

# ADAM TORGERSON

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## PERSONAL INFORMATION

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## SUMMARY

- Skillful storyteller with experience shaping strategic communications across media.
  - Critical thinker, word nerd, visual artist and data cruncher delivering exceptionally successful outcomes in communications, finance and policy.
  - Collaborative leader who understands what moves people.
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## COMPETENCIES

- Strategic planning
  - Communication planning
  - Public relations
  - Media relations
  - Editorial direction
  - Crisis communications
  - Social media
  - Marketing
  - Writing
  - Photography
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## EDUCATION

**Master's of Business Administration**  
Willamette University, 2011-2014

**Master's Coursework** (30 semester credits)  
Academy of Art University, 2006-2007

**Bachelor's in Political Science**  
Western Oregon University, 1999-2002

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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**DIRECTOR OF MEDIA RELATIONS | 2009 – Present**  
**INTERIM COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR | 2012 – 14**  
Willamette University

- Planned and executed strategic communications, marketing and branding initiatives.
- Managed media relations, social media and crisis communications.
- Responsible for the media relations effort that resulted in Willamette's inclusion in "Colleges That Change Lives," which had a major impact on enrollment.
- Shifted enrollment marketing conversation from cost to value.
- Developed financial aid communications lauded by top higher education consultants.
- Helped transform reputational crisis about sexual assault concerns into a positive opportunity for campus dialog.
- Increased subscribers and engagement across social media presences.
- Created stories, photographs and graphics that drove web traffic.
- Taught classes about persuasive communication campaigns and how to succeed in college.
- Led Willamette's communications office through major organizational and staffing changes.
  - Hired and trained staff.
  - All three university magazines earned CASE medals under my leadership.
  - Strengthened campus relationships with University Communications, especially among faculty.

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## EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

### PHOTOGRAPHER | 2003 – Present

#### Adam Torgerson Photography

- Created images from concept to print.
- Taught photography classes.
- Managed small business operation.
- Featured in regional magazines, billboards and other commercial publications.

### SENIOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST | 2005 – 09

#### Oregon Department of Transportation

- Responsible for all aspects of external communication across media.
- Delivered insightful, clear on-air interviews.
- Managed crisis and strategic communications.
- Completed 700-level Incident Command System courses for public communications and led communications for the department's first emergency operations center.
- Addressed sensitive questions live on air about federal and state policies, including A.R.R.A., the federal stimulus package.
- Earned agency's "Driving Force" award for on-air contributions during unprecedented storms and flooding.

### FINANCIAL INVESTIGATOR | 2004 – 05

#### Oregon Real Estate Agency

- Investigated real estate activity, including client trust account audits.
- Interpreted statutes and regulations.
- Analyzed policies and legislation.
- Regularly assigned most sensitive cases and consistently among the most productive investigators.
- Repaired relationships between management and staff while negotiating successful bargaining contract.
- Found major theft by forensically reconstructing agent's trust account.

### ASSISTANT BUDGET AND POLICY ANALYST | 2001 – 03

#### Budget and Management Division / Office of the Chief Financial Officer

- Analyzed agency budgets and developed the governor's budget.
- Presented the governor's budget to the legislature.
- Analyzed proposed legislation for fiscal and organizational impact.
- Researched and presented policy issues on behalf of the governor for the public, media and executives.
- Webmaster.
- For gubernatorial transition teams, researched and created a presentation that explained how the budget fell so short and what options were available to address it.
- Protected the only "General Fund" agency not cut during budget reductions.
- Tracked all proposed reductions during the five special legislative sessions and multiple Emergency Board meetings.

### EDITOR IN CHIEF | 2001 – 02

#### COPY EDITOR | 2000

#### Western Oregon Journal

- Administered deadline-driven organization.
- Managed and hired staff.
- Sold, designed and placed advertising.
- Earned ONPA awards for publication and individual writing excellence.
- Lobbied successfully for a major increase in organizational funding.
- Earned a large IT grant to replace an aging computer system.

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## WORK SAMPLES

### MY PASSION: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE

Statesman Journal (Salem, Ore.)

Growing up in Las Vegas with parents that insisted I venture out into summer's sandy oven, I spent a lot of time catching scorpions, vinegaroons and all kinds of reptiles. I marveled at the way each creature seemed perfectly suited for its place — and its prey.

I've seen blood squirt from the eyes of a horned lizard, and I've dropped a desert iguana when distracted by the whip of its separated, writhing tail. One of my best friends can attest to the wallop a small sidewinder packs.

Despite all the time I spent exploring and experiencing the desert, it wasn't until a college trip with friends to Zion National Park, far from the electric skies of Las Vegas, that I looked up and saw the Milky Way - the band of stars that form the "backbone of night." I felt the bewildering immensity of nature for the first time.

I still wonder what our ancestors thought as they gathered around a fire pit and looked to the sky. Some of their answers became myths that shaped and were shaped by society, but what of the countless millions who weren't satisfied by such explanations? Among the everyday struggle for survival, there must have been people like me — people for whom the echoing question, "What are stars?" would never be silenced.

Human nature is to seek understanding. Our minds are powerful, complex but imperfect pattern detectors. When we look at clouds, we see shapes. We impose meaning on randomness. We confuse correlation and causality. We infer intent by default, and because we are biased to reinforce our own beliefs, it takes effort to overcome an incorrect idea that has taken root.

These biases served us well through millennia. We survived.

Through science, we've opened a window to the heavens, and we've looked back in time to discover much about how we came to be.

I was stunned to learn that nearly half of Americans don't know how long it takes our planet to revolve around the sun. I cringe when politicians deny evolution. My heart breaks when children die from easily preventable or treatable conditions because parents decide against vaccines or choose prayer over medicine.

Though science has certainly demonstrated its value to our health, economy and quality of life, it is more than advanced technology or medical treatments. The scientific method is humanity's best tool to discover truth.

I started the local Science Pub series in conjunction with OMSI, and I collaborate with scientists to help share their work with the public. I'm passionate about the public understanding of science not just because I love the mysteries of quantum mechanics, neuroscience and cosmology, but because scientific literacy affects our ability to evaluate important issues facing our society.

With our growing population, its commensurate impact, our advancing technological sophistication and proliferation of ideas and claims, we need decision makers who understand the value and methods of science. We need a scientifically literate electorate that is able to face with open eyes our economic, environmental and geopolitical challenges.

I'm passionate about the public understanding of science not only because it answers the question, "What are stars?" but because I believe that the truth is the best foundation upon which to build our future.

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UNMASKING A RESEARCHER  
Willamette University



Kaeli Swift '09 wears a mask as she uncovers the corpse. She knows she's being watched.

Eerie and emotionless, the mask does its job. Swift's hazel eyes meet obsidian stares, and her experiment begins.

## WORK SAMPLES

Swift studies crow funerals, raucous avian flash mobs that form when a dead crow is spotted.

Crows are smart. They remember faces of threatening people and warn others to be on the lookout. To avoid being recognized and affecting the birds' behavior, Swift and her colleagues wear masks when unwrapping the stuffed crow used in their research.

While staying undetected by the birds, Swift's work is earning visibility of a different sort. She was recently featured on the PBS program "IN Close."



### THE NEST

Swift netted her mentors at Willamette before earning a National Science Foundation fellowship to pursue crow research at the University of Washington.

When she landed as a freshman, Swift knew she wanted to study birds. It didn't take long to track down her undergraduate advisor, Dave Craig.

"One thing I knew that I was especially good at—for all of the other things that I felt doubt about—was networking," Swift says. "I like birds," she told Craig. "I've been told you like birds. I want you to be my advisor."

As a biologist who studies bird behavior, Craig says he couldn't pass up a student named "Swift," a nimble species of bird that targets insects mid-flight.

Swift first became a masked crow menace through collaborative work with Craig. They investigated crows' ability to recognize individual human faces. She found another mentor in Emma Coddington, a neuroethologist who studies the effects of stress on behavior and the brain.

"She was like a laser beam," says Coddington, smiling as she remembered meeting Swift before the start of a tough physiology class. "She stood out because she was genuinely curious and kept asking questions that indicated she was constantly integrating, thinking about how this fits in her life."

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## UNMASKING A RESEARCHER (CONTINUED)

Willamette University

A key part of Swift's undergraduate life was her work with Saturday Explorations and Willamette Academy. She describes teaching through the university's youth programs as among her most meaningful personal and most valuable professional experiences. "It's important that students see there are all kinds of people that do science," she says.

## THE LEAP

Graduation came and went. Though an important chapter in her story, it's hard to picture Swift as a recent graduate unsure if she was cut out for academia.

As someone who also struggled to imagine herself as a scientist and professor, Coddington understood such self-doubt but had no question about Swift's ability. Coddington hired her to help set up a new physiology lab in Olin Science Center, and Swift's mentors encouraged her to apply for an NSF fellowship. Grad school was a way to explore how her passions for teaching, fieldwork and research could fit together in her life.

Swift credits Craig and Coddington for giving her the space and the encouragement she needed, when she needed it.

## WORK SAMPLES

"They were there to support me when I said, 'I don't know if I'm the kind of person who could do this,'" Swift says. They told her, "You are. Do this."

She did.

## THE ASCENT

Her experience with animal behavior and physiology proved invaluable to her research into crow funerals. But Swift took off for graduate school with something more: She earned the respect and admiration of her professors, especially her mentors.

"Their role as advisors wasn't this discrete four-year period when I was an undergrad," she says. "They're still the people I call when I'm most 'done' and when I have awesome triumphs. Having the support of people who understand what it's like to be in this profession — and what it's like to be in this profession as woman — is really important.

"I knew that I picked Willamette because I could get more one-on-one attention, but I never expected to have faculty that I would invite to my wedding—and who would show up! But they did."

Swift's relationship with her mentors is evolving. She's more colleague than advisee now, visiting campus in December to teach Craig's "Behavioral Ecology" class and again in January for a biology colloquium.

As her career takes flight, crows and the NSF won't be the only ones watching Swift. Like the birds she studies, her friends and colleagues at Willamette will be on the lookout.

"She's amazing, and it's been a privilege to watch her," says Coddington. "I'm excited to see who she continues to grow into."



Photo, left to right: Coddington, Ramona Flatz (biology research assistant), Swift and Craig

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## RESPONSE TO "STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR CONNER MERTENS"

Ivy Coach

"Willamette University is a school that has never come up before on our blog but it is deserving of a special 'shout out' today.

For those not familiar with Willamette University, it's located in Salem, Oregon and it's the oldest university in the western United States (it was founded in 1842). In the most recent rankings of 'US News & World Report,' Willamette was ranked 63rd among liberal arts colleges so, no, it's not a college we write about much being as our company gears itself towards the most highly selective colleges.

But Willamette put out a press release yesterday that moved us and we wanted to share it with you. As you may or may not know, a football player for Willamette came out as bisexual yesterday and he marks the first college football player to be openly a member of the LGBT community while still competing collegiately. Our good friend at "Outsports," Cyd Ziegler, wrote a wonderful piece on the player — Conner Mertens — that shared his story with the world.

And so how did the university respond? With this beautiful statement:

## WORK SAMPLES

In response to 'Conner Mertens came out to his college football team last night. Now he comes out publicly,' the university issued the following statement:

'Willamette University fully supports Conner Mertens and respects his contribution to a more humane and just world.

Willamette University is, at its core, a community of people dedicated to learning. Our motto, "Not unto ourselves alone are we born," is our guiding principle. It tells us that we have a responsibility for each other.

Willamette's inclusive campus community inspires students to find and pursue their passions. By transforming knowledge into action, we learn about ourselves.

Our student-athletes work hard to succeed in competition and in the classroom, but they don't stop there. Willamette students apply what they've learned to their lives, their careers and their communities. This is the essence of our motto and what it means to be a Bearcat.'

Wow! '...respects his contribution to a more humane and just world.' It gave us chills. Ivy Coach salutes Willamette University on this momentous occasion. May one day an announcement like this not be news. But today, it sure is."