

# KEITH PIERCE, APR

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**PORTFOLIO**  
KeithPierceAPR.com

## **SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- Visionary communications and marketing executive with more than 30 years of leadership experience in nonprofit, government, and higher education sectors.
- Strategic marketing and brand management
- Media relations and public information officer experience
- Higher education and advancement integration
- Digital strategy and audience engagement
- Executive communications and crisis leadership
- Enrollment, fundraising, and institutional visibility
- Proven success in strategic communications, brand management, digital marketing, media relations, and public affairs across complex institutions.
- Team development and cross-unit alignment
- Deep expertise in executive messaging, crisis and reputation management, content strategy, and stakeholder engagement across traditional and emerging platforms.
- Strong understanding of higher education and its role in society, with experience advancing academic missions and presidential initiatives.
- APR-certified communications strategist; former U.S. Army officer (Captain) in Public Affairs and Air Defense Artillery.
- Technical fluency: Adobe Creative Cloud (InDesign, Photoshop, Premiere), Microsoft Suite, WordPress, SharePoint, Constant Contact, and web/social analytics tool

## **CORE LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS**

- Repeatedly recruited to lead transformative efforts—most recently spearheading a law school rebrand within the first year as Assistant Dean at American University.
- Aligned internal messaging and branding for strategic initiatives including faculty recruitment, institutional accreditation, and global partnerships.
- Executed a media visibility initiative that increased national faculty mentions by 30% year-over-year.
- Led multichannel campaign strategy contributing to increased enrollment and a 20% rise in digital engagement within 18 months.
- Turned around a dysfunctional school board with comprehensive communication and team-building training
- Track record of building and mentoring high-performing teams, launching award-winning campaigns, and enhancing visibility, engagement, and enrollment.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Assistant Dean of Strategic Communications & Marketing**

**American University Washington College of Law – Washington, DC Jan. 2022 – Present**

**Effectively oversee a multi-functional team and guide strategy and execution across communications, marketing, digital content, media relations, brand management, and website administration. Appointed to rebrand and elevate the national and global visibility of AUWCL, one of the nation's leading law schools, within the first year of tenure.**

- Serve as senior communications advisor to the Dean and member of the leadership team.
- Oversee and integrate all aspects of strategic communications, including internal messaging, external media relations, digital content, advertising, print publications, social media, crisis communication, and event promotion.
- Lead a cross-functional team including roles in digital strategy, creative services, public relations, and web administration to deliver cohesive messaging and brand consistency.
- Develop high-impact campaigns to support recruitment, enrollment, alumni engagement, fundraising, and reputation-building goals.
- Provide strategic communications, branding and marketing; thought leadership; coaching; and editorial direction across offices, centers, programs, and initiatives.
- Manage institutional storytelling, amplify faculty scholarship and impact, and coordinate institutional responses to media and crisis situations.
- Lead the migration, redesign and relaunch of the law school's website and digital presence in alignment with broader university goals prior to the next migration phase.
- Partner with AU's central communications and IT teams on a campus-wide transition to a new Adobe-based web platform—still to come.
- Measure effectiveness of strategies through digital analytics, media monitoring, and audience engagement.

#### **Key Accomplishments:**

- Directed rebranding and online digital campaign strategy that contributed to increased enrollment, web traffic, and national media exposure.
- Revamped the Dean's newsletter, revitalized flagship publications, and implemented Trello-based project management to enhance team coordination.
- As editorial director of *The Advocate* (the law school's alumni magazine), enhanced content and created an interactive digital version while bringing down overall production cost.

### **Director of Strategic Communications & Public Relations**

**Queens University of Charlotte – Charlotte, NC**

**Jan. 2021 – Jan. 2022**

**Effectively directed external public and media relations and internal communications for a private university serving nearly 2,500 graduate and undergraduate students.**

- Led earned media strategies to advance enrollment and other university priorities.
- Produced high-level communications for the president, senior leadership team, and board including talking points, speeches and important messages for students, staff and faculty
- Set the tone for messaging in all communications including presidential messages, press releases, news articles, media statements, social media, etc.
- Crafted key messages and built relationships with diverse audiences, including news media, internal and external stakeholders, key industries and the community-at-large.

- Successfully led workshops for staff and senior leaders including: "thought leadership PR," "media relations 101," and "writing for the brand."
- Managed media tracking, monitoring, and monthly analysis reporting.
- Managed direct reports, including social media/PR manager and digital/web manager.
- Served as editorial director of *Queens Magazine*.

### Director of Public Affairs & Media Relations

Old Dominion University (ODU) – Norfolk, VA

2019 – 2021

**Effectively managed the university's reputation and image through public relations and media relations functions.**

- Formulated strategies, crafted messages and built relationships with diverse audiences, including news media, internal and external stakeholders, key industry and government constituents, and the community-at-large.
- Led the operation of the news and media relations team, including the conception, development, creation and dissemination of news, research, and/or strategic communications and public relations and reputation management initiatives.
- Managed media tracking, monitoring and monthly analysis reporting.
- Served as editor of *InsideODU*, *Monarch Mailer*, and the university's official news site.

### Director of Communications & Marketing

Batten College of Engineering and Technology – ODU – Norfolk, VA

2017 – 2019

**Verifiably established and implemented breakthrough communications and marketing strategies that successfully boosted the regional, national and international brand of the Batten College of Engineering and Technology (BCET).**

- Provided public relations, marketing, advertising and communications counsel and guidance to the dean, associate deans and department chairs.
- Established marketing priorities for six departments as well as the college as a whole.
- Immediately revised the BCET [website](#) and established a previously non-existent social media presence to include, [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).
- Created the first college newsletter in more than 5 years – "[Illuminator](#)," – including concept, name, design, layout and interactive content. (*Monthly distribution reached more than 12K*).
- Generated nearly **two dozen significant news stories** in the first 12 months – more than triple the previous year – for University channels as well as local and regional news media.
- Provided extensive writing support to include news articles, news releases, ads, brochures, web content, video scripts, speeches, and more.

### Communications and PR Consultant/Contractor/Trainer

Pierce Communications – Philadelphia, PA/Charlotte, NC

off/on from 2004 – 2020

**Offered PR, marketing, branding and media relations counsel/training**, as well as content and writing support, to corporate, government, education, health care and nonprofit clients.

- Contracted to work with the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce to implement PR strategies and counsel to boost local, regional and national image of the Myrtle Beach area.
- Leveraged relationships with key media, bloggers and influencers to push key messages.
- Provided crisis/reputation management/training; including media, staff and board conflicts
- Through a series of training, effectively transformed a dysfunctional school board into a cohesive team, resulting in radically improved board meetings and media turnaround.
- Executed an image campaign and open house for an urban middle school with declining enrollment. Realized 30% enrollment increase the following school year.

## Public Relations & Marketing Manager

Virginia Tech, Outreach & International Affairs (OIA) – Blacksburg, VA

2013 – 2016

**Through sound internal and external communications, marketing and branding counsel, successfully developed and implemented PR and marketing strategies to support the vice president in building unit awareness and executing the OIA mission.**

- Prepared news releases and responded to news media inquiries.
- Prepared speeches/presentations for internal/external audiences and events for the VP.
- Supported unit directors in developing communications plans for various centers/institutes.
- Led workshops for communicators, writers, graphic designers, as well as managers and directors including: *"trends in communications and marketing"* and *"writing for the brand."*
- Served as co-creator, host, webmaster and writer for VT internet video series, [Save Our Towns](#), (winner of two national awards: [PR Daily's](#) – *"best community affairs"* and [Bulldog Award's](#) – *"best use of digital/social communications"* and *"best use of video" for cause/advocacy*).
- Traveled to India, Nepal, and Ethiopia to cover USAID-funded projects managed by Virginia Tech. This included filming/editing video news stories, as well as taking photographs and writing stories for various publications (i.e., [Invasive plant conference in Ethiopia](#)).
- Successfully filmed, produced, and edited video news releases for [OIA YouTube Channel](#)
- **Redesigned, edited and managed OIA website** and monthly newsletter (to include layout).

## Director, Communications — Director, College Readiness Campaign

New Visions for Public Schools – New York, NY

2009 – 2011

**Launched and successfully led a youth-driven college-readiness campaign** leveraging the power of social media and engaged over 30K students in 76 NYC high schools.

- Led a communications and government relations team of six, managing all communications, marketing, news media, publication design, and government relations issues.
- Managed youth leadership corps focused on college readiness in 30+ NYC public schools.
- Developed marketing strategies that enhanced and facilitated relations with funders, sponsors, schools, community, corporate partners, and the NYC Department of Education.
- Advised school leaders in media crises, communications issues and marketing strategy
- Worked with civic/legislative leaders to understand and support school change initiatives.
- **Reason for leaving:** Economy-related downsizing/reorganization eliminated position.

## Senior Vice President, Communications & Marketing

MicroSociety, Inc. – Philadelphia, PA

2005 – 2009

**Developed national marketing, PR, and fundraising strategies** that resulted in over \$500K in new funding and nearly \$500K in new business within the first year of employment. **MicroSociety** is a nonprofit with a mission to connect classroom learning to real life.

- Managed all communications, marketing, fundraising, staff and client-related issues.
- Developed marketing and outreach strategies that increased funding through enhanced relations with sponsors, donors, school districts and state education departments.
- Managed the development of all marketing and fundraising materials and presentations.
- Oversaw development of new website – to include video news and school spotlight sections.
- **Reason for leaving:** took advantage of new opportunity after economy-related downsizing.

## Press Secretary and Director of Communications

Pennsylvania Department of Education – Harrisburg, PA

2003 – 2005

**Served as a spokesperson for the Pennsylvania Governor's radical [education funding] "*Plan for a New Pennsylvania*,"** which yielded extraordinary levels of media placement, and brand recognition, as well as widespread legislative, corporate, and staff buy-in.

- Provided public and media relations counsel to the Secretary of Education and senior leadership while managing press, communications and web teams.
- Assisted the Secretary of Ed in opening unprecedented statewide lines of communication through varied mediums, including statewide workshops never done in Pennsylvania.
- Managed the flow and response of all press inquiries and media briefings.
- **Reason for leaving:** Change in administration/move to become an independent consultant.

## Director of Communications and Development

School District of Lancaster – Lancaster, PA

1998 – 2003

**Introduced the concept of "branding urban public education" by executing innovative and highly visible PR, communications, marketing, and media strategies** – actions that were rare for an urban school district – producing unprecedented levels of media attention, community support, and brand recognition.

- Directed all communications, public/media relations, and development strategies, providing sound PR counsel to the superintendent, school board, administrators, and directors.
- Created the district's first-ever brand campaign to include the design of a new logo (*still in use today*) including image materials as well as advertising collateral.
- Managed major crises such as budget and funding inequities, the closing of 5-year-old high school including the relocation of 1,100 students, and teacher pay/union conflicts.
- Leveraged out-of-the-box communications/marketing strategies to successfully boost fundraising efforts – yielding \$5-10M per year for four consecutive years.
- Conceptualized, developed, and managed the *first* school district website.
- Created the *first* Annual Report to the Community, published in the local Sunday paper.
- **Reason for leaving:** Followed superintendent to state-level communications position above.

## Senior Associate for Communications

Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce– Philadelphia, PA

1997 – 1998

**Led public relations, marketing and communications for the city's "Children Achieving Challenge" – managed by the *Partnership for Reform*; an education division of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.**

- Launched major marketing campaigns, including the successful "SAT-9" campaign touting the increase in test scores and *Project Book Report*, to combat city-wide textbook shortage.
- Conducted image campaign strategies for the Philadelphia School Superintendent.
- **Reason for leaving:** Followed supervisor to school district communications position above.

## EDUCATION

LA SALLE UNIVERSITY, Philadelphia, PA

- B.A., Communications

**APR: ACCREDITED IN PUBLIC RELATIONS**

- Universal Accreditation Board – Public Relations Society of America – since 2003

*Portfolio with work samples available [here](#) and upon request*