

Public Affairs Communications

Grady  College

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



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Overview

Public Affairs Communications (PAC) is an important field that has received little attention by the academic community nationwide but will soon be a major focus at the University of Georgia, anchored by its venerable Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. Grady College has prepared generations of public affairs leaders, and thanks to a generous gift from PAC veteran and Grady alumna Carolyn Caudell Tieger, the college is creating a singular program to prepare students exclusively for success in public affairs communications. While there are numerous public affairs programs throughout the U.S., Grady believes its offering is the first to focus solely on the communications skills required for success in the career field.

The Carolyn Caudell Tieger Professor of Public Affairs Communications, which will ultimately become a chair, will teach, mentor and engage in professional outreach and lead a program laser-focused on Public Affairs Communications. Expected to join the Grady faculty in 2016, The Tieger Professor will also oversee a new certificate in PAC, which will document students' specialization in the study of Public Affairs Communications through course work and experiential learning.

What is Public Affairs Communications?

Grady College uses this definition:

Public Affairs Communications is the backbone of public policy, politics and advocacy. It is a specialized communications skill set aimed at educating, driving or changing public opinion around public policy, legislation, issues or political candidates. It includes skills such as understanding and executing public opinion research, advocacy or political campaigns, grassroots and ally development, opinion writing, advocacy advertising and new media mobilization, among others.

Public Affairs Communications provides an extraordinary career path that is intellectually and financially rewarding. It is one that provides students with opportunities to make a real difference in shaping how voters, corporations, and influential organizations engage in policy, politics and issues.

Public Affairs Communications at Grady College will help students understand how government operates, and how it serves citizens, locally and nationally. Students will be exposed to leaders and issues in PAC, hands-on training, experience-building internships, and the opportunity to see first-hand how policy and legislation are made and influenced.

PAC Program Elements

Professorship

The Carolyn Caudell Tieger Professorship in Public Affairs Communications has been established to provide students with training in the strategy and practice of Public Affairs Communications focused on policy and politics. The professor will be responsible for developing and growing the program, including leading a certificate component of the PAC program and a cohort of students with interests in PAC. The Professor will have extensive experience in the field, teach a range of PAC courses and serve as an expert public voice in issues relating to Public Affairs Communications.

PAC Program Elements

New Courses in PAC

Three new courses will offer a unique understanding of the profession, as well as specialized skills, concepts and principles informing the practice of Public Affairs Communications:

Introduction to Public Affairs Communications – ADPR 3860 (3 hours)

This course describes the field and the role of public affairs and advocacy in shaping public policy, legislation and politics. It also covers career opportunities and the strategies, tools, and techniques of historical advocacy campaigns. Students will gain an introduction to the field and complete assignments designed to develop strategic thinking and apply the tools available to public affairs professionals—developing message tracks, writing an opinion editorial, developing a white paper on a PA issue, interpreting polling data, and creating an advocacy advertisement and supporting media buy, among other assignments.

Advanced Public Affairs Communications – ADPR 3960 (3 hours)

This course provides an in-depth study into Public Affairs Communications and will offer a hands-on opportunity for students to bring their classroom learning to the real world. Students will explore the elements and tools of a comprehensive public affairs or political campaign and how to use them strategically to create, implement and measure a successful campaign. Guided by the PAC professor, students will develop a proposal for a full-scale campaign for an issue, policy or legislation, or political candidate. They will also learn about the professional principles, ethics and law related to public affairs and politics.

Topics in Public Affairs Communications – ADPR 5940 (3 hours)

This course allows students to focus on one essential PAC topic at a time. Varied semester topics might include: (a) the role of polling data in public affairs/politics (b) famous case studies in public affairs/political campaigns (c) advocacy advertising and media buying in public affairs and political campaigns (d) earned media in public affairs and politics (f) crisis management and public affairs, among others.

PAC Program Elements

New Grady-SPIA Interdisciplinary Certificate

This innovative program of study will package the above courses and others in a new interdisciplinary certificate at UGA—one of the first of its kind—that prepares students with applied skills in the area of Public Affairs Communications and politics. The new certificate, beginning fall 2016, offers two tracks: (1) Public Affairs Communications and (2) Applied Politics. The certificate is designed to offer a competitive professional advantage to students majoring in both colleges who want to combine their interests in communications and politics.

Serving as a type of enhanced and specialized minor, the new Grady-SPIA interdisciplinary certificate will prepare Grady students to compete effectively in the world of policy, political communications and advocacy. Students will come to understand PAC as a distinct discipline with exciting career paths. They will also be introduced to and practice the various forms of PAC, and understand how the components work together to influence policy, public opinion and legislation. The Carolyn Caudell Tieger Professor will teach core courses in this track. Grady students will also benefit by having the opportunity to participate in the new Grady@DC summer program that features internships and a PAC topics course.

Grady@DC: Public Affairs Communications in Washington, D.C.

The new Grady@DC summer program is designed to offer an experiential academic opportunity in Washington, D.C., for Grady College majors. Initiated in 2015, the 8-week program gives students the opportunity to experience PAC at one of its epicenters, hear directly from PAC pros who guest lecture, and intern at important public affairs agencies, government offices, media operations, trade associations or non-profit advocacy groups — all designed to enhance the students' academic experience. In addition to a 3-hour internship, students take one 3-hour course on Public Affairs Communications (6 total hours). Students are housed at the new UGA in D.C. residence, Delta Hall. Up to 12 Grady students can participate each summer. They will also learn about the professional principles, ethics and laws related to public affairs and politics.

PAC Program Elements

Resources for PAC – Public Affairs Communications Advisory Committee

A PAC advisory committee has been created to provide counsel to Grady and promote its PAC program. The committee is comprised of public affairs communications leaders from major agencies, companies, associations and government entities with years of experience at the highest levels. The committee will meet periodically to review the progress of the program with Grady leadership and be directly involved in creating interest in and visibility for the PAC program and certificate. As exemplars of the profession, this committee will advocate for the program by helping raise its profile and resources. The committee also serves as an important source of guidance, networking and professional mentorship for PAC students.