



**Jennifer Johnson Hicks, '02**  
**Editor for News Partnerships,**  
**The Wall Street Journal**

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During her 16 years at The Wall Street Journal, Jennifer Johnson Hicks has been at the forefront of transitioning the organization into the digital future. Hicks previously worked with the digital news and product teams before moving into her current role of bringing content to new audiences on various platforms. The 2002 University of Oklahoma graduate, who earned degrees in both journalism and political science, recently talked about her time on campus and career experiences.

**What is your favorite memory from your time in the journalism and mass communication program at OU?**

I loved moving seamlessly between the classroom and the OU Daily newsroom in Copeland Hall. We could be discussing beat coverage in Jack Willis's class or an ethical quandary with Dr. Craig and suddenly it would be highly relevant to the work we were doing to cover issues on campus. It was our syllabus coming to life.

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

There have been so many highlights, including the opportunity to work in London during a pivotal time for Europe's economy. But I'm most proud of my contributions in moving a 130-year-old news organization into the digital future. It's amazing to look back at the progress that's been made since we launched a website in 1996, and it gives you the energy to take on the next big challenges and opportunities.

**How did your time at OU prepare you for your future career?**

Perfectly! I felt extremely prepared to work in a professional newsroom after graduating from OU. But I can't stress enough how important it is to pair those journalism fundamentals you learn in class with some kind of real-world experience.

**What advice would you give to**

**Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member in the program?**

From the moment I stepped on campus until the day I graduated, Jack Willis and Susan Sasso were amazing mentors. Even as an untested freshman, they ushered me toward new opportunities and helped me build confidence in myself and my abilities as a journalist. I've leaned on Jack's wisdom—from his keen news judgment to his management style—nearly every day of my professional career.

**How did your career path lead you to The Wall Street Journal?**

I was fortunate to land at the Journal early in my career. After graduating from OU, I went to New York to get my master's at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism and from there went to work as the assistant night editor at The Muskogee Phoenix for six months. When an entry-level editing role became available at the Journal, I jumped at the opportunity. It's crazy to think I've been there for 16 years now. I don't feel that old!

**Describe your role at The Wall Street Journal.**

I lead our partnership efforts in the newsroom. My role is to bring our incredible journalism to new audiences on platforms like Apple News, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and more. This requires close collaboration across the newsroom and with our product and technology teams, but also with my commercial colleagues. This role leans on many aspects of my previous jobs leading the digital news and product teams at the Journal.

**current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?**

Because of the virus and its repercussions, you'll probably be entering one of the most difficult economic environments in recent memory, particularly for the media industry and local news. But it's also a world that urgently needs what you can provide: deep reporting, factual information and clear communication. My advice is to be persistent, be patient and don't let rejection get you down. Keep chipping away and building on each opportunity that comes your way to get where you want to go.

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

When these lockdowns end and life gets back to normal, I'm really looking forward to traveling again with my husband. We had to put some big trips on hold and can't wait to get them back on the calendar. I'm using this time inside to revisit some of my other hobbies, like creating new recipes in the kitchen and researching my family tree. And organizing—and reorganizing—my Brooklyn apartment. I've also had a lot of hilarious Zoom chats with friends and family.

**Are there any other organizations or projects you're involved with outside of your full-time job that you want to highlight?**

Dow Jones News Fund is near and dear to my heart. Being a DJNF copy editing intern at The Boston Globe the summer after my junior year was one of the most memorable experiences outside of Norman and gave me valuable time in a professional newsroom. I'm now proud to serve as one of the Fund's alumni advisers.



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