

Our Man at the White House

June 19, 2009 12:15 PM Madison LaGrone
newwave@tulane.edu

Just eight years ago, Nick Shapiro was a fresh graduate of Tulane University with a bachelor's degree in communication. Today he works for President Barack Obama and says, "I can't imagine what could top this ? it is a thrill every day to walk into the White House."



A 2002 Tulane graduate, Nick Shapiro, left, became assistant press secretary for President Barack Obama, right, after gaining public relations savvy in New Orleans. (Official White House photo by Pete Souza)

Shapiro is assistant press secretary for President Obama, working 24/7 with reporters to answer their questions and make sure the president's policies are communicated effectively to the public. He resides in Washington, D.C., and works daily in the White House.

"I answer reporters' questions on issues from homeland security to transportation to technology," says Shapiro. Citing the complications in illuminating a broad political message, he works to make President Obama's goals "more transparent to the

American people.”

Of course, a lucrative job in Washington did not simply fall into Shapiro's lap. He was a dedicated laborer on John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign. After Kerry's defeat in the election, Shapiro quickly bounced back with a job with the Obama for America effort. He served as the deputy press secretary throughout the 2008 election campaign.

Shapiro talks about the sense of fulfillment he feels at this exciting point in his career and emphasizes that his time at Tulane was essential in preparing him for a career in the “real world.” Originally from Connecticut, Shapiro chose to attend Tulane for its location in the incomparable city of New Orleans, but he never expected to have such remarkable opportunities.

He cites John Patton, former professor and chair of the [communication department](#), as a major influence in his college career and, in fact, the reason he became a communication major in the first place.

“Right off the bat, I had a real interest in learning about the American presidency and the communication side of that,” says Shapiro.

He credits Tulane with giving students “the flexibility to do independent studies.” In his case, that meant interning at the House of Blues, and then working at New Orleans public relations firm Deveney Communication starting in his junior year. Shapiro gained experience in the industry, running public relations accounts for a variety of clients, and then began to work for Louisiana political campaigns directly after graduation.

“If it wasn't for the mentoring of John Deveney and the team at Deveney Communication, I would never have gotten this amazing opportunity,” Shapiro says, encouraging all Tulane students to look for internships. He says his experience at Tulane and at Deveney Communication was essential, and he can't thank them both enough.

Madison LaGrone is a senior majoring in communication at Tulane University.