

## **Alumni Pride: Virbitsky helps manage international media at 2012 London Olympics**

**by Natalie Johnson - Thursday, July 26, 2012**

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With the flexibility and determination of a former gymnast, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumna Vanessa Virbitsky '08, has turned her love of sports and writing into a winning career with the U.S. Olympic Committee.

As an associate communications manager with the USOC, Virbitsky is stationed in London for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games to work with international media covering America's 600 participating athletes.

"There's no greater honor than helping to tell the stories of incredible U.S. athletes—many of whom have inspired me to jump a little higher, push a little harder and dream a little bigger," she said. "Working for an organization with a mission to 'inspire all Americans' and knowing that something I've done during my workday has made the life of someone else a little better, a little brighter—that makes me proud."

Virbitsky, who double majored at UWO in journalism and political science, will be one of four top alumni to receive an Outstanding Young Alumni Award at a reception and dinner, during Homecoming weekend in October.

"In many ways, UW Oshkosh gave me the tools necessary to be a successful professional," she said. "From learning the ins-and-outs of AP writing style to presenting in front of large groups of people both in the gym and the classroom, UWO gave me the skills and confidence necessary for pursuing my dream. Without this base knowledge and the development of critical-thinking skills, I don't think I would be where I am now or certainly would not have gotten here so early in my career."

At UWO, Virbitsky also excelled as a two-sport athlete, competing in all-around on the gymnastics team and running hurdles and relays on the track and field team.

Winning the 2007 National Collegiate Gymnastics Team championship is one of her fondest memories.

"Our team was incredibly close knit, and we worked so hard every day for that accomplishment," she said. "I'll never forget the dance party that took place on the award stand, and I still wear the championship ring every day. "

After graduating from UWO, Virbitsky accepted a graduate assistantship at Ball State University, where she worked as the assistant coach for the Cardinals gymnastics team and started working on a master's degree in public relations with an emphasis in sport communication.

During her second year of graduate school, she was offered a six-month communications internship at the U.S. Olympic Committee. She took off a semester to help the USOC communications staff members

prepare for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

In December 2010, she returned to Ball State and took a second graduate assistantship—this time working in sports information.

“A few months into the semester, I was offered the opportunity to work with the USOC communications team at the Vancouver Games—a definite a turning point in my career,” she said. “At the 2010 Games, I assisted with media services at USA House, including several media days with USOC sponsor Allstate, and helped to book athletes for various U.S. morning shows, particularly NBC’s *Today Show*.”

Two weeks after graduating from Ball State, Virbitisky drove across the country to start a full-time communications position at the USOC in Colorado Springs, Colo.

“Vanessa is a valuable contributor to the U.S. Olympic Movement who has the potential to be a strong future leader and ambassador for the USOC,” said Lindsay Hogan, USOC marketing and communications director. “She is a tireless worker and positive force working on behalf of our athletes and the sharing of their journeys.”

During the past year, Virbitsky has been part of the team tasked with working with the approximately 20,000 credentialed international media covering the London Olympics. “To add some perspective, there are only 4,000 media credentialed for the Super Bowl,” she explained.

Her duties include writing executive speaking points, press releases and newsletters, conducting media training with Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls and coordinating and executing media interviews.

“The most rewarding part of my job so far has been my increased involvement at a strategic level within our organization—thinking about *why* we’re doing things, instead of just *what* we’re doing, which is now a daily focus,” she said.

For more information about the alumni awards dinner or Homecoming 2012, please contact the Alumni Relations Office at (920) 424-3449 or send an email to [alumni@uwosh.edu](mailto:alumni@uwosh.edu) for information.

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