

Florida A&M University
School of Journalism & Graphic Communication
Annual FAMU PR Week
Hosted by. FAMU PRSSA

“PRoud FAMUly”

March 25- 28, 2025

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

2:00 - 2:30 PM | SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

Preparing for the Workforce – Panel Discussion & Mock Interview Featuring: HEIDI OTWAY, APR, CPRC SalterMitchell PR PRESIDENT+PARTNER | Drew Piers, APR, CPRC partner and managing director at Sachs Media

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

12:20 - 1:35 PM | Classroom Room 2073

Maximizing Your PR Resources: Eric Winkfield, Vice President at M Booth and M Booth Health (Virtual)

Thursday, March 27, 2025

11:00 - 12:30 PM | SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

Presentation by Alonda Thomas: Alonda Thomas Ph.D., Vice President and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU)

Friday, March 28, 2025

5:00 - 6:15 PM | School of Journalism Studio B

Social Media and Mental Health - "Continuing the Conversation": Jonathan N. Bertrand, Founder and CEO of the Social Media Research Institute (SMRI) | Christina Compere-Minor, Social Media Manager at Florida A&M University

Speaker Headshots and Bios:

HEIDI OTWAY, APR, CPRC PRESIDENT+PARTNER



Decades of experience have solidified Heidi as an expert in media, communication, marketing, and audience engagement. She has led numerous public relations and public affairs initiatives, managed the reputation of top corporations, and developed campaigns targeting diverse audiences across Florida. She relentlessly pursues results for every client to help them win. Her work has supported some of Florida's top industries and sectors. Her clients include Verizon, NeighborWorks America, Bank of America, Weyerhaeuser (formerly Plum Creek), The Able Trust, the Florida Department of Health, the Florida Governor's Office, Florida Healthy Kids, Destin Water Users, Florida A&M University, Florida State University, Miami-Dade County, Pinellas County, No Kid Hungry, the U.S. Census, and JP Morgan.

She is accredited by the Universal Accreditation Board for public relations and is a Certified Public Relations Counselor. Many of her award-winning campaigns for organizations and businesses helped their good causes win. Evidence of her strategies, innovative ideas, and creativity can be found across Florida. A former journalist and television news manager, Heidi earned her Bachelor of Science in Broadcast Journalism from Florida A&M University.

Drew Piers, APR, CPRC



Drew Piers, APR, CPRCA is a partner and managing director at Sachs Media, Drew Piers helps clients tackle complex challenges, from driving advocacy campaigns in dozens of states to managing high-stakes crisis situations. With a focus on creating positive impact, Drew has successfully led ballot initiative campaigns, shaped public policy through strategic campaigns, and used storytelling combined to drive meaningful action. His work has earned multiple state and national awards, and he also shares his expertise as a Political Communications professor for master's students at Florida State University.

Drew Piers Partner, Managing Director

Sachs Media

941-592-6399

Eric Winkfield



Vice president at M Booth and M Booth Health

Eric M. Winkfield is a vice president at M Booth and M Booth Health leading the firm's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. As a practitioner, his scope includes strategically counseling key corporate clients, adding depth to reputation management, public affairs, and issues and crisis management.

Prior to joining M Booth, Winkfield worked for Pepco, a Washington, D.C.-based public utility company owned by Exelon. There he served as a key member of the governmental and external affairs team, advancing community outreach strategies, strategic stakeholder engagement plans, and leading cross-functional teams on regulatory and public policy initiatives. He holds a master's degree in integrated marketing communications from West Virginia University and a bachelor's degree in public relations from Florida A&M University.

He is passionate about advocating and helping others grow to become their best and authentic selves and has an unwavering commitment to mentoring. Winkfield serves on the faculty and visiting committee at the Reed College of Media at WVU. He is also strongly involved in mentoring and alumni engagement for the School of Journalism & Graphic Communication at FAMU. In 2018, The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations named him as an Emerging Leader.

Winkfield is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., serves on the board of advisors for After-School All-Stars DC, The Emerging Leaders Committee for the Plank Center in Public Relations, and is a graduate of Leadership Montgomery County, a nonprofit dedicated to developing future leaders and building work cultures that celebrate different ideas, perspectives, and backgrounds.

Alonda Thomas Ph.D.



Alonda Thomas is the Vice President and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). She leads the University's strategic communications, marketing, media relations, and brand and reputation management efforts.

Previously, Alonda was the Chief Communications Officer and Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications at Jackson State University. In 2021, she spearheaded the unveiling of the JSU Elevate Strategic Plan. Under her leadership, the team helped surpass the \$500,000 fundraising goal for the JSU Day of Giving campaign by producing a series of marketing videos to garner donations during the one-day event.

Thomas previously served as Director of Public Relations and Interim Vice President of Communications at Howard University. During her tenure, the team received several awards, including the Public Relations Society of America 2021 Bronze Anvil Award for Executive Communications, the 2020 Bronze Anvil Award for Twitter Engagement, and the PRWeek 2020 Best in a Crisis Award.

Hailing from Miami, Fla., Alonda received her bachelor's degree in public relations from FAMU, a master's degree in integrated marketing and management communications from Florida State

University, and her doctorate in urban higher education from JSU. Follow her newsletter, “Don’t Quote Me: Tips and Quips by PR Strategist Alonda Thomas,” exclusively on LinkedIn.

Jonathan Bertrand



Jonathan N. Bertrand is the Founder and CEO of the Social Media Research Institute (SMRI), a pioneering corporation dedicated to addressing the mental, behavioral, and societal impacts of social media. As a leading voice in the emerging field of Social Media Harm Reduction, Bertrand combines research, advocacy, and practical interventions to promote online safety and reduce the negative effects of digital platforms on individuals and communities.

With over 15 years of lived experience and expertise in Social Media Awareness, Bertrand has developed groundbreaking concepts, including Social Media First Aid and the Triple Conscious Theory, which explore the influence of online personas on user behavior. His work has led to collaborations with policymakers, health organizations, and advocacy groups to create solutions aimed at empowering users and improving digital well-being.

Bertrand’s leadership extends to partnerships and engagements with entities such as the Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Purpose Outreach Center, and the International Visitor Leadership Program & More. His approach blends theory and practice, ensuring that the solutions he champions are both actionable and ethical, fostering a safer, more responsible digital ecosystem on a global scale

Christina Compere Minor



Christina Compere is a seasoned social media manager and marketing professional with over 10 years of experience in the fields of social media marketing, event planning, and content creation. With a passion for growing businesses and amplifying their brand presence through the power of social media, Christina has successfully driven engagement for various organizations, including the #1 public HBCU.

In her role as the social media manager for Florida A&M University, Christina reached an impressive 16 million impressions in under 90 days. She played a key role in growing the @fam_u_1887 Instagram account. Her diverse skill set also includes business reviews, copywriting, graphic design, digital fundraising, public speaking, and proficiency in tools such as CapCut, TikTok, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere, and Microsoft Office.

Christina's journey began in 2014 when she started as an administrative intern at the FAMU Office of Alumni Affairs, where she helped create the @famualumni1887 page. Throughout her career, Christina has had the opportunity to work on high-profile projects, including serving as an associate producer and videographer for the Obama Re-Election Night 2012 segment. She also hosted the Environmental Youth Summit in 2013 at North Carolina A&T University, sponsored by the EPA and Toyota Green. Additionally, she worked as the executive producer of a children's TV show and contributed to live television programming for PTWWN TV, a worldwide Christian network.

A proud graduate of Florida A&M University with a degree in Broadcast Journalism, Christina's early career also included co-founding The BEETtv, a student-run music television show that reached over 80,000 homes in Tallahassee and had a nationwide presence on YouTube.