

Since the first tornado warning I can remember, I've been hooked on weather. While I aspired to be a meteorologist, as an undergraduate I also found myself fascinated with sociology, anthropology, and excelling in courses in political science and communication. I earned my B.S. in Interpersonal Communication from Ohio University in 1999 and gained valuable experience with a leading global consulting firm working with leading Fortune 500 companies. However, it wasn't long before I returned to school to pursue my true passion – meteorology. In 2004, I completed my M.S. in Earth & Atmospheric Science from Georgia Tech. After graduation, I set off to pursue my career in meteorology, never envisioning the opportunity to combine my two backgrounds.

When I joined The Weather Channel, my perspective changed. In my current role, I am able to draw from my varied knowledge bases and participate in the development of new weather forecast products on the Local on the 8s and Weatherscan. From focus group testing to responding to viewer feedback, I frequently find myself at the intersection between meteorology and communicating with our viewers. It is truly fascinating, and often surprising, to hear how our viewers perceive and respond to weather forecast information. Everything from how to read a radar map to understanding weather warnings and utilizing the latest technology, brings a new appreciation for how even the "simplest" product can be dramatically misunderstood by the public.

Another important part of my role is to lead our partnership with the emergency management community. As part of our local hurricane coverage, my team is responsible for gathering and disseminating customized Emergency Management Bulletins with evacuation orders, shelter locations, travel information, and specialized content directly from emergency managers. During the unprecedented 2005 hurricane season, my team sent over 400 Emergency Management Bulletins including during Hurricanes Katrina, Ophelia, Rita and Wilma, and continue to expand our efforts. Once again, communicating effectively while coordinating volumes of real-time weather data is a tremendous challenge for our group.

My interest in WAS\*IS unfolds from all of these experiences. After the hurricane season of 2005, I gained a new understanding for the interdependence between many organizations we work with, and how these strong partnerships make it possible for our viewers to rely on The Weather Channel as a valuable source of information as they make lifesaving decisions during extreme weather events. I also learned more about the important role and responsibility of the media. While often falling under scrutiny, there is potential to bridge the gaps between research, academia, the private sector, the government sector and the public by using the reach and technology of the media. Combined with advances in meteorology and strides in research, these strong partnerships can further enhance our understanding and effectiveness of the public response to these events, and ultimately, save lives.

While recognizing that challenges do exist between and among the sectors, I hope that by participating in WAS\*IS I will have the opportunity to continue to build on the momentum and success WAS\*IS has already created and tap into the potential that lies in our collaboration. I look forward to actively participating with members from research, the private sector, and the public sector, while representing (maybe even de-mystifying!) the role the media plays in all of this. Most importantly, I hope that as we share new ideas and projects, learn from case studies, examine the latest research, we will discover innovative new methods for the future and can take our positive experiences into the field.