

Jennifer Smart

(919) 602-5217 • jleigh.smart@gmail.com • jleighsmartdesigns.com

Executive Summary

Strategic and award-winning communications executive experienced in leading public affairs, crisis communications and civic engagement in large, complex government systems. Recognized for building transparency, trust and engagement through clear messaging and authentic storytelling. Adept at advising executive leadership, aligning communications with organizational priorities and leading high-performing teams through change.

Skills & Expertise

Strategic Communications • Public Affairs • Media Relations • Crisis Communications • Executive Advising • Stakeholder Engagement • Community Partnerships • Internal & External Communications • Public Policy Messaging • Equity & Inclusion

Selected Achievements

- Fiscal Year 2025 included Hurricane Milton, Shaquille O'Neal headlining the city's holiday parade and an NCAA Championship for the University of Florida Gator Men's Basketball Team, achieving an annual total of 4,989,777 social media views and 3,183,110 website views on City of Gainesville platforms.
- Led outreach and media strategy for \$8 million in federally funded Safe Streets upgrades and transit improvements, advancing public safety and mobility equity.
- Developed communications campaigns contributing to a 50% drop in gun homicides and 42% reduction in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities.
- Produced and promoted the Gainesville Gun Violence Prevention Summit, uniting law enforcement, subject matter experts and community leaders to shape public policy.
- Launched Gainesville's first Arts, Culture & Entertainment District branding initiative and coordinated communications outreach for large-scale civic events attended by thousands.

Professional Experience

Marketing and Communications Director | City of Gainesville, Florida • November 2022
– Present

- Lead citywide strategic communications and engagement strategy, overseeing an \$1.1 million budget and eight-person team across creative, media and public information disciplines.

- Serve as principal communications advisor to the city manager, mayor and commission on priorities affecting more than 145,000 residents.
- Oversee all external and internal communications, media relations, branding and engagement for city departments including Public Works, Fire Rescue and Transit.
- Develop and manage comprehensive campaigns supporting public safety, infrastructure, arts and equity-based initiatives.
- Direct bilingual emergency messaging and accessibility communications, expanding reach to historically underserved neighborhoods.

Communications Specialist | Lee County Department of Public Safety, Florida •

December 2020 – November 2022

- Managed communications for Emergency Management, EMS and Logistics divisions, leading social, digital and print education efforts.
- Produced real-time updates during Hurricane Ian, informing more than 200,000 residents in impacted regions through coordinated messaging and visuals.
- Designed emergency preparedness campaigns, All Hazards Guide and targeted outreach for vulnerable populations.

Senior Public Information & Communications Analyst | City of Durham Water Management, North Carolina • *December 2019 – December 2020*

- Directed communications for infrastructure and water quality projects, contributing to public education and conservation campaigns.
- Authored citywide reports and customer communications on rate changes and service enhancements.

Assistant Director | Wake Forest Historical Museum / Wake Forest University • *July 2013 – November 2019*

- Oversaw branding, public programming and grant-funded exhibits aligned with university initiatives such as the Slavery, Race and Memory Project.

Medical Anchor and Reporter | WTVD-TV Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina • *October 1993 – February 1999*

- Anchored and reported on public health, education and government affairs for ABC 11 Eyewitness News.

Education

University of Florida – Bachelor of Science in Telecommunication, Minor in American History

College of Journalism and Communications