

Sara Freeland, APR

Education

University of Georgia,
ABJ, Journalism

Middle Georgia State
University,
MA, Technical and
Professional Writing

Accreditation in
Public Relations

Hootsuite certificate
in social marketing

Honors

National Award of
Excellence, PRSA
Silver Anvil Awards,
“Most Effective
Campaign on a
Shoestring” for UGA
summer enrollment
campaign

Phoenix Award, Most
Effective Campaign
on a Shoestring for
UGA enrollment cam-
paign, PRSA Georgia

PRSA Georgia PRSA
Georgia Forty under
40 list, 2020

Chapter Champion,
PRSA Georgia, April
2023, for volunteer
work

University of Georgia, Athens, Ga.

Communications director, UGA Instruction, 2021-2024

- Oversaw communications and marketing for university and statewide audiences for 20+ units. Developed strategic communications plans to maintain brand messaging and reviewed analytics to ensure ROI and project success.
- Led statewide marketing campaigns for summer enrollment and financial aid deadlines. Administered summer semester campaign to increase student enrollment by 5% annually. Planned campaign from emails to display ads, stickers to videos, while monitoring enrollment numbers to reach the goal of 5% increase in enrollment a year. Received statewide and national awards for campaign’s strategy and effectiveness, planning everything from emails to display ads, stickers to videos. Received statewide and national awards for campaign strategy and effectiveness.
- Managed a staff of four: writers, videographers and designers. Assigned work. Gave clear directions, expectations and deadlines. Worked to ensure quality products were produced. Sent work for approvals.
- Revamped logo approval process to better track numbers and compliance to better ensure all products—from T-shirts to speeches—look and sound like UGA.
- Planned and executed events, including lunch & learns and retirements, incorporating photo slideshows and photo books made by my team.
- Launched new websites, employee handbook, and a lunch & learn series.
- Directed internal communication, including monthly email updates to faculty, staff, and students. Redesigned and revamped faculty newsletter to maximize readability and open rate. Created editorial calendar and wrote or edited all content while updating lists of contacts to ensure timeliness, accuracy and keep key stakeholders informed. Launched staff newsletter to better centralize news among staff in locations across campus and the state. Newsletter highlighted thought leadership, new employees, news and training opportunities. Led to increased attendance at staff events.
- Web manager for 20+ university websites. Provide daily support and troubleshooting. Launched three websites in the first five months of the job while retiring underutilized websites. Review analytics to inform user experience and search engine optimization.
- Led design and promotions for informative advising checklists encouraging students to go beyond academics to be well-rounded students. Designed the lists and built website for the lists for advisors to embed on other sites across campus. Promoted project.
- Led a marketing campaign for a national survey. Wrote plan, timetable, task list, strategy, goals, implementation and more for the university to administer the survey.
- Revitalized annual report to include highlights and impacts from all reporting units. The report also emphasized the division’s nationwide thought leadership.
- Made presentations and wrote speeches for leadership.
- Served on university-wide committees (First-Year Odyssey, Instruction Advisory Council, Strategic Communications) and planned instruction awards for faculty.

Public relations professional, UGA Marketing & Communications, 2016-2021

- Overhauled the UGA news release distribution system to focus on targeted media lists, shifting to a pitching model. Analyzed previous years’ news release data and implemented new standards.
- Sent news releases. Created and updated media lists. Pitched statewide & national stories.
- Compiled monthly and annual reports on UGA news mentions and trends.
- Wrote news releases and feature stories as needed.
- Assigned projects to writers, designers, photographers and videographers.
- Oversaw student profiles.

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Public relations coordinator, UGA Public Affairs, 2013-2016

- Handle media relations, strategic messaging, and crisis communications for university.
- Send news releases to targeted outlets
- Oversaw news release distribution for 17 of UGA's colleges and units.
- Build and maintain relationships with local and national reporters and media. Create media lists.
- Write communications plans for projects and overall strategic goals.
- Manage UGA Today website. Post news and photos to website. Update as needed.
- Edit research stories to make easy to read and understand.
- Plan and host orientation for all new university communicators.
- Host trainings and give best practice updates to campus communicators. Host workshops on pitching, lede writing and headlines; Maintain communications listservs.
- Supervise projects, writers and graduate students. Serve on committees as needed.

UGA Master Calendar Manager, 2009-2013

- Managed UGA's calendar of campus events.
- Oversaw a website redesign to highly praised, more up-to-date website.
- Led a campaign to increase calendar's visibility and campus use. Campaign included presentations, training sessions, one-pagers and more. (Usage increased more than 200 percent as a result of redesign).

Writer, UGA Public Affairs, 2007-2012

- Wrote news and feature stories for the university. Wrote assigned stories and came up with own story ideas.
- Assigned photos to university photographers and found art to go with all stories.
- Worked with designers and editors.
- Edited stories and releases.
- Worked with communicators for planning and promotion across university products.
- Supervised and mentored student employees.

Volunteer experience

CASE, volunteer judge for international awards, 2023-2024

PRSA, volunteer judge for Phoenix Awards, 2023-2024

PRSA Georgia, website committee, chair, 2022-2023

Athens Road Runners, communications director, (2018-2020)

- Served in a leadership capacity for large local running group and non-profit.
- Managed communications for the group: Sent Mailchimp emails, answered email and social media questions, ran social media for group, scheduled posts, introduced an Instagram account, got Facebook page to 1,000 likes.
- Oversaw quarterly newsletter, event planning, logo and branding.
- Introduced member recognition program, annual survey and annual report.

Skills

- Strategic Communications
- Media Relations
- Crisis Communications
- Project Management
- Brand Management
- Digital and Social Media Marketing
- Team Leadership and Development
- Content Planning and Creation
- Event Planning and Coordination
- SEO and Web Analytics
- Internal Communications
- Public Speaking and Presentations
- Executive communications
- Public relations
- Marketing
- Strategy
- Analytics
- Reports

Professional memberships

- Public Relations Society of America
- American Marketing Association
- Georgia Education Advancement Council
- Council for Advancement and Support of Education