

# JayMac

Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication Alumni Association



## **GAYLORD ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT** **Bradon Long, '16** **Meteorologist, Morning News** **Anchor at WPMT-FOX 43**

"The opportunities provided by the residents of Gaylord gave me the chance to skip an entire career step, not have to go to a small market and opened the venues into the wide role I play at my station today. All I did was say 'Yes,' to those opportunities and give them my all."

**Since a young age, Bradon Long knew he wanted to become a meteorologist.** This dream brought him to the University of Oklahoma, where he graduated in December 2016 with a bachelor's degree in journalism with minors in meteorology and international studies. Long recently reflected on his time at Gaylord College and the way it set him up for his career.

*What led you to journalism as a major, and what made you decide to add meteorology as a minor?*

Ever since I was 3 years old mimicking the weathercast I had seen earlier the same morning at Sunday School, I knew I wanted to be a meteorologist. My first vivid memory is of the blue skies of Northwest Oklahoma, throwing pinecones between chalk-drawn boxes on the concrete playing hopscotch with my mother. When we came inside, the massive 318-miles per hour monster F-5 tornado was ravaging Moore, Oklahoma. From then on, I knew everything I did was to attend the University of Oklahoma. I took the ACT test 12 times to get the highest

first internship at NewsOK.com where I earned my stripes as a multimedia journalist. By January 2016, with guidance from Boettcher, Dickey, Loy, Fischer, Orr and more, I beat out more qualified, older applicants (as well as a fellow student) and became an on-air meteorologist at KOKH-FOX25 in Oklahoma City because of Julie Jones' connection there (see how that loops around to NPPA with Julie?). It was technically an internship, but I was on-air each and every weekend in a top-50 market. I then transferred to KOKH's sister station - Tulsa's Channel 8 (KTUL-TV ABC), in a paid on-air role directly as a result of my gained experience. By September of 2016, with all of the experience gained because of opportunities supplied by Gaylord staff and faculty, I earned my job at WPMT-FOX43. I left in September, three months before graduating. My professors worked it out with me. The best statement came from Mike Boettcher. He said, "My job is to make sure you get a job. Your work is done." Comparatively speaking, it's the same size market as

score possible. I was involved in OU Nightly from the moment I stepped foot on campus. I was never afraid to venture into something new and try things out. After Yvette Walker landed me an internship at the Oklahoman, I made a decision. In this day and age, a meteorologist's first job would likely put them in a role where they had to perform as a journalist as well. There was much more value in majoring in journalism, learning the tricks of the trade from the best in the business at OU and only to minor in meteorology. It was the best decision I ever made and continues to pay off in my professional career now as a meteorologist, a morning news anchor, a sports host and as a franchise reporter.

*What is your favorite memory from your time at Gaylord College?*

The day-to-day with OU Nightly would be up there, as well as the true friendships I developed with faculty and staff that continue to grow to this day. The moment I earned my first job during my junior year, walking up to Bob Dickey, Bob Loy and Mike Boettcher to tell them I would be on-air at a major television station in Oklahoma City over a year before graduation because of their leadership and guidance was one of the best moments of my life. I felt like I actually belonged to a sacred fraternity for the first time.

*Did you have a favorite faculty/staff member at Gaylord?*

No. I have several that I could never wind down below this list. I will never make a career move without first consulting Mike Boettcher, Kathy Johnson and former OU staff member Bob Loy. Their guidance and friendship shape me into the man and journalist I am today. The amount I learned in class from Bob Dickey and Ken Fischer put me ahead of my competitors with years more experience than I. Melanie Wilderman helped me figure out who I am as a human being and the manner in which I hope to carry myself in the years to come. Kathy Sawyer spotted me from the start and guided me every step of the way in school. There are even more stories with Ed Kelley, Kathy Johnson, Elanie Steyn, Lee Reynolds, Barry Orr, Julie Jones and more that I could

Oklahoma City for my first full-time job. The opportunities provided by the residents of Gaylord gave me the chance to skip an entire career step, not have to go to a small market and opened the venues into the wide role I play at my station today. All I did was say "Yes," to those opportunities and give them my all.

*Describe your work at WPMT.*

I play a lot of roles at my station. I arrived in 2016 as the Weekend Meteorologist as well as a Morning Feature Reporter. However, I earned a promotion last year. I am the Weekday Morning Meteorologist and News Anchor of FOX43 Morning News at Nine, a brand new show created around myself and my co-anchor. It debuted in September 2018. I co-host a sport show called "High School Football Frenzy" in the fall, which just won a Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters Award (my first). I also created my own franchise segment called "Center Stage", which is a spotlight on local community theater. Otherwise, I do a number of promotable pieces throughout the year on a variety of news topics.

*What do you consider to be the most significant moments of your career so far?*

Listening to the stories of my community in Central Pennsylvania have truly proved more rewarding than I ever thought possible. I have reported on death. I've reported on heartbreak. I've interviewed Tony Award and Heisman Trophy winners. I have covered tornadoes, winter storms, devastating flooding. While being a member of the media in 2019 certainly has its challenges, I can't think of anything more rewarding than doing exactly what I am doing right now and being able to continue to grow this platform wherever it takes me.

*What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?*

Challenge yourself. Expand. Don't limit yourself to just one area. Be open. Take every opportunity possible provided to you in college. I would probably be in some dilapidated apartment, struggling to pay my bills and contemplating the meaning of life if

never narrow the massive love and kindness of the Gaylord faculty and staff to just one individual. It is not myself who can take the credit for any success - it is solely because of these particular Sooners.

*How did your career path lead you to WPMT?*

It all revolves around Gaylord faculty and staff. Let's go for a ride, shall we? Kathy Sawyer literally holding my hand in October 2014 as I made the switch to be a journalism major. Julie Jones invited me to work the NPPA yearly meeting in Norman on Spring Break 2015, where I learned that what many professionals were doing at the time wouldn't even earn a "C" in Bob Dickey's class. Melanie Wilderman asked me to serve on her staff at a high school news camp in the summer of 2015. That's where I met Yvette Walker. Yvette pushed me into my

not for all of the opportunities provided to me by the Gaylord staff and faculty. It's that simple. Take every opportunity given to you and give it your best shot. Be kind. Make friends with your classmates, your faculty and staff. It's a small world out there, so be the best you can be in every facet of your being.

*What do you do for fun outside of work?*

Lately, I've gotten back into golfing (which doesn't hurt when the bosses play too and you play tournaments representing the station). I enjoy reading my Agatha Christie mysteries, relaxing at a local vineyard and traveling as much as I can. It's hard to tune out of work. But, you have to find a balance. You can be passionate about your work while remembering who you are outside of it as well.



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