

Jennifer Smart

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Executive local government leader with experience advising elected officials, executive leadership teams and cross-functional departments in politically complex municipal environments. Trusted strategic partner to senior leadership on governance, emergency operations, public safety coordination, infrastructure initiatives, organizational communications and stakeholder engagement.

Brings a record of aligning departments around strategic priorities, supporting operational continuity during crisis situations and guiding public-sector initiatives requiring collaboration across executive leadership, technical departments and community stakeholders. Experienced in executive-level decision support, emergency management coordination, public trust restoration and organizational strategy.

Core Competencies:

Executive Government Leadership • Cross-Department Coordination • Strategic Planning & Implementation • Emergency Management Support • Public Safety Coordination • Organizational Effectiveness • Stakeholder Engagement • Crisis Leadership • Governance & Public Trust • Executive Communications • Team Leadership • Community & Economic Development

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

Director of Marketing & Communications | 2022 – Present

Serve on the executive leadership team for a full-service municipal government serving approximately 145,000 residents in a politically complex university community. Advise the mayor, city manager, charter officers and senior leadership on strategic initiatives, governance issues, crisis response, operational priorities and public engagement.

Lead an eight-person department responsible for citywide communications strategy, executive messaging, emergency communications and cross-department coordination.

Key leadership accomplishments:

- Advise executive leadership and elected officials on high-profile governance, infrastructure, public safety and organizational issues involving significant public and political visibility.
- Coordinate enterprise communications and stakeholder alignment across a full-service municipal organization with a seven-member city commission, five charter officers and 16 departments including fire, police, public works, transportation, parks, housing and economic development.
- Supported leadership through complex governance and financial transition issues involving Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU), legislative oversight and public trust restoration.
- Lead strategic public engagement initiatives tied to major capital projects, transportation safety improvements, economic development priorities and community violence prevention efforts.
- Provide executive briefing materials, policy communications, presentations and strategic messaging support for Gainesville City Commission meetings and public forums.
- Support citywide emergency response coordination and crisis communications during severe weather events, public safety incidents and operational disruptions.
- Manage departmental staffing, dotted-line communications reports from city departments including police and fire, while handling operational planning, workflow prioritization and performance expectations for an eight-member team and \$1.1 million budget.
- Support executive budget communications involving structural financial challenges, operational priorities and long-range fiscal planning.
- Advance collaborative violence prevention initiatives involving public safety agencies, nonprofits, schools and community stakeholders.

LEE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, FLORIDA

Communications Specialist, EMS & Emergency Management | 2020 – 2022

Supported communications strategy and operational coordination for emergency management, EMS and county public safety operations.

- Worked within the Emergency Operations Center during Hurricane Ian, supporting interagency coordination and public information efforts during one of Florida’s largest disaster responses to a population of approximately 830,000.
- Coordinated messaging involving local, state and federal response partners during emergency activation periods.
- Supported leadership communications involving emergency preparedness, operational continuity and disaster recovery for Public Safety divisions including Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Emergency Management, Lee Control (911 communications and dispatch), and Logistics.
- Developed operational messaging addressing floodwaters, generator safety, downed power lines and contractor fraud prevention.

CITY OF DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Senior Public Information & Communications Analyst | 2019 – 2020

Supported executive communications and strategic initiatives for a large municipal government organization.

- Managed communications during a large-scale utility billing crisis requiring organizational accountability and public trust restoration.
- Coordinated communications (including public health, customer billing and supply chain issues) across technical and operational departments during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Supported employee communications and operational continuity messaging involving critical infrastructure personnel.

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

Assistant Director, Wake Forest Historical Museum | 2013 – 2019

Led strategic planning, fundraising, partnership development and community engagement initiatives for a university-affiliated museum organization.

- Directed Smithsonian-affiliated initiative “Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America,” securing more than \$42,000 in grant and sponsorship funding.

- Managed cross-functional partnerships involving university leadership, donors, nonprofits, volunteers and community organizations.
- Led preservation and public engagement initiatives involving historical research, grant development and community partnerships.

WTVD-TV ABC 11, RALEIGH-DURHAM

Medical Anchor & Reporter | 1993 – 1999

Covered healthcare, public health and regional issues for a major-market television station serving North Carolina.

- Served as on-air medical anchor and reporter for a major-market ABC affiliate covering healthcare, medicine, public health, hospitals, health policy and emerging medical research.
- Reported on complex healthcare issues including patient care, medical innovation, public health trends, insurance impacts, physician practice, hospital systems and community health initiatives.
- Interviewed physicians, healthcare executives, researchers, public officials and patients, translating technical and policy-driven subject matter into accurate, accessible reporting for broad public audiences.
- Developed expertise in communicating high-stakes and rapidly evolving information with clarity, credibility and editorial precision.
- Produced enterprise health reporting under tight deadlines while balancing journalistic standards, audience trust and institutional sensitivity.
- Collaborated closely with newsroom leadership on editorial strategy, breaking health news coverage and long-form public affairs reporting.
- Built a strong understanding of how healthcare organizations communicate during crisis events, operational challenges and periods of public scrutiny.
- Recognized for an on-air communication style that combined authority, empathy and clear storytelling around complex health and medical topics.

EDUCATION

University of Florida Bachelor of Science, Telecommunication (Journalism)
Minor, American History

ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- Extensive experience working directly with elected officials, executive leadership teams and community stakeholders.
- Background includes emergency management coordination, public safety communications, economic development initiatives and governance strategy.
- Professional portfolio and leadership case studies available at leighsmartdesigns.com.