

Q1. What is your favorite part about your current position? How did you get to where you are now?

*As communication and media coordinator at the University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs (IGPA), I have the privilege of working with some of the nation's top scholars in public policy. I enjoy learning about new things every day: from the state's fiscal policy to Chicago's residential segregation to the effects of climate change on Illinois, there's always new evidence to absorb. And, my job lets me be creative in translating and packaging these important new research findings to help policymakers and leaders make informed decisions. I get to work with journalists, legislators, and advocates to help inform democracy; it feeds my passion for public service. I moved into my current position over the past six years. I started out as a communication assistant while earning my graduate degree. After moving to Chicago, I was fortunate enough to continue working at IGPA, and expanded my role as I gained experience and skills. My graduate degree in communication helps me every day. I learned so much about academic research, strategic communication, and public policy as a graduate student. It gives me credibility and confidence. I would say I got to where I am now by being proactive; when I see a problem or challenge to be solved, I never hesitate to suggest ideas and take on responsibility to get it done.*

Q2. What did you enjoy most about being a communication major at UIUC?

*As a graduate student at U of I, I was given so many opportunities to challenge myself in new and interesting ways. First and foremost, as an instructor of CMN 111-112. I absolutely loved teaching and continue to conduct public speaking and writing workshops for public officials and college students today. The professors I worked with in my program are some of the most renowned scholars in the country, but are down-to-earth and supportive. The department was collegial and fun, and I made lifelong friends. I also appreciated the diversity of content. I took courses in globalization; the history of telecommunication; statistics; law, and so much more. I left with a strong understanding of the many perspectives and new research in the communication field.*

Q3. What advice would you give to current communication students about the professional realm?

*Always take advantage of opportunities to continue learning. No one is going to lead you to more knowledge; it's on you to continue reading about your field, meeting new people, asking smart questions and volunteering for new experiences. Find those blogs and news sites and Twitter accounts that are shaping the conversation in your field, and stay up-to-date on new developments. If your boss offers you the chance to take a professional development course or attend a conference, give her an enthusiastic YES. Every manager loves a proactive professional who lives up to her word. And, treat everything you write like that big final paper for your favorite professor. Proof read, ask for feedback from a trusted colleague, and proof read again. You may not get a grade at the end, but think of your work as a reflection of everything you accomplished at U of I, and keep building on it every day.*

