

Alumni Pride: Virbitsky wins gold with Olympic internship

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As the world watches snowboarders defy gravity and ice dancers twirl in perfect unison this month, former University of Wisconsin Oshkosh scholar-athlete Vanessa Virbitsky '08, will enjoy her own Olympic moment in Vancouver.

The UW Oshkosh spring 2008 commencement class speaker will serve as a press officer for the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, which begin Feb. 12.

Virbitsky, who recently served a six-month internship at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., is taking a break from her master's degree studies at Ball State in Muncie, Ind., to attend the games.

“This internship gave me the opportunity to explore many areas of sports communication, including media relations and placements, sponsor relations and publications,” she said. “I also worked closely with a team of dedicated individuals who are passionate about the Olympic Movement and its affect on society.”

As part of the internship, Virbitsky wrote the cover story for the 22,000-circulation Olympic Beat magazine, attended the 2010 U.S. Olympic Team Media Summit in Chicago, Ill., and facilitated photo shoots for Sports Illustrated, Men's Journal, Getty Images and USA Today.

Other duties included responding to media requests, posting updates to the [@USOlympic](#) Twitter account and coordinating USOC fan mail.

At Ball State, Virbitsky is working toward a master's degree in public relations with an emphasis in sports communication and serving as a graduate assistant sports information director for the softball team.

While at UW Oshkosh, Virbitsky, a native of Harrisburg, Pa., majored in journalism and political science with an emphasis in public relations and advertising. She worked for the Advance Titan and the Oshkosh Northwestern and interned with UWO's integrated marketing and communications department.

She was a two-sport athlete in gymnastics and outdoor track and field. In March 2008, she was named a Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Judy Kruckman Women's Gymnastics Scholar-Athlete Award.

“By taking advantage of every opportunity I could at UW Oshkosh, I was very prepared for both graduate school and my internship with the USOC,” Virbitsky said. “My journalism degree has made me a very well-rounded communicator, and I have felt well-prepared for writing, designing, reporting and other public relations functions.”

In her UW Oshkosh commencement address to fellow graduates, Virbitsky said, “By using our UW Oshkosh education — the one thing we will always have in common — we can proudly say that we are ready for the choices that lie ahead. We are ready to finish today and begin our tomorrows.”