



Samaiyah Islam, '12
Communications and PR Program Manager,
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Samaiyah Islam recognizes the positives that can come from change. For her, the most significant moments of her career have come in such moments, and that includes her openness to various jobs within the communications industry. Originally on a public relations path, the 2012 Gaylord College graduate worked in digital marketing before returning to PR, currently working for Feed the Children in Oklahoma City. Islam recently reflected on her time at OU, career experiences and more.

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

Wow, I have so many great memories. Everything from attending PRSSA and Ad Club meetings to working late nights with my friends in the upstairs computer lab. However, my absolute favorite memory is the opportunity I had with the British Media study abroad program. I definitely had a blast traveling through

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

Many of the significant moments in my career have come from change. Whether it's change within an organization or change within a long time campaign I had been working on, I have had to be flexible and take situations as they come. In those moments, you have to be able to step back, assess what you have been doing and make your own changes for success. Through those moments, I have learned about leadership and trusting my own voice.

How did Gaylord College prepare you for your future career?

Not only did Gaylord College teach me the fundamentals of writing and practicing public relations, but it also taught me about the importance of networking. Networking can seem like a big scary thing for those who are

London, Bristol and Paris with great classmates and faculty tour guides. Through this program, I was able to learn more about the BBC, SkyNews, The Guardian, as well as visit PR and Ad agencies like Edelman and Ketchum. It was an incredible experience that shaped how I view different cultures.

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

I was really fortunate to get to know Dean Joe Foote and Dr. Ralph Beliveau through the British Media program, as well as Pritch Pritchard when I went to New York with OU PRSSA. They were always available for professional advice and wanted to help in any way they could. Through my travel experiences with them, they taught me the importance of building a great portfolio, as well as how to be more comfortable speaking about my professional experience with confidence.

How did your career path lead you to Feed the Children?

After working with a few digital marketing agencies in the city as a social media specialist and content marketer, I was ready to get back to my roots as a PR practitioner. I also really wanted to spend time generating awareness around important issues that affect our society today. I needed a breath of fresh air, and the nonprofit world was something I wanted to explore. When I saw the job posting for a media relations position at Feed the Children, I immediately jumped on the opportunity. At the time, I had gotten my degree with a public relations focus but had veered off into digital marketing, which ended up being really great for my career. I was able to bring my digital marketing experience to the position I have today within Feed the Children and look at public relations through a different lens.

Describe your role at Feed the Children.

As a communications and PR program manager for Feed the Children, you do a lot! In my small - but mighty - public relations team that handles both the U.S. and international side of our organization, I handle media relations as well as internal communications. Externally, I work with Feed the Children's corporate and community partners to generate awareness around our distribution events and the issue of

naturally reserved. However, you don't realize you are networking every day while you're a student. You are networking with peers and professors all the time. I've made great connections through Gaylord College that I value today.

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

One piece of advice I'd give to aspiring students is to never be afraid to jump around and try something new. Mass communication is a broad field, and just because you start on one track, it doesn't mean that you have to stay on that track. I jumped from public relations to digital marketing and back to public relations again. It never hurts to try your hand at many different professions within the field. Many of the great professionals I know started in the newsroom as a journalist and switched over to public relations. As a PR practitioner, you may be called on to execute various jobs that's not within the traditional public relations scope.

What do you do for fun outside of work?

I love to hang out with my friends and family. If the current pandemic has taught me anything, it has taught me to cherish the ones that I love. After not being around many people over the past couple of years, I just want to see them all the time! When we are together, we explore different parts of Oklahoma City by trying new restaurants, boutique shops and museums. I also enjoy reading books of all kinds and I am a part of a great book club that meets every month.

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

This year, I have the pleasure of serving as president for the Public Relations Society of America's Oklahoma City chapter (PRSA-OKC). PRSA-OKC focuses on educating, advancing and connecting local public relations, marketing and communications professionals in the Oklahoma City metro. I have been a member for more than five years and have been lucky to be on the Board of Directors for four years. I was introduced to PRSA-OKC through my time at Gaylord when I was heavily involved with OU PRSSA. However, it wasn't until I started my

childhood hunger. In my five years with Feed the Children, I have had the pleasure of working with many of the families we serve to tell their story. I often use their experiences with food insecurity and poverty to develop a story to pitch to local and national media. Internally, I handle communications around our disaster response, our staff newsletters and our employee town halls. It can be a lot depending on the time of year, but I have a great team that supports our communication efforts.

PR-focused job with Feed the Children that I became more involved. It has been a wonderful learning experience! I have gotten the chance to explore my social media expertise, network and learn important leadership skills. I highly encourage all mass communication students, especially those in the PR field, to check out our chapter programming and networking opportunities. We are a great group of professionals who can help lead young professionals in the right direction.



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