



**Koby Harrington, '09 & '11**  
**Assistant Vice President for Development,**  
**Oklahoma City University**

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Koby Harrington makes a lasting impact wherever he goes. He has a magic all of his own starting with a legacy as campus leader while an undergraduate at the University of Oklahoma to an executive at the Walt Disney World Company to currently raising funds for Oklahoma City University. The two-time OU graduate, who earned a public relations degree in 2009 and a master's degree in human relations in 2011, recently shared about his career journey, his time at OU and more.

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

I have many great memories as both a student and alumnus at Gaylord. As a public relations major there were many opportunities for group assignments, which connected me with fellow classmates, many of whom I keep in touch with to this day. I remember long days and late nights of group work (utilizing the then brand-new computer

I then had the opportunity to serve as the director of advancement for the Beta Theta Pi Foundation, a nonprofit that supports more than 10,000 undergraduate students on 140 college campuses across North America currently participating in Beta Theta Pi. Today I am the assistant vice president for development at Oklahoma City University. I lead a team of gift officers at OCU as we work to advance the mission of the university.

**Describe your current role.**

Oklahoma City University is a private liberal arts and sciences university. OCU is a leader in private education, located in the heart of Oklahoma City. It offers small class sizes and highly individualized and personal attention from faculty. OCU has been an integral part of Oklahoma City for nearly 120 years. My role as assistant vice president is to help advance the mission and priorities of the university by

lab and study rooms of Gaylord Hall) to perfect client campaigns, portfolios and other assignments. An added benefit to those long hours were the comradery and bonds formed with classmates as we worked together. The experiences taught me not only about the practice of public relations, but maybe even more importantly, how to work with others and contribute effectively in team settings... something that has served me well to this day.

Speaking of Gaylord Hall, it was brand new during my days as an undergraduate (Phase II was still under construction), and I have memories of how excited and proud faculty, staff and students were to be utilizing all the bells and whistles of such a state-of-the-art facility. We had the best academic building on campus (still do in my opinion), and I remember feeling so fortunate and appreciative to walk through those doors each day.

As an alumnus I am always proud to show off Gaylord College. During my time as an OU staff member, I often gave campus tours to both prospective students and returning alum. During tours I often went out of my way to do a quick walk through of Gaylord Hall with them and share a little bit about the excellent faculty, staff and students in the College of Journalism.

**Do you have a favorite faculty or staff member from the college?**

I don't think I could pick a favorite. I remember always looking forward to David Tarpending's lectures as he shared his personal experiences in the field and his knowledge and insights. I enjoyed Maureen Taylor's classes and the energy and humor that she brought to each lecture. Dr. Carstarphen was always generous with her time and so kind and genuine (she was a Camp Crimson namesake when I was on the student staff, and it was so fun to get to know her through that lens as well). Dr. Tsetsura was my capstone professor. We had a small class (around seven of us) and only one client, so I benefited from getting to learn from Dr. Tsetsura in a small group environment. I appreciated her dedication and the attention she paid our class among all her other responsibilities.

**How did your career path lead you to your current job?**

I have been very lucky in my career to

leading a team of gift officers responsible for securing philanthropic support from OCU alumni and friends.

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

While I can't think of just a moment, I feel fortunate to have found meaningful work that has allowed me to play into my strengths and continues to challenge me to learn and grow as a professional. Nonprofit work can certainly be challenging, but it is also very rewarding. I think the significance comes into play when I think about all the generous people I have connected with in my 10+ years of advancement work in higher education, and the transformational support they've provided to thousands of students through scholarships, experiences and more. Playing a role in helping to orchestrate this impact is really special, and something I don't take for granted. In July 2021 I received my Certified Fundraising Executive accreditation (CFRE).

**How did Gaylord College prepare you for your future career?**

My Gaylord education prepared me in a multitude of ways. I was challenged to think critically, encouraged to be creative and overall equipped with a baseline of knowledge and experience that prepared me to move into the professional arena. Specifically, I feel like I use my communication and writing skills often in the work that I do. As I mentioned earlier, the collaborative group work at Gaylord provided experience and preparation for the team settings I have experienced in my career as well as working with a board of directors.

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

Commit to fully engaging in your experience at Gaylord and the university during your time as a student. This means seeking out opportunities that will challenge you to learn and grow as a leader. For me, that meant applying for leadership roles both inside and outside of Gaylord College. I learned a great deal through my involvement in CAC, Greek Life and Camp Crimson alongside my academic studies at Gaylord. As you aspire to a career in mass communication you can set yourself up for success now by

work for organizations that I believe in and admire. After I graduated with my degree from the College of Journalism, I began a graduate assistantship in OU Student Life as I pursued my Master of Human Relations. As part of the internship component of the MHR program I applied and was accepted into a professional internship in management at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, which turned into a full-time role with the Disney Company. I learned so much about effective leadership while working for Disney and was able to apply these skills to my next career move, which was back at OU, where I spent seven years on the OU staff-- first in Student Affairs then in University Development.

engaging in organizations and opportunities that will set you apart when it comes time to begin looking for internships and jobs.

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

I enjoy spending as much time as possible with my family. My wife Sarah works at OU as a Student Success Coach and we have two boys, Jacob (4) and Grant (1). We love living in Norman and you can usually find us at a local park, restaurant or around campus as we frequent OU sporting events and activities.

I also enjoy running and am training for a half-marathon.



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