

Political Campaigning Newsletter

UF MA/PC Program



Dr. Stephen Craig

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Director's Corner

For those who don't know us very well, the University of Florida's Graduate Program in Political Campaigning is a two-year program of study leading to an M.A. degree in political science, with a certificate attesting to the specialization in applied politics (campaigns and otherwise).

It is designed to provide students who want a career in politics or public service with technical skills related to strategy formation, message development and communication, resource management, polling, and other key aspects of professional politics in the 21st century — as well as a broad understanding of why some strategies and tactics succeed but others fail.

Campaigning students take a mix of academic and practical courses, the latter taught by experienced professional consultants and augmented by frequent guest lectures and

workshops. They also may take elective courses outside the department on such topics as political communication, fundraising, and speechwriting, and are required to complete an internship during the summer between their first and second years.

From an entering class of just two in 1985, the Campaigning Program typically has about 12-15 students enrolled at any given time. While some growth is anticipated in the future, it is our desire that the Program remain what it has always been: a unique and highly personalized educational experience in which students receive a degree of personal attention and regular contact with instructors they might not get at another school.

In sum, the Campaigning Program provides an excellent opportunity for students to learn about politics and make the kinds of contacts that will help them get started in their professional careers. If you know someone looking to embark on such a career, **let them know about UF!**

DNC Chair Returns to Gainesville — Dallas Rawlins (MA/PC 2016)

Perhaps the most famous graduate of the Political Campaigning Program is U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who completed her degree in 1990. While many former gators have gone on to enjoy success in the political arena, she is probably the most recognizable (if controversial) figure active today. After serving in both the Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate, she was elected to Congress in 2014. The first Jewish congresswoman ever elected from the state of Florida, she has served since 2011 as chair of the Democratic National Committee.

On March 14th, 2015, Rep. Wasserman Schultz visited her old digs in the Political Science Department at UF. In town for meetings with local Democrats and members of the Gainesville Jewish community, she took time to stop by Anderson Hall and reconnect with several of her old professors and to meet with students who are currently enrolled in the Political Campaigning Program.

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**U.S. Representative and
DNC Chairwoman Debbie
Wasserman Schultz**

Where Are They Now?



Graduation Day 2015:
Ansley Tuten, Joel Mendelson,
and Chad Smith with Dr. Craig at
the Swamp.

The Political Campaigning Program is proud of its strong alumni network. Graduates have had a great success in a variety of fields, including general campaign consulting, polling, marketing and advertising, grassroots organizing, fundraising, and many others. Here is what some Campaigning grads are doing today:

Chris Vail - Amazon Media Group

Chris is Manager of Advertising Sales for Amazon and oversees the company's product marketing.

Rebecca Guerra - ProGeorgia

Rebecca is the Deputy Director of Pro-Georgia, a non-profit that advances progressive social change in Georgia.

Paul Sherman - Institute of Justice

Paul is a senior attorney with the Institute of Justice, litigating constitutional cases relating to First Amendment rights.

Mitchell Norton - Dept. of Commerce

Mitch is a communications specialist for the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, and oversees the Select USA Investment Summit.

Sagar Sane - The Sorin Group

Sagar is Business Development Manager for The Sorin Group, a major international company that specializes in the development of medical devices.

Scott Laster - Southern Strategy Group

Scott is a senior political advisor for the Southern Strategy Group based in North Carolina.

DNC Chair Returns to Gainesville

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The representative talked about her days as a student in the Program, and then fielded questions on a variety of topics. One student asked about candidate recruitment, which is a key responsibility for anyone who chairs one of the national party committees. Rep. Wasserman Schultz confirmed the importance of that role, especially at a time when Democrats have had mixed success in elections at all levels.

She fielded questions from the Republicans in attendance with characteristic humor and aplomb, and revealed something that the rest of the country would learn about three days later — that she will not be a candidate for Marco Rubio's U.S. Senate seat in 2016. Many questions dealt with her experience as a student and, specifically, with how the Campaigning Program helped her to take advantage of the political opportunities that came her way. She replied that the Program had been critical in helping her land a job as legislative assistant to Florida Rep. Peter Deutsch, whose seat she later won when Deutsch decided to run for the Florida Senate. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Campaigning students were grateful to Rep. Wasserman Schultz for interrupting her busy schedule to spend time with them. Her willingness to do this (on short notice, no less), and the openness and candor of her answers to their questions, make a powerful impression. If nothing else, it demonstrated that being a graduate of the Campaigning Program is a proud tradition that can provide a channel to a successful career in the field of politics. Heck, you could even wind up in Congress someday.



**Campaigning students with Congresswoman and DNC
Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz.**

Learning the Best from the Best — Nathan Harvey (MA/PC 2016)

The Political Campaigning Program at the University of Florida is truly a unique program in that it combines academic rigor with professional practicality. The Program provides students with a strong foundation of academic learning backed by research methods and data analytics, while also emphasizing the importance of practical skills. It is this powerful combination that has made our graduates so successful in their respective fields.

On the academic side, Campaigning students benefit from having some of the foremost experts on political behavior, public opinion, political parties, and general American politics just down the hallway. High-level political jobs today require one to be well-versed in the underlying theories dealing with these topics. Having regular access to our distinguished faculty is a terrific resource for students who wish to understand the “how and why” of politics. Many of these professors are recruited on a regular basis as experts by the media.

As for learning practical skills, Campaigning students are also fortunate to learn from a number of leading professionals.

Each year, first-year campaigners take an introductory course in campaign management, covering all aspects of campaigns from strategy to messaging to polling to paid media to fundraising, and much more. This course is taught by Roger Austin, a veteran political strategist for races at all levels. Austin previously served as the political director and legal counsel for the Republican Party of Florida. This course features guest lecturers at various times during the semester. In fall 2014, these guests included Alex Patton, a local political consultant who discussed the evolving role of social media in campaigns; and Eric Conrad, who was Communications Director for Gwen Graham’s successful race in Florida’s 2nd Congressional District. Both speakers provided valuable insights into their prior campaign experiences.

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Our PC Class of 2015 award winners (from left): Ansley Tuten, who received the Ralph E. Gonzalez Independent Spirit Award; and Joel Mendelson, winner of the Walter “Skip” Campbell Leadership Award.

Post-Election Workshop 2015

On January 30, 2015, members of academia, the political community, and other gathered along with students in the Political Campaigning Program, as well as several Political Science undergrads, for our biennial election workshop at the Hilton University of Florida. As always, the day began with a retrospective on the last election (emphasizing the race between Rick Scott and Charlie Crist for governor), and continued with a lively discussion of what we might look forward to in 2016 both nationally and here in Florida in 2016. Sharing their insights was an impressive mix of political experts.

Academics included UF professors Daniel Smith, Michael McDonald, and Michael Martinez, plus Susan MacManus from USF. These panelists were joined by political practitioners David Hill, Adam Goodman, David Beattie, Jim Kane, Jim Kitchens, Steve Schale, Scott Simpson, and Roger Austin. Also present were Adam Smith from the *Tampa Bay Times* and former Florida Senator Paula Dockery.

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Second-year campaigners with some of the panelists at the 2015 Political Campaigning workshop. Participants included a mix of academics, former elected officials, journalists, and professional political consultants.

An Interview with Dr. David Hill — Looking Forward to 2016



Dr. David Hill

David Hill is director of Hill Research Consultants, a public opinion and marketing research firm with clients nationwide. He became a political pollster and consultant in 1984 after serving as a university professor for 10 years, including a tenured post at Texas A&M University. He has advised more than a dozen U.S. senators and governors (including Mel Martinez and Bob Martinez, Florida's first Hispanic senator and governor, respectively). Hill also consults with numerous national advocacy groups and has polled for almost 30 successful constitutional amendment initiatives in a half-dozen states (six in Florida). In the last election cycle, he polled for anti-casino efforts in two states, for the reelection of America's longest serving governor (Iowa's Terry Branstad), reelection of Pam Bondi as Florida's AG, reelection of Michigan congressman Fred Upton (more famous as the uncle of Kate Upton), and super-PACs in multiple states.

How is the 2016 election cycle shaping up so far?

On the Republican side, because there are so many candidates, voters should be able to find someone who fits their sensibilities. On the Democratic side there is starting to be some disappointment in the press, as even mainline Democrats seem to be ceding the nomination to Hillary. Primary battles generally make a better general candidate — it's sort of a vetting process, so it will be interesting to see how the Democrats deal with whatever happens.

What will the 2016 election be about?

I tend to think that every election is about rectifying the "mistakes" of the past election. I think this time there will be a greater emphasis on experience, proven experience and political savvy when it comes to politics and government. This will not be an election for a newcomer. People will insist on verification of someone's capabilities. This goes against the general narrative of choosing one of the old names. I think in the end the narrative of being assured of savvy leadership will be enough. In particular, as we see more unrest in the Middle East, I don't think the American people will turn over the presidency to someone entirely focused on domestic politics.

What will be the major issues of debate between Republicans and Democrats?

Right now the remarkable thing about the issues is that we've turned back to the world of 2007-2008. When we ask people what the most important problems facing America are, besides the economy and jobs, the rest of the issues are 5-7% mentions. It may be the case this election will be less about issues and more about leadership style. It is also the case that candidates will be called upon to produce a more diverse platform and not focus on general social issues.

How do you think voter outreach methods will change going into 2016?

There is a huge movement towards social media. I think you will see a proliferation of advertising that only appears online and is accessed through portals like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Campaigns can no longer depend on broadcast and cable television to carry their message. The big struggle is determining how much to divert to each outreach method. Republicans in past elections have only spent about 10% on digital media, and that may have to rise to 30%. Television may be flawed in today's day and age, but it still reaches the most people. It is a very challenging environment, and campaigns will have to make difficult decisions about where to spend their limited funds.

Do you anticipate turnout to reach 2008 or even 2012 levels?

The only reason we had the surge turnout in 2008 and some states in 2012 was because younger voters came out to vote. But they didn't vote at the same levels in the 2014 midterms. The question is, are they going to come back again? I think that there is a problem with Hillary being able to inspire young people to come out at those same levels. It will certainly be interesting to see how young people react to candidates in 2016, and whether those candidates are able to mobilize those voters.

What should political spectators look out for in the next few months?

A lot of it is the money game. It is very expensive to campaign in this day and time. Even email, which someone might think is free, can be very expensive. Campaigns are more expensive now than ever, and money will be a determining factor of each campaign's success. The real challenge is being able to tap more sources of funding beyond your immediate connections and supporters. The question is, once they get money from their main backers, do candidates have other avenues to raise more money? A fact of life is that you cannot run a campaign without money. It will be interesting on the Republican side to see how candidates position themselves to raise money. For Democrats, there is some suspicion that Hillary might falter — something that would signal to other candidates that she might be vulnerable and encourage other viable candidates to enter the race.

Insider's Access: Q&A with Christina Barker (MA/PC 2013), Special Assistant to Tampa's Mayor

What is your current position and what do you do?

I am Special Assistant to the Mayor for the City of Tampa. I provide strategic direction to special projects and public policy critical to Mayor Bob Buckhorn's agenda.

What did you do before? How did you come to work for the Mayor of Tampa?

My last position was as Director of Public Policy at the Tampa Bay Partnership (a regional economic development organization, much like a regional chamber of commerce). Right before starting the Political Campaigning Program at UF, I interned on Mayor Buckhorn's 2011 campaign. That relationship carried over and eventually led to the position I serve in today.

What does a typical day at your job look like?

This is a tough question because every day is so different. We truly do have many exciting things going on here. I staff the Mayor at many off-sight events, speeches, media availabilities, and so forth. I also work with city department directors on special projects like the potential expansion of the Tampa Historic Streetcar. And I research policy initiatives that have been successful in other cities to determine if they may work well in Tampa.

What's your favorite part about working in the Mayor's office?

This job gives me the opportunity to make a true difference for those who live in, work in, or visit Tampa. Whether we are cutting the ribbon for a new park or business, or working on the redevelopment of an impoverished neighborhood, every day our goal is to make Tampa better. Being able to work alongside Mayor Buckhorn is an honor. He is doing great things for Tampa and, thanks to his leadership, Tampa is thriving.

Campaigning Students Get Involved in Local Elections - David Bell (MA/PC 2016)

Many of our students take advantage of the skills they learn from the campaigning program long before graduating by getting involved with local electoral politics here in Gainesville and around North Central Florida. In particular, the recent 2014 mid-term elections and the Gainesville city elections saw a great deal of involvement from Campaigning students.

During the 2014 mid-terms, two second-year students (Joel Mendelson and Ansley Tuten), ran a tough race on behalf of Harvey Ward, a Democrat who was challenging an incumbent County Commissioner in the Democratic pri-

mary. Their experience was one they will not soon forget, it taught them a lot about what it takes to be successful in local elections.

Two first-year campaigners (Nathan Harvey and Samantha Gottshall) handled field operations for Ted Yoho, a Republican seeking reelection in Florida's 3rd congressional district. This experience was especially useful for learning about grassroots organizing and outreach tactics.

Other campaigners jumped into the recent city elections in Gainesville. Dallas Rawlins, a first-year student, worked on two city commission races, first for Adrian Hayes-Santos and then for Harvey Budd during the runoff. David Bell, another first-year, also got hands-on campaign experience by joining Budd's campaign. Both Dallas and David gained valuable insights into what it takes to be successful in local elections.

We are proud that many of our students take the initiative to get involved in real-world politics even before they have a diploma in hand. If recent election cycles are a guide, UF campaigners will be leaving their mark on elections in Gainesville and throughout North Central Florida for many years to come.



Ansley Tuten hard at work for Alachua County Commission candidate Harvey



Campaigners Nathan Harvey (left) and Samantha Gottshall (middle) sign-waving with Congressman Ted Yoho.

Political Campaigning Alumni Profile

Two recent alumni discuss the lessons they learned in the program, their career accomplishments, and how current students can benefit from their experience at UF.

Scott Simpson: Direct Mail

Scott earned his B.A. from Millersville University in Pennsylvania and his M.A. from the University of Florida. He is currently a managing partner for Resonance Campaigns, a communications and direct mail consulting firm.

Describe what you have been doing since graduating from the Political Campaigning Program.

“After receiving my degree I became a pollster with Lake Research in 2004. In 2009, I stopped doing polling and moved into direct mail with Gumbinner and Davies. And this year, I started my own consulting firm, Resonance Campaigns, in Washington, D.C.”

What lessons did you take from your time in the program?

“I learned how to do strategy and how to write better in general. It definitely taught me how to think strategically in terms of how to put a campaign together. It was a very good basis for becoming a pollster. Thinking strategically, how to make contacts, and how to put campaigns together are definitely some things I that I learned in the program.”

What advice do you have for current and future students in the program or anyone who is looking to forge a career in politics?

“Never burn bridges. Always assume that anyone can be a good contact for you in the future. Never be known for slacking off; always try to overdo your work. Don’t be afraid to take risks. Don’t stay in a situation that you don’t like for too long.”

Scott Simpson
(MA/PC 2003)



Kristine Zooberg: Fundraising

Kristine graduated from the University of South Florida with a B.A. in Political Science and received her M.A. from the University of Florida. She is founder of KZR, which assists candidates, non-profits, and businesses in reaching their fundraising goals.

How have you utilized the knowledge and skills you acquired from the program in your career?

“Nearly everything you do on a campaign is critical and urgent. It’s about learning to identify and prioritize what is most important above the rest. Having an academic understanding of political behavior helps to make sense of the candidates and experiences you face in campaigns. Being my own worst critic, both as a student and in my career, has helped me to cultivate a good work ethic.”

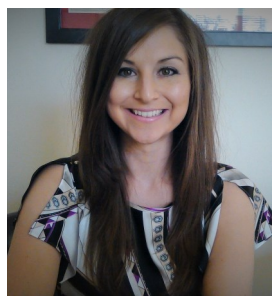
What have you enjoyed most about your time in politics?

“There’s something new every day — new challenges and new people. And I enjoy helping good people get elected to public office. Despite all the negativity in politics today, there are still good people around who deserve to be in office. I enjoy helping them get there.”

What advice do you have for current and prospective students?

“Seize every opportunity you’re given to learn as much as you can. You won’t regret it. Go the extra mile. Stay until the job gets done. Be the last to leave — these things matter. And always stay true to yourself.”

Kristine Zooberg
(MA/PC 2009)



Political Campaigning Conference 2015

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In the morning session, MacManus, Schale, Dockery, McDonald, and both Smiths shared their experiences and impressions of the midterm races, and of Scott's narrow (and in some ways unlikely) win over Crist in the battle of the two governors. Apart from a consideration of campaign strategy, good and bad, on both sides, there was much speculation about what Crist might have done differently to produce a more favorable outcome. Panelists also discussed the meaning of 2014's low turnout, the forecast for 2016, and the lessons one might draw from the fact that a declining proportion of Florida voters cast their ballots on Election Day, opting instead for either absentee or early in-person voting.

After a break for lunch, participants and students re-convened for a discussion of the 2016 elections. It was still very early in the game, of course, but Beattie, Hill, Simpson, Goodman, McDonald, and Kane all made their best guess about who would be the presidential nominees (Clinton was a consensus choice for the Democrats, while the Republican field was judged to be wide open) and what might happen if Marco Rubio vacated his Senate seat in order to pursue the White House (not all panelists expected him to do so, especially with Jeb Bush in the race). There also was a spirited exchange between some panelists about the future of the Republican Party as the pace of demographic change picks up both in Florida and throughout the nation.

A variety of topics were covered at the workshop, providing attendees with a multiplicity of views about how things actually work in the real world of politics. Given the mix of academics and practitioners, and of Republicans and Democrats, it's hardly surprising that not everyone was on the same page. Exchanges were always cordial, however, and hearing the different perspectives undoubtedly proved to be of great value to those who attended.

Learning the Best from the Best

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Campaigning students stage a mock press conference in the Advanced Strategy course taught by Damien Filer, Scott Simpson, and David Hill.

Campaigners also take a second practical skills course called Advanced Campaign Strategy. This class is unusual in that it is divided into three modules, each taught by a different instructor. In spring 2015, the first module dealt with media strategy. Taught by Damien Filer, a Tallahassee-based consultant with extensive experience in communications and ballot initiative campaigns, it focused on how to develop earned media and manage press relations. The module culminated in a mock press conference in which students were split into groups and assigned individual roles (such as candidate, campaign manager, or communications director) for a mock candidate announcement press conference. The second portion of the class was taught by Scott Simpson, founding partner of a Washington-area direct mail firm and graduate of the Campaigning Program. Simpson covered many aspects of direct mail strategy, and described what it takes to be successful in that particular. The final module of the class was taught by Dr. David Hill, a prominent Republican pollster and political consultant. Dr. Hill focused his portion of the class on messaging strategy, and particularly how to communicate and relate to voters on a personal level. During the 2015-16 academic year, students will take courses in Lobbying (another three-module class to be taught by Doyle Bartlett, David Mica, and Ian Rayder) and survey research (taught by pollster Jim Kitchens).

The Political Campaigning Program is a truly innovative program that continues to grow and produce what one of political consultant has called "the smartest people in the room". We are proud of the how the Program has adapted to the rapidly developing field of political consulting over the last 30 years. It is our hope to continue this momentum for another 30 years and more. We can't wait to see the great things our graduates accomplish. Whatever it may be, our experience at UF will be one to remember.



In order to achieve its long-term objectives, financial support is needed in several areas including the following:

- *Endowed professorships*
- *Research center (workshops and reports)*
- *Online instruction*
- *Guest lecturers/speakers*
- *Ethics in Government and Politics Program*
- *Student assistantships and fellowships*

Even with limited resources, the UF Political Campaigning Program has established itself as one of the top political management/practical politics graduate programs in the entire country. We have accomplished this while maintaining (and hopefully instilling in our students) a sensitivity to the democratic context of U.S. politics, and to the notion that officeholders, candidates, and those who advise them have obligations to society that extend beyond the immediate goal of winning a particular election or enacting a piece of legislation. We welcome the support of anyone who agrees with us that politics is an honorable profession, and that programs of study like the one at UF can help to keep it that way.

Political Campaigning Program (UF/PC)

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Yes! I want to Support UF/PC

Want to help the UF/PC program? Consider making a tax-deductible contribution. We have several endowments that provide scholarships to our outstanding MA students.

Political Campaign Program General Fund
Graham / Mack Scholarship Fund
Walter ("Skip") Campbell Leadership Award
Ralph E. Gonzalez Independent Spirit Award
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