



## **Matt Marks, '18** **Graduate Director at the OU Food Pantry**

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While a student in Gaylord College, Matt Marks was a key part of bringing the OU Food Pantry to campus. This resource aims to address food insecurities and is free for OU students, faculty, and staff who are in need of nutrition assistance. Marks is currently pursuing a master's degree at OU and is still involved at the pantry as its graduate director. The broadcast journalism graduate recently shared some thoughts about his time as a Gaylord student, the growth of the food pantry and more.

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

There were many fun memories from my time in Gaylord, but one that sticks out is covering the teacher walkout in April 2018. Each Monday around that time, my fellow journalists Jaron Spor, Reagan Ledbetter, and I would head up to the Oklahoma Capitol and cover the news of the day. We called ourselves “the Capitol Crew” and it was

service. I knew this was right up my alley. It took a year to plan and prepare but in March 2017, we opened our doors. Since then we have had 5,500+ visits to the pantry and our numbers have grown rapidly this fall semester alone.

### **Why did you decide to continue your involvement with the food pantry through graduate school?**

I enjoyed what I was doing as an undergrad and I wasn't ready to be done just yet. It was the right job to take on, and it allowed myself to work with an amazing group of undergrads who wanted to give back and serve our community.

### **If OU alumni would like to be involved with the food pantry, are there opportunities to do so?**

We always can use the support whether that be monetary donations or dropping off canned items. We rely entirely on the support from the OU

an amazing experience to connect with other journalists and get an inside look at Oklahoma politics.

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

Every faculty/staff member I have come in contact with has played a role in my college career. I do want to give a shoutout to David “Tarp” Tarpenning as he was my Intro to Mass Communications professor. While he may not know it, he was a mentor for me throughout my time at Gaylord. After taking his class I would stop by his office periodically and chat with him about classes, news or what was going on in life. I really appreciated those times and his friendship.

**What have you been up to since graduation?**

I still haven't left OU mostly because I love it so much. I am finishing up my master's degree in Adult and Higher Education with an emphasis on Intercollegiate Athletics Administration. I will be graduating (again) from OU in May 2020.

**Talk about the creation of the OU Food Pantry. Why did you want to be involved with it, and what was the process like? How has the community responded?**

I began working with the food pantry when it was just an idea. Back in 2016, I was the Executive Assistant to our SGA President Daniel Pae and VP Michael Lutter. After one of our meetings they asked me if I wanted to head up a task force with some of our cabinet members to develop a plan to get a pantry to the university. I was thrilled to take up this task because my involvement in high school centered around food drives and community

community and beyond. If anyone has questions or wants to help support us they can email us at [oupantry@ou.edu](mailto:oupantry@ou.edu).

**What advice would you give to current students in Gaylord College?**

I would offer up two pieces of advice. Enjoy every moment because it goes fast and get involved early. When I look back at my time at OU I wish I had gotten involved with all that Gaylord offered when I was a freshman and sophomore. I was late to the game, but still enjoyed every opportunity that I was a part of.

**What are your plans or goals for after you finish your master's degree?**

When I graduate I plan to combine both my bachelor's and master's degrees and work as a sports broadcaster/announcer within an athletics program. Ideally I would love to stay at OU in some capacity because I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here, but wherever I end up I am hoping to work within athletics.

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

The hands-on experience, the learning environment and the professors are top notch and help make Gaylord College one of the best in the country. The professors prepare you for what the “real world” holds, and I can't thank Bob Dickey, Ken Fischer, Mike Boettcher and so many others enough for their guidance and mentorship. Gaylord College from day one lets you start being a journalist and building your professional career. It's an incredible program that gave me great lifelong memories and experiences. I am thankful that I chose OU and that I have my degree from Gaylord College.



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