance to connect what they learn in the classroom with real-world experience.

Though she loves arthouse and non-fiction films, you can often find her checking out the latest heist movie at the multiplex.