

JayMac

Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication Alumni Association



GAYLORD ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

“The things I learned in my short period of time there have been so helpful to me throughout my career.”

KARISSA CONDOIANIS

Senior Vice President, Public Relations, State Fair of Texas
Dallas, TX

Howdy, folks! With OU-Texas just around the corner, thousands of Sooner fans will soon flock to the Cotton Bowl, located right in the heart of the State Fair of Texas. Our very own 2003 journalism alumna Karissa Condoianis serves as the Senior Vice President, Public Relations for the State Fair. Read on for her perspective on her Gaylord experience and public relations career. **And be sure to join us at the Gaylord College OU-Texas Party**, held Friday, October 5 from 5-7 p.m. at Moroch Partners (3625 N. Hall St., Suite 1100, Dallas, TX 75219). RSVP to Lee Reynolds at leereynolds@ou.edu.

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

Aside from the many, many broadcasts on News4Norman and all the wonderful people I worked with during my time at Gaylord and OU, I would have to say the opportunity to travel to Switzerland to study at the International Academy of Broadcasting. It opened my eyes to so many things and

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

That’s a tough one. I’ve had some pretty incredible moments in my career so far. Through my work with Highland Capital, I had the opportunity to be on the platform at the ringing of the Opening Bell at the New York Stock Exchange. Through my work with BeautiControl and Tupperware Brands, I was able to attend New York Fashion Week several times and helped empower women throughout our great nation. Through my work over these last 5 years at the State Fair, we have held the most successful Fairs in history and given millions of dollars in college scholarships, in funding and support to our local community, and to help preserve our historic home, Fair Park.

The moment that changed my life was taking that message from the State Fair of Texas. I mean, who gets an email through LinkedIn asking if they are interested in hearing about an opportunity to manage public relations for

helped me grow as a person. The things I learned in my short period of time there have been so helpful to me throughout my career.

Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member at Gaylord College?

He's not there anymore, but I would have to say Dr. Tim Hudson. He helped give me confidence in my work and future and helped guide a lot of us safely through Europe when we studied abroad.

Describe your role at the State Fair of Texas.

I am currently the senior vice president of public relations for the great State Fair of Texas. As spokesperson for the Fair, I oversee all media relations and outreach functions, including development, planning, and strategic oversight of all public relations efforts, and I am also involved in the organization's community initiatives, including management of the Fair's scholarship program. We've awarded nearly \$5.4 million in college scholarships during my tenure to students throughout the Lone Star State. I also serve on the management team of the State Fair helping set the overall direction for the organization. During the Fair, I oversee all public relations, media relations, and guest services functions of the event, our walkaround mascot, Little Big Tex, and even the voice of Big Tex. I have two full-time team members year-round and leading up to and during the Fair I have approximately 90 seasonal folks on my team.

How did your career path lead you to the State Fair?

Oh my. I've had quite the career so far. While I was still in school at OU, I took jobs with ESPN and ABC Sports working different sporting events on the weekends and worked as an associate producer for News 9 in Oklahoma City. The summer before my senior year of college, I interned at Fox Sports Southwest in the Dallas area and thankfully they hired me to join the team as a production assistant after graduation in 2003. I worked there for several months and then decided to make the jump to the corporate world to gain the ability to move

someone was playing a trick on me at first. This was a dream job! I had to Google my current boss to ensure he and the opportunity were real. Several interviews later, the job was mine! And now, several years later we are continuing to host a world-class event for millions of people each year – nearly 200,000 of those were on OU-TX last year – and helping to make a huge difference in our community and throughout the Lone Star State.

What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in public relations?

Take on every opportunity with passion! Get as much hands-on experience in as many different areas of our field as you can. It helps make you more well-rounded and you never know what doors it could open for you. I always tell my team to lead with "yes." We try to make any request happen and go into everything we do with an optimistic outlook. I believe it makes us stronger as a team and the media and other partners we work with have come to rely on my team and know that we can be counted on to deliver great results.

Who's going to win OU-Texas this year?

The Sooners, of course! The Red River Showdown is the one of the biggest rivalries in college football. The atmosphere of holding this game in the heart of the State Fair of Texas is like nothing I've ever experienced before, whether it has been as a fan attending the Fair and the game or now as an employee of the State Fair of Texas. It is something I look forward to every year. Being a proud OU grad, I of course am cheering for our Sooners and always hoping for that W, but each year I just hope for a great game for all fans to enjoy. I love standing on the sidelines and looking up at the stands to see my OU (and even some Texas) friends waving back at me. The division of crimson and burnt orange in Cotton Bowl Stadium is like nothing I've ever seen. In addition, my husband is a Longhorn, so we have quite the rivalry in our household and look forward to this game day every year.

out of my parent's house. I worked my way up at a Dallas-based investment firm, Highland Capital Management, L.P. for about seven years to manage marketing, advertising, and public relations efforts within their retail products division. I was then hired by BeautiControl, a subsidiary of Tupperware Brands – yes, that Tupperware – to manage marketing and public relations. Four years later, I was recruited through LinkedIn by the now-president of the State Fair of Texas. I feel like everything in my education and career has led me to this opportunity. As I approach Opening Day of my fifth State Fair of Texas (as an employee) I continue to feel humbled by this opportunity and know that I am a steward of this incredible organization and event. I hope to leave my mark while here and help to pass along this 132-year tradition to future generations.



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