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Writing as a Nonprofit Leadership Tool

By Samantha Weinberg

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Professional Writing in the Department of English in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of Kennesaw State University

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Methods and Methodology..... | 7 |
| Literature Review..... | 12 |
| Job Advertisements Analysis..... | 43 |
| Nonprofit Management Interviews..... | 49 |
| Discussion..... | 63 |
| Conclusion..... | 70 |
| Appendices..... | 75 |
| Works Cited..... | 81 |
| Resume..... | 88 |

Introduction

The mutual reciprocity of connecting writing students to community engagement projects within the nonprofit sector has been well established, especially in the areas of service learning, community-based learning, and internships (see Stevens, Addams, Bouelle, Rehling, McEachern, Matthieu, Towey). Through these activities, students can connect their classroom knowledge to the world beyond classrooms for purposes of learning while also helping their communities where writers and resources may be sparse. When writers utilize their skills to work towards a nonprofit's mission, they can help create change in their communities and impact the lives of individuals in need. However, the role and impact of writers in nonprofits does not stop at these educational experiences, but rather writers can continue to address essential community and public challenges through nonprofit careers.

The nonprofit sector has grown into a massive industry composed of 1.3 million charitable nonprofits and 12.3 million employees (National Council of Nonprofits). In fact, the nonprofit sector is now classified as a major industry in the United States with the third largest workforce in the country (Salamon and Newhouse). As a major industry, the nonprofit sector offers an abundance of employment opportunities. For writers interested in building off of these service-learning experiences and starting a career in the nonprofit field, there are some ideal positions to begin their nonprofit work. Positions within the nonprofit sector such as grant writing, communications, and social media are very writing-centric and provide logical opportunities for writers to begin their nonprofit careers.

It is clear by the nature of their responsibilities that these writing and communication roles, such as grant writers or communication specialists, require strong writing skills and the production of written deliverables. However, these are not the only roles within nonprofits where writing skills are beneficial and useful. Mastery of the written word is a helpful trait for those in many nonprofit positions, including those in management, administrative, and executive roles. In fact, job descriptions in advertisements for nonprofit executive and management positions, for jobs such as Executive Director, CEO, Vice President, and Director of Development, often call for “excellent written communication skills,” or some variety of communication or writing skills, as a necessary trait for ideal candidates. Recent job postings for nonprofit leadership roles on job advertisement websites like *WorkforGood.com* display consistent references to a need for writing ability for candidates through descriptions of desired writing skills, experience, and requirements.

I have had the unique experience to be studying writing while growing my own career in the nonprofit sector through internships and employment at multiple nonprofit organizations. Through my experiences, I observed not only how impactful and essential effective written communication is for nonprofit success, but also how pervasive and important writing is throughout nonprofit organizations in different departments and staff levels. I saw that writing is crucial to advertise services; attract and keep donors; update board members; establish policies and procedures; apply for funding; develop business and strategic plans; distribute annual reports; create brand awareness; establish a social media and online presence; and much more. These actions are also discussed in the scholarly nonprofit literature, but specifically how writing contributes to the effectiveness of these activities, as well as the organization’s overall mission, is not clearly defined.

As a writer seeking career growth in the nonprofit sector, I found the ubiquitous nature of writing in nonprofit organizations interesting. I discovered that I could also bring value to other projects and responsibilities by lending my writing skills to projects outside of my roles. On top of being relevant across departments, I also observed how the need for writing skills did not decrease with the ascension into management or executive positions. Managers, even top leadership, were also required to use the written word to communicate effectively, as also noted in job descriptions. The higher-level administrators and executives with whom I worked needed to use writing for important activities and were effective communicators, even though many were not writers by training.

In my experience, job responsibilities can vary dramatically by the size of the nonprofit organization and its available funding. While some organizations may be able to have specialists cover the writing focused responsibilities such as grants or communications, other organizations may find that all writing falls to other staff members, including the management team, whose expertise may lie in areas other than writing. This observation of nonprofit management often wearing many hats and the potential challenge of lack of writing expertise is echoed in the literature by facilitators of writing internships and service-learning projects with nonprofits (McEachern, Rehling). This writing that management staff members are responsible for then may be limited to specific higher-level communications, such as board documents or strategic plans, or it might include all types of materials depending upon the nonprofit's size and staffing level.

Although job advertisements mention writing skills, and I have personally witnessed the value of writing, there are limited academic and professional resources that discuss the value and role of writing for nonprofit managers. While limited, the resources that are available do confirm

my observation that writing is a necessary skill for management. Considerations of the desire for excellent written communications skills and observations of writing at the management level prompted several questions that shape this research: What is meant by the term “excellent written communication skills” in job description for nonprofit management and administrative positions? What kinds of writing skills and deliverables are critical to the responsibilities of nonprofit managers and leaders? How can writing skills impact both the effectiveness of a nonprofit manager and the organization as a whole? This capstone project will use primary and secondary research projects to answer these guiding research questions while ascertaining the kinds of writing nonprofit managers perform and the kinds of writing skills necessary to be an effective nonprofit administrator at many levels within an organization.

What follows in this capstone is an exploration of how writing is viewed and used by nonprofit managers, administrators, and leaders. Since this research revolves around exploring writing activities, and the term “writing” can be very broadly defined, it is important to clarify what is meant by writing in context of this project. There is much scholarship that explores the evolving forms of writing. However, for purposes of this capstone project, discussion of writing is focused primarily on the use of written language to communicate messages as is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: writing is “the action of one who writes, in various senses; the penning or forming of letters or words; the using of written characters for purposes of record, transmission of ideas, etc.” (“Writing, n.”). The use of written communication includes both digital and print mediums. Although this research is focused solely on written communication, this does not dismiss that writing has evolved to include a range of activities, including visual communication, which is much discussed in the literature and most certainly could be further explored in relationship to the nonprofit sector, but that is beyond the scope of this project.

Additionally, it is important to note that “communication” is a frequently used term in nonprofit literature to refer to writing activities, which is logical because as the *Oxford English Dictionary* points out, communication is “the transmission or exchange of information, knowledge, or ideas, by means of speech, writing, mechanical or electronic media, etc.” (“Communication, n.”). In addition, Luke Strongman sets forth that “writing is about communicating with words” (Strongman xiii). Because, as the OED and Strongman identify, writing is a way of communicating, and due to the frequent use of the term communication in the nonprofit literature, this research will also explore the term communication, especially where it relates to the written form or activities that would inherently involve writing for managers. Communication, as Todd Cohen explains, is a primary responsibility of nonprofit leaders: “Most of what managers do every day is communicate – with staff, board members, volunteers, donors, government, other agencies, the public, and the media” (Cohen 85).

Furthermore, there are many terms and job titles used in reference to nonprofit leaders and leadership positions including manager, administrator, executive, president, officer, and director. Additionally, roles, titles, and responsibilities of those in management positions may vary drastically by the size of the nonprofit. Because of this variance from organization to organization and in order to capture the range of roles that perform leadership and management responsibilities, this capstone will primarily utilize the terms manager and management to refer generally to management, leadership, executive, or supervisory duties within nonprofit organizations. With that said, there is some variance in the terminology between scholarly sources, and at times other leadership titles might be used. It is important to note, however, that this capstone does not examine board members as management, and rather it is specifically focused on staff members.

The research in this capstone affirms that the current literature, including job advertisements and interviews with active nonprofit managers and executives, confirm that strong writing skills are essential for nonprofit managers. The interviews undertaken as a part of this project will further articulate the value of writing and its impact on nonprofit organizations as well as the perceptions and understanding of what is meant by “excellent written communication skills” through the eyes of nonprofit managers. If effective writing is imperative for the success of nonprofit managers, then strengthening writing at this level will ultimately benefit the individuals, communities, and missions served by nonprofit organizations.

This research is valuable for multiple audiences. It will primarily be valuable for writing or English students looking to be prepared for long-term careers in the nonprofit sector or current nonprofit writers, like me, who seek to grow their career and apply their skills in leadership roles. Understanding the specific role of writing in nonprofit leadership will empower these writers to articulate the value they can bring to management positions and assist with career growth. Additionally, this research is also valuable for nonprofit managers who are not writers but seek to strengthen their skills and for students in other fields seeking careers in the nonprofit sector. Last, this research will benefit faculty members in professional writing programs develop curriculum to prepare students interested in connecting their writing skills and abilities to careers in the nonprofit industry.

Methods and Methodology

The primary objective of this capstone project is to answer the following three questions: First, what is meant by the term excellent written communication skills? Second, what kinds of writing skills and deliverables are critical to the responsibilities of nonprofit managers? Third, how can writing skills impact both the effectiveness of a nonprofit manager and the organization as a whole? To answer these questions, I utilized multiple methods in my approach including a review of existing scholarship about writing and management in the nonprofit sector, an analysis of job advertisements for management and administrative roles in nonprofits; and a set of interviews with nonprofit leaders through an IRB approved research study. The methodology behind this approach allowed me to explore the scholarly and professional discussion regarding the role of writing in nonprofit management and to discover the value that nonprofit managers place on writing from employers and individuals in the field. In addition, at the end of this project I reflect about my own experience as a writer, intern, and professional in the nonprofit sector, which provides a brief, but autoethnographic examination of what I learned about writing through my work in relation to what was uncovered from the following research components of this project.

First, I conducted a thorough review of secondary sources, including books, chapters and journal articles, to identify any literature that discussed nonprofit management, administration, or leadership in connection with writing or communication. I also reviewed resources devoted to nonprofit management skills and nonprofit management education. As resources were limited, I expanded the research scope to review sources that discussed writing and communication in the

broader nonprofit scholarship, not just limited to management applications. Additionally, I reviewed professional sources that discussed these topics as well. Sources reviewed included both print and digital materials. After the relevant sources were identified and reviewed, the key information was compiled into a literature review.

I then performed a review and analysis of online advertisements for nonprofit management and administrative positions found on *WorkforGood.com*. I chose this website as the source of the advertisements because it only promotes nonprofit opportunities. This review encompassed all available advertisements on February 1, 2020, under the “Executive/Senior Management” category on the job posting website, which allowed the review to focus solely on management positions. On the date selected, there were forty-two positions posted in this category. In order to identify the required writing skills needed for nonprofit management positions, each advertisement was analyzed for inclusion of any variations of the terms “writing” and “communication” as well as for mentions of writing-related activities, deliverables, and skills. Additionally, any reference to stakeholders or audiences, such as donors or board members, were recorded as well. This data was then reviewed for trends and themes to discover what written communication skills were necessary for nonprofit administration roles and what deliverables these positions were required to create.

Upon completion of the literature review and job advertisement analysis, I proceeded with primary research. An IRB protocol was submitted and approved for a research study that explored the value of writing for nonprofit management by conducting interviews with nonprofit managers and administrators. The primary inclusion criteria for this IRB study participants was that participants were all required to currently hold leadership roles within active nonprofit organizations. I was open to individuals who held any management-level position.

Participants were recruited through emails for confidential, recorded, telephone interviews, and an informed consent process was followed. In total, six interviews were conducted with individuals in management level roles at different nonprofits, primarily in the Metro Atlanta area. Interviews were held with individuals holding the following job titles: Interim CEO, Executive Director, President & CEO, and Associate Area Director. The managers' experiences ranged from relatively new managers to very experienced executives. None of the participants held writing-focused roles. The study intentionally included managers from different nonprofits in order to obtain a range of perspectives and to explore the potential impact of multiple variables such as organization size, management experience, and job responsibilities. The nonprofits represented by the participants varied in size, ranging from a small, newer organization with only one employee to a well-established nonprofit with over four hundred employees. Additionally, as this study did not focus on a particular service area of the nonprofit sector, such as education or food security, the managers all represented a range of missions.

Through these telephone interviews, the nonprofit leaders were asked a variety of questions regarding their experiences with writing, including the primary study questions listed below:

- What is your current job title?
- What other positions have you held in your organization?
- Please provide a brief overview of your primary responsibilities.
- Job descriptions for roles like yours in nonprofit management often list “excellent written communication skills” as a necessary skill for candidates. What kinds of written communication do you use to perform your management responsibilities?
- In your role, what types of writing deliverables do you create?
- On an average day, what percent of your time do you spend writing?

- What kind of training, background, or formal education in writing or communication practices do you have?
- As someone in a management role, how does writing impact your effectiveness as a manager or your work to achieve your organization's mission?
- In what areas of writing do you wish you had stronger skills or abilities and how would this impact your work?
- Do you use other writers to create written communication or to help you with writing?
- What positions within your nonprofit do the most writing and what type of writing does that entail?
- What kinds of courses or academic experiences would help prepare nonprofit administrators for the writing demands you and others face?

Participants provided reflections and answers to these questions through personal and confidential interviews that were conducted during April 2020.¹ As all interviews were confidential, identities and employers of participants will not be discussed in this project. Rather, aliases and job titles will be the only identifiers utilized. Interviews were transcribed upon completion and the qualitative data was reviewed for trends and themes to discover what written communication skills the participants utilized in their management roles, what deliverables they were required to create, and how written communication impacted their effectiveness as a manager and their work to achieve their mission.

¹ These interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. While this did not affect the data collection process, it may have impacted the availability of potential participants. Some participants at times briefly mentioned the virus's impact on their work, but all attempts were made to focus reflection on typical work situations.

Last, I utilized a limited autoethnographic approach to briefly reflect upon my own personal experience as a writer in the nonprofit sector. This reflection allowed me to consider the role of written communication in different nonprofit contexts and explore how I utilized writing as a fledgling manager myself. My reflection was a valuable component of this project as it adds a perspective not explored in the other research methods, that of a writing student directly growing a career in nonprofit administration. The inclusion of my reflection also allowed me to connect what was learned through the various research components, further identify the necessary writing skills and deliverables, and explore what constitutes effective written communication. My reflection validates, as demonstrated through the literature review, job advertisement analysis, and management interviews, that writing is a critical component of nonprofit management work.

Literature Review

Resources and Overview

The nonprofit sector is a substantial employer in the US economy, and there exists a plethora of resources, both academic and professional, available to support those who work in nonprofit management and administration. The range of available resources include academic journals such as [*Nonprofit Management & Leadership*](#), [*Nonprofit Business Advisor*](#), [*International Journal of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*](#), and [*VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*](#); professional publications dedicated to nonprofits including [*Advancing Philanthropy*](#), [*The Chronicle of Philanthropy*](#), [*Nonprofit Quarterly*](#), and [*The NonProfit Times*](#); and digital resources including [*GrantSpace*](#), [*Candid*](#) (previously the Foundation Center), and [*GuideStar*](#). Training and other resources can be found through membership in professional organizations such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals, National Council of Nonprofits, National Association of Nonprofit Professionals, Grant Writers Association, Association of Certified Nonprofit Professionals, Society for Nonprofits, and Young Nonprofit Professionals Network. In addition to these publications and groups, additional training and resources can also sometimes be found through local resources such as community foundations or other nonprofit resource groups, like the Georgia Center for Nonprofits. Furthermore, there also are many avenues for nonprofit education and professional development, and preparation for nonprofit management careers can begin through a variety of degree programs, including public administration and nonprofit management.

Although the aforementioned publications and organizations offer resources related to nonprofit management, there is limited literature that directly focuses on nonprofit writing and communication, and even less devoted specifically to nonprofit management's use of writing or written communication. Often, nonprofit management resources focus on broader leadership skills and omit, or minimally cover, writing responsibilities. In fact, scholars have commented not only on the value of communication, but also on the need for more studies in this area. In "Connecting Nonprofit and Communication Scholarship: A Review of Key Issues and a Meta-Theoretical Framework for Future Research," Matthew A. Koschmann, et al. specifically note that even though communication is important to the execution on many nonprofit activities, communication scholarship has not been well applied to nonprofit studies:

Communication is central to nonprofit organizations and the activities of the nonprofit sector. Fundraising and donor relations, client relationships and service delivery, volunteer management and board governance, collaboration and cross sector partnerships—all involve dynamic processes of human interaction.... Yet despite the importance of communication to the nonprofit sector and the research done in our field, communication scholarship is noticeably absent from, and has had relatively little impact on, the interdisciplinary field of nonprofit studies. (Koschmann et. al. 201)

In the above analysis, Koschmann utilizes the term communication, rather than writing, in discussing nonprofit services and interpersonal activities. One common trend in both Koschmann's work and the body of available research is that most discussion of writing, or of activities that clearly involve writing, are included through discussions about communication, which is logical since writing is a form of communication. Most of the nonprofit management resources utilize the term communication, with the use of writing often limited to discussions

regarding grants or proposals. David Horton Smith's *Dictionary of Nonprofit Terms and Concepts* defines nonprofit communication as "the sharing of in-person and mediated information and emotional messages to further the mission of a nonprofit group, both within and across its boundaries to outsiders" (49). As writing is a written way of sharing these messages, and many, if not most, communication activities involve some level of writing, this chapter begins with review of the broader discussion of nonprofit communications, as it relates to management. Communication, which might refer to activities completed by a department, a combination of people, or an individual, is an essential skill for nonprofit management. Donna M. Raphael and Dale Nesbary assert that communication skills are critical for nonprofit leadership:

Effective communication is one of the key components of leadership in the public and nonprofit sectors. . . . Communication involves the skills of creating an effective message, analyzing the audience, listening to and understanding the audience's needs, knowing how to use the tools to bring the message to the audience and to determine which tool is right for the situation, and using the right timing for desired results. (Raphael and Nesbary 134)

Although Raphael and Nesbary do not explicitly use the term "writing" here, the actions they describe, such as analyzing an audience's needs and crafting a message, are steps that can be followed through the writing process. The act of writing could be how an effective message is created. Additionally, Raphael and Nesbary refer to the use of tools to deliver messages, and written communication activities and genres are options of tools that leadership can utilize. Additionally, while Raphael and Nesbary do not specifically refer to rhetoric in their discussion, the process they describe of analyzing an audience's needs and crafting the appropriate message

for that audience based on the situation's context could make a connection to rhetorical studies, which is a potential area of future exploration and study.

Stakeholders and Audiences

Throughout the literature, a consistent theme emerges: nonprofit managers are required to communicate with a variety of stakeholders. These stakeholders are the intended audiences of nonprofit communications. In addition, as Raphael and Nesbary point out, communication is one of the ways managers are able to communicate with the diverse groups to whom they are accountable. Koschmann explains that stakeholder communication is represented well in the available literature: "By far the largest amount of communication research in and of the nonprofit sector focuses on stakeholder communication" (208). The large amount of research dedicated to stakeholder communication as mentioned by Koschmann tells us that communicating with these groups is an important activity. Additionally, stakeholder communication does not refer to just one audience. Nonprofit managers and administrators need to possess the skills to communicate with varying audiences, both internal and external of the organization (see Knox, Raphael and Nesbary, Joyaux, Koschmann, and Souder). Furthermore, Raphael and Nesbary add that due to the differing needs of audiences, communications require more than a single, blanket approach as messages might need to be tailored for each audience: "Public administrators speak to many internal and external stakeholders. Each audience has different needs and interests. Therefore, each audience may need a different message" (Raphael and Nesbary 141). Nonprofit stakeholders might include employees, board members, customers, elected officials and other authorities, general public, the news media, government organizations, volunteers, corporations, individuals, and donors (see Raphael and Nesbary, Souder, Furlich, Sand, Joyaux). The ability then to communicate with many groups of people, such as those listed here, who may have

differing interests and needs, is beneficial for nonprofit managers to possess. Simone Joyaux emphasizes this leadership trait when she explains that nonprofit “leaders communicate easily at all levels and with diverse constituents” (138). Because nonprofit constituents are diverse, so are the communications and messages that are appropriate for each. Thus, nonprofit managers need to be skilled in understanding the needs of their stakeholders and being able to appropriately tailor and target their communication to best meet each group’s needs.

Variance in Communication Responsibilities

In *Nonprofit Management 101*, Kim Hendler and Shelly Cryer affirm the value of communication skills for nonprofit managers and assert that “strong written and verbal communications are critical” (49). They include written and verbal communication on their list of universal nonprofit leadership skills, along with fundraising, strategic planning, identifying talent, political savvy and confidence, financial management, and humility (49-50). The inclusion of written communication skills with other critical activities, such as financial management and strategic planning, on this universal list demonstrates the high level of importance of these skills. The authors also explain that delegation of responsibilities vary depending on organization size: “In the smallest nonprofits, a single person handles all responsibilities (probably with help from volunteers, and while working closely with board members). In larger organizations, job functions can be organized in countless ways. Leadership responsibilities are apt to be spread out among numerous senior staff members concentrating on specific areas” (Hendler and Cryer 42). Thus, since written communication is necessary for leaders, and leadership responsibilities may be delegated in different manners based on organization structure, then the writing responsibilities required by managers may be variable as well.

As Hendler and Cryer point out, variations in organization size and structure affect leadership responsibilities and activities. Communication activities and staff structure within nonprofit organizations are also variable from organization to organization depending upon organizational capacity. Some organizations might have an entire communications department, others might have one communications specialist, or others might not have any staff members dedicated to these tasks and the communication responsibilities might be combined within another role. Rebecca Walton asserts that as organizations differ, so do their documentation needs: “Thus, technical communicators cannot effectively meet needs with a one-size-fits-all approach. Nonprofit organizations differ greatly, and technical communicators must expect documentation needs to differ as well” (Walton 14). While the methods or logistics nonprofits use to execute communication activities might be inconsistent, what scholars have consistently shown is that communications in nonprofit leadership is an important activity.

Fundraising/Development

One such important activity that relies heavily on written communication is fundraising, also known as development. While organizational size and structure may vary, Drew Dolan’s 2002 study revealed that variations in organizations, such as size, age, and area of focus, did not affect the training needs of administrators. His survey of nonprofit administrators identified fundraising and grant writing as the top two skills needed by professionals in these management roles. Communication ranked sixth, behind volunteer administration, planning, and cooperative ventures (Dolan). Individuals tasked with development are responsible for communicating with donors, a key stakeholder for organizations, and securing the necessary financial resources needed to execute their organization’s efforts. Other sources, such as Elizabeth A. S. Benefield and Richard L. Edwards, support Dolan’s findings that fundraising is a critical responsibility for

managers: “A major function of nonprofit managers, particularly those who occupy chief executive officer positions, is securing resources for their organization” (Benefield and Edwards 61). Hence, research reveals that fundraising is one of the primary responsibilities of nonprofit managers.

When searching for scholarship relevant to writing and nonprofits, grant writing dominates much of the available resources. There are countless resources devoted to grant writing; in fact, there are too many to review in the context of this project. The quantity of material on the subject of grant writing is not surprising as surveys and data have consistently established that grant writing is a needed skill (see Dolan and Sand). It is also not unusual to see grants receiving substantial coverage in nonprofit management resources. For example, there is an entire chapter devoted to grant proposals in Richard L. Edwards and John A. Yankey’s *Effectively Managing Nonprofit Organizations* (see chapter by Henry), and in Michael Sand’s *How to Manage an Effective Nonprofit Organization: From Writing an Managing Grants to Fundraising, Board Development, and Strategic Planning*, there are two chapters devoted to grants, and not one chapter devoted to communications or other writing skills. Given the omnipresence of grants in the available resources regarding nonprofit management and the affirmation of the value of these skills through surveys such as Dolan’s, it is clear that all nonprofit managers need the ability to write grants effectively.

In addition to grants, there are a variety of other written deliverables that fundraisers can utilize to engage donors and raise funds for their organization. According to Adrian Sargeant and Jen Shang, these written deliverables can include fundraising plans, case statements, fundraising letters, online fundraising, and marketing materials (Sargeant and Shang). Deliverables such as these are primarily utilized to communicate with potential or current donors. Michael Sand

points out the value of using public relations to make prospective donors aware of a nonprofit's work prior to making financial asks: "Individuals are more likely to give to an agency when they are aware of the agency's services before they are asked for funds. Agencies should develop and implement public relations efforts before fundraising begins, so prospective donors are knowledgeable of the agency and its programs and needs" (Sand). Thus, proactively communicating with potential donors can assist with fundraising activities. In addition, there is direct evidence that reveals effective communications with donors can yield an increase in donations. Donor relations, a specific subspecialty of fundraising, explicitly connects effective communication to an organization's ability to retain donors. Donor retention is imperative because half of the individuals who make contributions to an organization do not make a subsequent gift after their first donation (Burk). Multiple scholars (see Joyaux, Sargeant, Shang, Wiggill, Burk, and Sand) have commented on the role that communication plays in building and sustaining donor relationships.

In *Donor Centered Fundraising*, Penelope Burk establishes that communications with donors directly affected giving, especially repeated giving, and efforts to retain donors:

We found that 46% of donors decided to stop giving for reasons that are tied to lack of meaningful information or to a feeling that their gift is not appreciated...An amazing 93% of respondents said they would definitely or probably give again the next time they were asked to a not for profit that provided them with meaningful information on their gifts at work. (22-23)

Therefore, communicating with donors to express appreciation for their contributions and report on how their gifts were used in support of a mission can in turn lead to more donations. Burk's data concretely demonstrates the impact communication can have on donations, which as a result

affects the financial resources of the organization. She even takes this impact one step further by directly connecting communication to fundraising performance: “Meaningful information on their gifts at work is the key to donors’ repeat and increased giving. Communication is the process by which information is delivered. Fundraising under-performance, therefore, is actually a failure to communicate” (Burk 19). Since writing is a communication method and the managers charged with fundraising within a nonprofit use writing to communicate with donors, it can be postulated that poor or ineffective writing is likely a cause of fundraising underperformance and lack of sustainable and long-term donor relationships.

Burk also shares a range of communication methods and deliverables that can be used to communicate with donors. While she includes some non-writing activities such as phone calls, on-site visits, and donor recognition events, many of her examples are written documents such as thank you letters, newsletters, emails, annual reports, and website content. Burk also explains that donor communication is most effective when executed by the organization’s leadership, especially CEOs and board members. Therefore, if fundraising is an essential ability that nonprofit managers and administrators should possess, and effective communication practices are crucial for fundraising and donor relations, then communications, and specifically writing, must be a necessary skill and facet of fundraising expertise for nonprofit managers.

Simone Joyaux supports Burk’s claims and also insists that communication, especially written communication, is a critical fundraising skill:

Because effective communication is essential to effective fund development, each fundraiser needs to know the basics. Even if you hire professional copywriters and speechwriters, improve your own communications skills. Every leader— especially fundraisers— needs to communicate well. In practice, communicating well often means

learning to write more persuasively since 98 percent of the content of your organization is conveyed in written form. (257)

Here, Joyaux explicitly calls out the need for leaders themselves to possess strong writing skills, regardless of whether or not they have staff to help with writing or fundraising. She further explains that the writing skills needed for managers is necessary because a large part of organizational communication is written. Although the ninety-eight percent statistic she utilizes is not reinforced with data, she is referencing the substantial amount of writing, as shown by other scholars, that are used in nonprofits. Last, Joyaux specifically mentions the need for “learning to write more persuasively.” While she does not expand on this point, the use of persuasive writing in leadership communication certainly is an important note that warrants more exploration and research.

Marlene Wiggill also expands upon the impact of communication on donors, as set forth by Burke and others, by connecting communication to both managerial and organizational effectiveness:

Therefore, strategic communication and relationship management play an important role in the effective management of NPOs. Communicating strategically and building strong relationships is particularly important in the case of donors because strong relationships could result in repeated and increased donations . . . Without planned communication and relationship management, many NPOS find it difficult to achieve their mission and goals. (Wiggill 226-227)

Wiggill identifies two causes for nonprofits to struggle with communicating effectively and achieving their goals: inadequate financial resources and insufficient training in communications

(Wiggill 227). The lack of financial resources causes nonprofits to not have communication departments and combine communication responsibilities within other roles or departments. Those individuals then tasked with communications activities may lack appropriate communications training, as identified by Wiggill. Because of the lack of communication training and resources, Wiggill explains her belief that nonprofits are not communicating with stakeholders in the most effective manner, which impacts their ability to accomplish their mission and goals. She firmly advocates for the use of communication strategies and plans to help nonprofit organizations achieve their goals.

Wiggill elaborates on the use of plans and explains that “The manager is responsible for the preparation and implementation of communication strategy and policy to the organization’s stakeholders” (228). Although she does not explicitly mention writing, communication plans are typically written documents, and as Penelope Burk established, donor communication typically involves written communication activities. The Georgia Center for Nonprofits sets forth the following regarding communications plans:

A good communications plan can help you deliver clear, consistent messages while allowing you to budget and spend more strategically on communications efforts. Much as a strategic plan provides a guide for your organization's programmatic efforts, a communications plan serves as a roadmap for developing and disseminating all materials and messages from your nonprofit to achieve clear goals. (“FAQ: Marketing & Communications”)

This overview describes that a communications plan should cover key messages, goals, strategies, tools, obstacles, roles and responsibilities, competition analysis, style guide, trainings, and evaluation measures. Therefore, in order to effectively communicate with stakeholders,

nonprofit organizations should have a communication plan in place. Furthermore, since these communication plans guide organizational activities, it can be assumed that the creation and writing of these plans could be a managerial responsibility.

Internal Documentation

One way nonprofit managers can communicate to both internal and external stakeholders is through the use of documentation. Rebecca Walton conducted an especially relevant study, “Technical Communication & the Needs of Small Nonprofit Organizations,” that narrows the conversation from the broader communications umbrella and begins to explore the value of writing for nonprofits, and specifically the need nonprofits have for documentation. She also asserts that technical communicators are especially well suited to help nonprofits meet their needs for documentation. Although Walton utilizes the term “communication,” she is clearly referring to writing given that her research focuses on written documentation. Walton contends that “Nonprofit organizations need documentation and written materials for a variety of purposes, from fundraising to planning to collaboration” (Walton 4). Walton also points out that this documentation “serves as a useful tool for stakeholders, promotes a common understanding of important information, provides proof of activities, expenses, and outcomes” (19-20). The documentation Walton refers to includes the following types of deliverables: print and digital internal documents such as manuals, lists, policies, procedures, strategic and business plans, donor databases, style guides, as well as documents for external use. Externally, she explains, documents assist nonprofits in communicating with stakeholders, which works to demonstrate accountability and effectiveness to stakeholders outside of the organization and its staff. Walton explains that the types of documentation mentioned above fall under technical communication, and that technical communicators are especially well-suited to help meet this need because they

possess “specialized knowledge in the written language and document development and design, needs analysis, and communication and rhetorical strategizing” (3). Therefore, technical communication knowledge or training is one beneficial area of study for nonprofit leaders. Additionally, although Walton is the only scholar included in this review to explicitly use rhetorical terminology, it is worth mentioning that exploring nonprofit management and writing from a rhetorical perspective could be another valuable area of study for nonprofit scholarship.

Written Deliverables

In addition to the examples of documents described by Walton, nonprofit managers and administrators may need to create or be involved in the creation of a myriad of other written communication deliverables. Lawrence Souder’s “A Review of Research on Nonprofit Communications from Mission Statements to Annual Reports,” details some of the many written deliverables nonprofits commonly create. He specifically cites mission statements, strategic plans, grant proposals, donor appeals, outreach and public relations materials, social media, emails, annual reports, and volunteer communication. In addition, Donna M. Raphael and Dale Nesbary, expand the list of written deliverables noted by Walton to include “newsletters, flyers, press releases, videos, speeches, meetings, special events, websites, position papers, public service announcements, letters, conferences, posters, fact sheets, speeches, and annual reports” (Raphael and Nesbary 141). Michael Sand covers some of the same examples as mentioned above and he also adds marketing materials including direct mail and advertising. In *Nonprofit Management 101: A Complete and Practical Guide for Leaders and Professionals*, Darian Heyman, like the others, covers many of the previously mentioned deliverables but also includes blogging, website content, marketing plans and materials, and newsletters. In *Writing for a Good Cause*, Joseph Barbato and Danielle S. Furlich not only detail a variety of collateral, primarily

development materials, but they also emphasize the persuasive nature of many of these written deliverables. In addition to the previously mentioned deliverables, their list also includes advertising campaigns, presentation materials, video scripts, thank you letters, grant reports, case statements, annual reports, brochures, newsletters, emails, and web pages. In addition, their book also places a significant focus on the pieces of writing that go into grants and proposals. See table 1 below for a consolidated list of written deliverables as mentioned by the sources in this section:

Table 1

Sample Written Deliverables Produced by Nonprofit Managers

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Action plans | Email | Policies and procedures |
| Advertisements | Flyers | Position papers |
| Annual Report | Fundraising letters | Press releases |
| Blogs | Fundraising plan | Speeches |
| Brochures | Grant reports | Strategic plans |
| Business case | Grants and proposals | Style guides |
| Case for support | Manuals | Thank you letters |
| Communication plans | Marketing plan | Video scripts |
| Conference posters | Mission statement | Vision statement |
| Direct mail | Newsletters | Website |

Sources: Rebecca Walton, Lawrence Souder, Donna M. Raphael, Dale Nesbary, Darian Heyman, Joseph Barbato, and Danielle S. Furlich.

- a. Note: This is a consolidated list of written deliverables mentioned in the aforementioned sources.

A key deliverable, as discussed previously, are the plans that govern the communication and strategic approaches to a nonprofit's business or fundraising aims. Strategic plans and

communications plans are mentioned primarily in connection to management responsibilities. Strategic plans and the strategic planning process are especially highlighted in management literature (see Hendler, Cryer, and Sand). While strategic planning is a very involved process with multiple components, the end result is a written deliverable. Burk identifies the development and implementation of the strategic plan as a key duty for managers because it drives programming and fundraising. Wiggill explains that “without a specific communication strategy, plan and policy, the messages of NPOs might not be getting through to the right people” (227). Therefore, communication plans are crucial documents because they enable nonprofit organizations to execute the necessary activities needed to communicate with their various stakeholders and audiences. Additionally, as noted by David Renz and Robert Herman, the existence of these types of planning documents can impact nonprofit effectiveness:

We identified the management practices through the deliberations of focus groups of experienced practitioners whom we convened to identify the practices they considered to be relevant to organizational effectiveness. The practices they considered to be indicators of effectiveness included the presence of a mission statement, a recent needs assessment, a planning document, a system to measure client satisfaction, a formal CEO and employee appraisal process, an independent financial audit, and a statement of organizational effectiveness criteria. We found, for funders, board members, and senior managers, that the organizations rated as more effective did in fact use more of these “correct” management practices, and that greater use of more of these correct practices was positively correlated with higher ratings of organizational effectiveness for all three groups. (Renz and Herman 281-282)

Thus, the impact of a written strategic plan on organizational effectiveness further demonstrates the value of written documents on nonprofit organizations.

Last, one area that does not seem to receive as much coverage in the literature is the role of writing in reference to managers' fulfillment of their human resources responsibilities, such as performance reviews. The role of leadership in human resources is usually covered in management scholarship, and human resources activities are often discussed as important aspects of management responsibilities. Mary R. Watson and Rikki Abzug state in "Effective Human Resource Management" that "The attraction, selection, and retention of staff are among the most important processes managers in organizations undertake, especially in today's dynamic workforce conditions" (597). While Watson and Abzug assert that the human resources activities identified here are important tasks for leaders, the documents that are needed to execute these responsibilities do not receive much attention. However, a few documents are referenced in Watson and Abzug's chapter including policies, organizational charts, staffing plans, offer letters, and job descriptions. Of these, the only example where writing is discussed is in reference to job descriptions. Watson and Abzug explain the value of these documents: "The job description serves three purposes: to help those who will select among applicants consider what is needed for the position, to advertise to potential staff what the job will entail, and for use in legal defense against discrimination charges" (618-619). If as Watson and Abzug assert, the attraction and securing of employees is an important activity for nonprofit managers, and job descriptions are necessary to do this, then the writing of the job description document must be a critical task for managers.

Leadership Hierarchy and Writing Skills

All of the aforementioned writing activities and deliverables are the kinds of written communication nonprofit managers may produce within the scope of their job descriptions. But, the specific responsibilities of managers are not standardized and may vary for each manager depending on variables such as management level and organization size. Richard L. Edwards and David M. Austin comment on variations driven by the tiers of management when they state that “The level of the management position within the organizational hierarchy often shapes the skills that are needed...In entry-level managerial positions, technical skills tend to be very important. However, the relative importance of technical skills tends to diminish as managers move up the organizational structure” (Edwards and Austin 5). Thus, the practical and technical writing skills required to create all written communication might be most applicable at lower levels of management. It can also be assumed that as managers advance through the organizational structure that they would still need to maintain knowledge of these skills so that they could effectively manage, evaluate, and mentor those who are directly creating communications.

In addition to reiterating the impact of management level on management responsibilities, R. Sam Larson and his coresearchers also observe that the size of an organization can cause the writing training needs of nonprofit management students to vary: “For students in lower levels of management or in smaller organizations, technical or internally focused operation skills may be more important. In contrast, students in higher levels of management or who are networked into a larger community of practice than their own organization’s may find conceptual or analytical skills...more important” (Larson, et al. 178-179). Therefore, position within the organizational hierarchy is not the only factor on management skills needed. Both organization size and management level are two potential variables on writing responsibilities.

While Larson, et al. discuss the value of technical skills for those in lower levels of management, Walton points out that those with technical writing or communication experience bring value to leadership positions generally:

Similarly, technical communicators are well suited for collaborative leadership roles because a grasp of rhetoric enables them to reason about civic issues and persuade audiences to adopt or support positions on these issues. Technical communicators have the power to shape and interpret complex information, bridging that information and the people affected by it...Although technical communication students and professionals are prepared to serve as editors and grant writers, those roles do not exhaust the skills that technical communicators offer. (Walton 3-4)

Here, Walton comments on writer's rhetorical knowledge and ability, which is not much discussed in other research, although it is implied in discussions regarding audiences. She further explains that this "grasp of rhetoric" along with technical writers' additional skills are useful beyond the technical roles of editors and grant writers, which supports this project's research and the assertion that writing skills are valuable for leadership roles as well.

Writing Issues for Management

It is clear that writing and communication impacts nonprofits' abilities to raise necessary funds to support their mission activities, but, in addition to this, ineffective use of writing can have other unintended effects as well. Srivatsa Seshadri and Larry Carstenson specifically assert the risks associated with email communications for nonprofit managers:

Nonprofits typically operate in a multicultural and global environment. Critical to their success is effective communications by their leaders. But effective communications is a

challenge as e-mail has become the medium of choice for communications among most nonprofit executives. Communicating with their culturally diverse stakeholders using the less personalized medium of emails could be jeopardized unless nonprofit executives consciously focus on how the recipients might decode their message. (Sheshadri and Carstenson 77)

Issues arise in communications when the receiver does not interpret the message as intended by the sender. In “The Perils of E-Mail Communications in Nonprofits,” Sheshadri and Carstenson assert that there is a risk of messages becoming misconstrued when emails are sent between individuals from different cultural backgrounds: “While the technology of e-mail magically eliminates the barriers imposed by barriers and time, it does not, and cannot, neutralize the barriers imposed by social, cultural, locational, and linguistic environments of the parties involved” (Sheshadri and Carstenson 78). Therefore, it is important for nonprofit managers to not only have strong writing skills but to also have the mastery of how to appropriately use these tools, such as email communication. Sheshadri and Carstenson review an example where a professional email exchange between two nonprofit officers went awry because of misinterpreted email messages between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Both parties were left feeling insulted and misunderstood and their relationship was damaged. Sheshadri and Carstenson identify the potential peril of ineffective emails such as breakdown of social bonds and communications, misconstrued messages, and escalating conflicts. They recommend that nonprofit executives and administrators take special care when writing emails to culturally diverse stakeholders by thoroughly proofreading emails, utilizing automatic signatures with respectful closures, maintaining composure and social graces, communicating with diplomacy, and becoming culturally literate.

The risk of misinterpreted messages and interpersonal conflicts as outlined by Shesadri and Carstenson are not the only potential issues that can arise as a result of ineffective written communication. Walton explains that another issue that can impact nonprofits is a lack of written internal documentation:

Organizations that lack documentation do not have objective facts on which to base their strategic thinking and therefore rely on person opinions, ‘gut feelings,’ and anecdotal input from stakeholders. In addition, the failure to document an organization’s policies and objectives prevents board members from fulfilling one of their legal responsibilities: evaluating the organization’s performance. (13)

Thus, insufficient internal documents, such a policies, can affect both the strategic decision making of the organization as well as board and staff members’ ability to successfully enact the responsibilities required by their roles. Additionally, Walton also asserts that a lack of documentation can affect nonprofits’ abilities to be accountable to their various stakeholders: “Unfortunately, when organizations fail to document their expenses, activities, and operating conditions, they cannot meet accountability demands. Nonprofit organizations are accountable to a variety of stakeholders, including board members, employees, individual donors, grant makers, government regulators, and ‘the public’” (Walton 5). This is particularly important when communicating with donors regarding the results of their gifts, which as Burk demonstrated can have an impact on the organization’s bottom line. Hence, written documentation impacts the effectiveness of the organization by helping meet accountability needs and encouraging continued giving.

Service Learning, Internships, and Management

The value of connecting writing students to community engagement projects within the nonprofit sector has been well-established in the experiential learning literature focused on service learning, community-based pedagogies, and internships. Scholars agree that students, universities, nonprofits, and communities can all benefit from these experiences (see Stevens, Addams, Bourelle, Rehling, McEachern, Towey, Matthews, and Sapp). Often the knowledge produced about student experiences in service learning, internships, and community-based projects comes through the reflections of students enrolled and instructors teaching courses with these components embedded in the curriculum. While the authors may be writing through the experience of a particular service-learning or other initiative, the observations and experiences provide insights into nonprofits and writing. Facilitating these experiences place writing instructors in the unique position to observe nonprofit organizational writing, challenges, practices, and characteristics as well as the specific deliverables produced.

While much of the scholarship regarding service learning and community engagement projects focuses on pedagogy and course structure, some scholars including Robert McEachern and Louise Rehling utilize their experiences with facilitating student service-learning to reflect on the role and execution of writing activities in nonprofits. Their observations and analyses affirm the value individuals with writing skills, in this case students, can bring to the nonprofit organizations. Louise Rehling offers the following observation regarding nonprofits' needs for writing: "Whatever the nature and specific mission of a nonprofit social service organization, it will have a need, possibly many urgent needs, for effective, efficiently produced, business communications" (Rehling 79). Rehling's commentary further affirms the need for strong written communication for nonprofits.

Interestingly, it is through reflections from service-learning situations where we see commentary regarding potential issues and challenges with writing in the nonprofit setting. Rehling explains that because organizations are often lacking in staff and funding, “Social service professionals sometimes do not have the training in business communication more common among managers educated for business specializations. As a result, even nonprofits with armies of volunteers may not have among them anyone qualified for high-level writing tasks...until a communication intern arrives” (86). While Rehling is commenting on the value of writing students, her observations also serve to identify a problem. If writing is critical to nonprofit work, but organizations lack skilled writers, then how can the communication needs of organizations be effectively met?

Another key point inherent in the service-learning literature is that nonprofit managers often wear “many hats” (see Bourelle and McEachern). McEachern references this trait when he covers five characteristics that are common among nonprofits: “passion for mission, chief executive wears too many hats, atmosphere of scarcity, individuals have mixed skill levels, and participation of volunteers.” (216). Since communication is a responsibility of nonprofit managers and leaders and as McEachern describes they wear many hats, this means that individuals in these positions must balance writing and communication responsibilities alongside of many other tasks, and, potentially other roles that stakeholders may consider more important than the writing projects.

McEachern explains that all five of the characteristics he identified affect service-learning experiences, but it can be further assumed that these characteristics would affect the organization as well. Because nonprofit managers are balancing a myriad of responsibilities, they are being asked to also have a wide range of skills, including strong written communication

abilities. McEachern describes that nonprofit professionals “are usually good at what they do but are often asked to do jobs for which they may not have training. The ‘mixed skill’ most relevant to professional writing service-learning projects would be nonprofit personnel’s often limited skills in writing” (McEachern 218). Here, McEachern touches on a second observation, the lack of writing expertise at nonprofits, which is also mentioned by Rehling. Rehling points out that nonprofit managers and staff may lack writing skills, and McEachern shows that managers often have to balance their responsibilities and priorities with mixed skills. As a result, individuals, especially managers, responsible for writing tasks may not have the appropriate training or experience to prepare them for the writing responsibilities they face.

Service-learning and community engagement scholars have also commented on the lack of available literature regarding nonprofit writing to help prepare students for these experiences. The need for additional study is asserted by McEachern when he states that “providing students with some instruction on what to expect in working with a nonprofit organization in general would also be appropriate. There is little available on the subject, at least as it relates to writing... As scholars, we need to focus more of our research on writing in nonprofit organizations” (McEachern 222). It is valuable to consider that increased study on nonprofit writing would not only be beneficial for those scholars who facilitate student learning experiences, but rather that it could also benefit and contribute to the development of nonprofit managers and other staff members responsible for written communication activities.

Education and Training

As the nonprofit sector has grown over the years, as an employer and an industry, so have the educational opportunities for study of this field (see Wang and Ashcroft, Dolan, Gerlach). This growth of nonprofit education has specifically resulted in expanded offerings for study of

nonprofit management in higher education settings. Lilli Wang and Robert Ashcraft identify a specific time period when expansion occurred in the field of nonprofit management studies: “From 1996 to 2006, the number of colleges and universities providing courses in nonprofit management has increased 30 percent” (Wang and Ashcraft 122). Dolan even notes that nonprofit management is “the fastest growing specialization” (278). With this growth of nonprofit management work and the relevant educational programs, it is important to consider how education can prepare those studying nonprofit management for the writing skills that are necessary for success in leadership roles.

Given the growth of the nonprofit sector and the demand for specialized public administration and nonprofit education degrees, the research on education in this field has grown. This research includes evaluation of student needs, course and curriculum design, and program assessment (see Raphael and Nesbary, Wang and Ashcraft). Studies have identified the educational needs for those studying nonprofit management or public administration, which includes communication and writing (see Wang, Ashcraft, Dolan, Knox, Raphael and Nesbary). Additionally, it has been noted that communications courses, specifically those in nonprofit management or administration programs, are often inadequate and do not meet the writing instruction needs of students enrolled in these programs (see Knox, Raphael and Nesbary).

In “Teaching Grammar and Editing in Public Administration: Lessons Learned from Early Offerings of an Undergraduate Administrative Writing Course,” Claire Connolly Knox conducts one of the most relevant studies to this project in her review of undergraduate public administration programs through the lens of examining writing and communication. Knox identifies some of the specific writing needs of public administration program graduates: “Public administration graduates need to possess well-written, concise, and audience-centered writing

skills as well as understand government and the non-profit sector's discourse community" (525). Here, Knox identifies some qualities of effective writing including being audience-centered and concise. She also asserts that "Although many public administration undergraduate programs primarily focus on policy, finance, and management, we fall short of a larger goal if students cannot communicate results to a variety of audiences" (Knox 515). Knox's bold statement that programs are ineffective if students are not prepared with the abilities to effectively communicate serves to further highlight the important need for writing and communication skills.

Knox found that graduates in her study lacked the skills needed to communicate effectively in writing. Specifically, these graduates demonstrated issues with grammar and writing mechanics: "Faculty members, advisory board members, and local public sector leaders and employers identified writing deficiencies among current and former students: grammar (specifically incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, incorrect use of punctuation), wordiness, formatting and structure, plagiarism and improper use of APA style, and passive voice" (Knox 520). This specific feedback regarding the alumni's deficiencies, comes directly from individuals involved in the nonprofit sector, which demonstrates that fundamental grammar and writing skills are important to those in the field and not just educators. While effective writing certainly is more than adherence to standard grammatical conventions, the identification made by nonprofit professionals of these specific errors sheds light on some of the qualities in writing that are important or valued to those in the nonprofit field. Therefore, not only do writers in the nonprofit sector need to know how to write for different audiences and understand a variety of deliverable formats, but they also need mastery of basic grammar, structure, and foundational writing elements.

Although the presence of errors and deficiencies may demonstrate the need for more writing instruction, Knox's survey of undergraduate public administration programs found that forty-four percent of programs did not require an administrative or technical writing course; however, her study revealed that eighty-five percent of the programs require a writing course outside of the program. This data demonstrates that while many students are getting writing instruction, these courses are not through the public administration program and therefore not specifically applicable to the nonprofit field. Knox explains that "Public administration undergraduate students learn the importance of communication within organizations in leadership, human resources, or organizational management courses; however, practical instruction in communication skills, such as effective-audience centered writing are lacking" (515). While students in public administration programs are taught the importance of communication in nonprofits, they are lacking instruction in practical communication skills specific to the nonprofit sector. Knox argues that a "discipline specific administrative writing course" (525) would best prepare public administration students with the written communication skills they need to succeed. The data provided by Knox demonstrates that many public administration students are not provided with writing or communication instruction focused on their area of study.

Knox argues that this practical instruction should include editing techniques as well as audience-centered writing. Her suggested course includes the following components: "Rules, Regulations, and Administrative Procedures; Executive Summaries and Abstracts; Policy Handbooks and Guides; Memorandums; Press Releases; Professional Report Writing; Grant Proposal Writing; and Government/Nonprofit Websites" (Knox 523). Knox's proposed course model covers skills and deliverables specifically applicable to nonprofit work. Additionally, even

though public administration graduates should enter the nonprofit workforce possessing “a solid writing foundation,” Knox asserts that it is still beneficial for nonprofit organizations to continue to offer professional development opportunities that include writing.

Similar to Knox’s study, Raphael and Nesbary emphasize the importance of including a strategic communication course in public administration programs because of the potentially negative impact of poor communication with stakeholders, especially donors. Raphael and Nesbary explain that studying strategic communication helps nonprofit managers become more effective: “By learning basic communication techniques, public administrators can improve their effectiveness and confidence in getting their messages across to key publics” (134). However, the strategic communication skills they refer to are not all writing skills, and they also include other communication skills such as change management and motivating employees in their description of strategic communication. The varying communication methods included in Raphael and Nesbary’s description shows that nonprofit managers need to be effective and versatile communicators, with effective communication not restricted solely to written activities.

While most of Raphael and Nesbary’s discussion focuses on broad communication skills, they conducted a survey of alumni from a single master’s in public administration program and asked respondents to rate the importance of various skills to their careers. An astounding ninety-two percent of respondents explicitly identified written communication as an important skill, with seventy-six percent agreeing that they were able to increase these written communication skills through their academic program of study. This data clearly shows two points: first, that written communication is a valuable and sought after skill for public administration graduates, and second that educational programs of study, such as public administration, that are not writing or communication focused, have the abilities to improve students’ grasp of necessary written

communication skills and thus increase their preparation for career success. Raphael and Nesbary's findings support Knox's assertion that program specific communication courses are valuable.

In addition to their survey of alumni, Raphael and Nesbary also reviewed MPA program websites for the presence of communication courses, excluding grant writing. They found through reviewing websites that seventy-nine percent of programs did not offer any communication course. Only nine of the 133 programs they reviewed offered classes in communications. Although the researchers acknowledge that other classes in these programs might help students improve their communication skills, the vast majority of these programs do not provide an opportunity through their curriculum for a course focused on nonprofit writing or communication skills. Raphael and Nesbary also assert that "The literature is replete with examples of practitioners and academics highlighting the need for more effective communication among public sector professionals. The literature and this investigation also find that public administration programs do not generally include communication courses in their curricula" (Raphael and Nesbary 143).

Furthermore, "Needs Assessment and Curriculum Mapping: Enhancing Management Skills of the Nonprofit Workforce" by Lili Wang and Robert Ashcraft, and "Curricular Content for Nonprofit Management Programs: The Student Perspective" by R. Sam Larson, et al., both identify communication and writing skills as needed curriculum topics for nonprofit management students. Wang and Ashcraft's study is unique as they reviewed a nonprofit management certificate program, which they note is not as well-studied as full undergraduate or graduate degree programs. A needs assessment and curriculum review of a certificate program was conducted that involved surveying two groups, one consisting of instructors and advisory board

members and the other of alumni and students, regarding the useful skill sets and courses they found most relevant and valuable for those studying nonprofit management (Wang and Ashcraft's 129). Both surveyed groups identified communication skills as a needed area for learning. The alumni and students, eighty-five percent of whom worked in the nonprofit sector, and the majority of those as managers or executives, identified their most needed training need as financial management. Fundraising, grant writing, marketing, and communication were also identified as training needs, all of which, as previously established herein, involve substantial writing. This group also included effective communication and social media on the list of subjects that they would like to have as additional course topics (Wang and Ashcraft). The instructors and advisory board members noted that verbal and written communication is an area of needed expansion. In fact, this group specifically recommended adding a communication course to the content curriculum. Ultimately, Wang and Ashcraft stated that "most nonprofit professionals and continuous learners taking short-term noncredit courses to attain knowledge and skill in financial management, strategic planning, fund-raising and grant writing, human resources and volunteer management, board governance, marketing and communication, program evaluation, and social entrepreneurship" (Wang and Ashcraft 133). From this list, grant writing, strategic planning, fundraising, human resources, and communication all have been shown to involve writing.

Larson and his co-researchers surveyed students enrolled in graduate nonprofit management courses at six institutions regarding the course topics they found most important to their professional training and academic needs. The highest ranked topics were strategic planning and fundraising/development, which is consistent with the findings of Dolan's study and others. Proposal writing and marketing were further down on the ranked lists but still identified as

important (Larson, et al. 174). While several of the studies examining nonprofit administration and management curriculum specifically identify communication as a programmatic need, not all studies have come to this same explicit conclusion. J.D Gerlach found in his survey on MPA programs “six preeminent nonprofit courses: an overview course in nonprofit management, (b) an applied course (applying nonprofit management principles in the workplace, (c) nonprofit fundraising, (d) nonprofit grant writing, (e) nonprofit finance, and (f) a cross-sector partnerships course” (474). Of this list, grant writing is the only course explicitly focused on writing or communications. However, given the understanding of fundraising, it can reasonably be assumed that courses in this area would cover writing activities and deliverables. Ultimately, the literature supports that communication, and specifically writing, are necessary skills for nonprofit administrators, but the educational opportunities available for these areas are inconsistent.

Although the educational opportunities for study in nonprofit management and administration have increased, nonprofit education scholars note that there is a need for continued study and research (see Knox, Dolan, Gerlach, Wang and Ashcraft). They see value in program reviews focusing on curricula evaluations to ensure that course offerings best meet students’ needs (Wang and Ashcraft). Many resources call for addition to curricula---some such as Knox give specific courses and activities for suggestions. It is important to note that while strong written communication abilities are established as necessary and critical for nonprofit managers, other knowledge and skills are also needed for the preparation of prospective managers.

Throughout these discussions about writing, communication, and nonprofit management woven through different academic specialties and lenses, a consistent theme is the acknowledgement that written communication is crucial to operations in the nonprofit sector and

that writing is an important part of nonprofit management responsibilities. The literature also calls for more research about the kinds of courses and writing and communication practices that would best serve nonprofit leaders (see Souder, Koschmann, Walton). Walton sums this need up when she states that “Current research establishes that nonprofit organizations need documentation for a variety of purposes. However, the research does not identify the specific needs of the nonprofit organizations. . . . To fill this gap, we need more research about writing in and for nonprofit organizations and about nonprofit organizations’ needs that are relevant to our field” (Walton 4). While the literature does establish that those in nonprofit management roles need to possess strong writing skills and that written communication is crucial to many nonprofit activities, additional research would ensure that educational programs best prepare tomorrow’s nonprofit leaders for career success.

Job Advertisements Analysis

In order to assess how today's nonprofit employers describe the writing skills, abilities, or experience they are looking for in nonprofit managers, I analyzed job postings on *WorkforGood.org*², a website that only presents nonprofit career opportunities; this site is affiliated with the well-respected Georgia Center for Nonprofits. Through the use of this website, my objective was to specifically focus on management-level nonprofit administrator roles. I reviewed all job ads available for review on February 1, 2020, under the "Executive/Senior Management" category on *WorkForGood.org*. On this date, there were forty-two positions advertised in this category. The job titles of positions contained in this category included a range of roles such as director, manager, vice president, executive, CEO, officer, and other managerial-type roles, all housed within nonprofit organizations. See Appendix A for a full list of the advertisements analyzed in this study.

Each job advertisement available in the "Executive/Senior Management" category was reviewed for inclusion of terms related to writing and written communication and for references to writing-related activities, skills, or deliverables. Since "communication" is the broader term, the ads were analyzed for any occurrences of this as well. Of the forty-two jobs available for review, sixty-nine percent mentioned a variation of "communication." These variations included "communication," "communicate," "communicating," and "communicator." The reference to communication, in some way, present in almost seventy percent of the ads demonstrates that

² All forty-two job advertisements, and the content of these advertisements, referenced in this section were sourced from *Workforgood.org*'s "Executive / Senior Management" online job board. See Appendix A for a full listing of the job ads included in this analysis.

communication experience or responsibilities are relevant to most positions. Although I expected to see the term “written communication” specifically used often, only two of the job postings utilized this combination of terms. This is significant because while writing is a communication activity, there are other types of communication as well that could be encompassed under the overarching umbrella of “communications.”

To better understand the relevance specifically of written communication to these management positions, the advertisements were also analyzed for use of any variation of the term “writing.” Sixty-two percent of the job advertisements did in fact make a reference to writing, primarily through use of the terms “writer” and “written.” The use of these two terms provides a few pieces of information. First, the reference to writing in over sixty percent of the advertisements demonstrates that writing, in addition to communication, is relevant and common in the management area. Second, the specific use of “writer” tells us that organizations are looking for individuals with writing skills and the use of “written” tells us that written materials, documents, or communications are in fact connected to the responsibilities or qualifications for these types of roles. In table 2 below, the presence of variations of writing and communication terms in the reviewed job advertisements is presented.

Table 2

Review of Writing Terms Present in Nonprofit Executive and Management Job Ads

| Term | Number of ads where term is present | Percent of ads where term is present |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Writ* ^a | 26 | 62% |
| Writing | 12 | 29% |
| Writer | 0 | 0% |
| Written | 16 | 38% |
| Written communication | 2 | 5% |
| Communicat* | 29 | 69% |
| Communication | 24 | 57% |
| Communicate | 7 | 17% |
| Communicating | 3 | 7% |
| Communicator | 5 | 12% |

Source: "Executive/Senior Management jobs," *Work for Good*,

www.workforgood.org/jobs/executive-senior-management/, Accessed 1 Feb. 2020.

- a. An asterisk is used to denote searches of incomplete words and any term identified that included the text behind an asterisk was included in that line's count.

When describing the writing ability and/or experiences desired for candidates, the job advertisements used a variety of verbiage to describe the types of writers and skills they seek. The following descriptions are utilized in the advertisements: "outstanding communication skills"; "communicate effectively in writing"; "strong writing skills"; "advanced communication skills"; "written, verbal, and digital communication experience"; "excellent writing and communication skills"; "communications strategist and storyteller"; "standout abilities as a written communicator"; "strong communication skills"; "extraordinary communicator"; and "exceptional written communication skills." An interesting theme in these descriptions is the use of adjectives. The use of descriptive adjectives such as "outstanding," "advanced," "strong,"

“excellent,” “standout,” “extraordinary,” and “exceptional” demonstrates that not only are writing and communication skills applicable to these management roles, but that individuals most possess more than just basic skills. Managers and administrators need to be advanced in their writing and communication abilities.

In addition to writing skills, these job postings also were analyzed for mentions of any writing-related deliverables or tasks, and it was found that the advertisements did indeed include many references to specific written deliverables. Throughout these advertisements for management positions there were a myriad of written documents and activities mentioned including internal communications such as various planning documents, manuals, policies, and records, and external deliverables such as grants, social media, newsletters, donor appeals, press releases, and letters. Table 3 below displays the full list of deliverables found in these advertisements. By inclusion of these specific items, we see that there are a variety of written deliverables for which those in nonprofit management positions may be responsible.

Table 3

Written Deliverables Mentioned in Nonprofit Management Job Ads

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Advertising plan | Donor solicitation/cultivation plan | Operations manual |
| Agendas | Email | Policies |
| Annual report | Fundraising plan | Press releases |
| Board packets | Grants | Program plan |
| Brochures | Internal records | Publications |
| Communication plan | Invitations | Request for proposal |
| Contracts | Job descriptions | Social media |
| Curriculum | Marketing plan | Strategic plan |
| Development plan | Meeting minutes | Videos |
| Direct mail | Newsletters | Written summaries |

Source: “Executive/Senior Management jobs,” *WorkforGood*,

www.workforgood.org/jobs/executive-senior-management/, Accessed 1 Feb. 2020.

Although the job advertisements contain references to many written deliverables, the language used in the job descriptions does not always clearly identify who is creating the documents. While sometimes the job descriptions utilize more determinate verbs like “write,” “draft,” “compose” and “create,” which clearly indicate that responsibility falls under the advertised position, other times verbs like “ensure,” “lead,” “develop,” “oversee,” “curate,” “manage,” “report,” and “maintain” are used in connection to writing or communication activities, which make it unclear where the responsibility to write these materials directly falls. In these management positions, leaders could be supervising the creation of written materials or creating the deliverables themselves. It can be inferred that even if the managers are not creating these pieces, or not creating them alone, that they would still need to be knowledgeable about them in order to ensure that they are created effectively, since these deliverables are connected to their responsibilities.

In addition to the aforementioned writing tasks and deliverables, fifty-five percent of the job advertisements mentioned audiences or stakeholders to whom the manager would need to communicate. Audiences mentioned include funding and referral sources, internal and external stakeholders, board of directors, staff, courts, committees, clients, members, partners, council members, constituents, community, and media outlets. The reference to this wide range of audiences shows that in addition to writing and communication skills, those interested in nonprofit management roles need to be able communicate with a variety of audiences, which directly aligns with the literature. Additionally, this aligns with my personal experience since in all of my nonprofit roles I needed to communicate with many audiences. Ultimately, the job advertisements confirm that nonprofit managers need to possess excellent written

communication skills, create a variety of written deliverables, and be able to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences.

Nonprofit Leadership Interviews

In order to explore the role and value of writing with active nonprofit managers and administrators, I performed an IRB approved research study³. Through this study, interviews were conducted with six participants who held management level roles at active nonprofit organizations. Participants represented organizations that ranged in size, age, mission, and populations served. Additionally, the managers were in different phases of their careers and held roles that included Executive Director, Interim CEO, President & CEO, and Associate Director. Table 3 below contains brief descriptions of each participant for reference. As mentioned previously, these interviews were confidential, and therefore no identifying information about the individuals or their employers will be mentioned here.

Table 3

IRB Interview Participant Index

| Alias | Job Title | Organization |
|-----------|--------------------|--|
| Christine | Executive Director | private family foundation |
| Sue | Interim CEO | large ⁴ , established nonprofit |
| Karen | President & CEO | large, established nonprofit |
| Jane | President & CEO | new, start-up nonprofit |
| Jill | Associate Director | Georgia area chapter of a large, national organization |
| Betty | President & CEO | small, established nonprofit |

Source: Personal interviews of Christine, Sue, Karen, Jane, Jill, and Betty.

³ These interviews were part of the KSU IRB Study #20-467 “Writing as a Nonprofit Leadership Tool.”

⁴ All references to organization size in this chapter are based on *Guidestar*’s nonprofit divisions (see Frailey, Kerstin and Madeline Kardos. “What Does the Nonprofit Sector Really Look Like?” *GuideStar*, 1 Jan. 2017, [https://trust.guidestar.org/what-does-the-nonprofit-sector-really-look-like.](https://trust.guidestar.org/what-does-the-nonprofit-sector-really-look-like))

The interviews with these nonprofit managers and administrators yielded much qualitative data regarding writing. All of the managers who were interviewed unquestionably expressed that written communication was necessary and valuable for the execution of their management roles and their work to achieve their organization's mission. None of the participants stated anything to indicate that writing was not valuable or unimportant to their roles and responsibilities.

Through their responses to questions such as “What kinds of written communication do you use to perform your management responsibilities?” and “How does writing impact your effectiveness as a manager or your work to achieve your organization's mission?”, the participants explained how they use written communication in their management roles. The participants shared that they utilize writing for a variety of communication purposes including, but not limited to, networking, negotiating, engaging and updating stakeholders, developing relationships and partnerships, connecting people, sharing resources, developing an online and social media presence, establishing and enforcing policies, providing employee feedback and performance reviews, documenting for human resources and legal purposes, communicating their mission and programs, responding to complaints, attracting program participants, securing funding, sharing their mission and programs, grantmaking, and more. The long length of this list, and the wide range of activities it contains, demonstrates that writing is applicable to many facets of managerial responsibilities. Thus, if writing is needed to perform these key purposes, then it certainly is a valuable skill for managers to possess.

Audience and Stakeholders

In addition to using written communication for a range of purposes, all participants revealed through these discussions that they use writing to communicate with multiple

audiences. These audiences typically are critical stakeholders within their organization such as donors, staff, and board members. In fact, donors and board members were the most frequently mentioned stakeholders, with five participants identifying each; staff was noted by four participants. Furthermore, half of the participants communicate with volunteers and colleagues. The addition of audiences such as colleagues demonstrates that managers also use written communication to connect with people who may not be stakeholders in their organization. The participants identified many other audiences with whom they communicate; table 4 below displays a comprehensive list of the audiences mentioned by the participants in the interviews.

Table 4

Audience of Management Communication as Identified in Participant Interviews

| Audience/Stakeholder | Number of Participants Who Identified Term | Audience/Stakeholder | Number of Participants Who Identified Term |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Donors | 5 | Community partners | 1 |
| Board | 5 | Government officials | 1 |
| Staff | 4 | Workspace community | 1 |
| Volunteers | 3 | Members | 1 |
| Colleagues | 3 | Alumni | 1 |
| School personnel | 2 | Potential partners | 1 |
| Parents | 2 | State and federal agencies | 1 |
| Regulators | 1 | Vendors | 1 |
| Investment manager | 1 | Grant seekers and recipients | 1 |
| Professional associations | 1 | Nonprofit and philanthropic leaders | 1 |

Source: Personal interviews of Christine, Sue, Karen, Jane, Jill, and Betty.

Managing Personnel and Human Resources

Table 4 identifies staff as an audience with whom many of the managers communicate, and as previously stated managers revealed that a purpose of written communication is to deliver performance feedback and reviews. Multiple participants discussed this purpose in their interviews. One participant, Sue an Interim CEO of a large nonprofit, explained that supervisors

in her organization conduct both written and verbal performance evaluations. Sue noted that if employee communication and feedback is “not well written, it’s not very useful. If it’s vague, if it’s unclear, if it’s ambiguous, you haven’t helped a person.” Thus, in order to communicate in a way that is beneficial to employees, managers should be direct and clear in their writing. In addition to being direct and clear for the purpose of feedback, Sue also pointed out that written communication to employees needs to be well written because documents produced by managers can become legal documents:

Another reason why it has to be very well done is some of the things we write are the basis of real documents. I mean, if I don’t properly construct a probationary letter for an employee, I can find myself eating my words in court...or ending up having to pay penalties because I have improperly terminated someone or it appears that I have discriminated against them. (Sue)

Sue’s reflections demonstrate that nonprofit managers must be able to communicate effectively and carefully when writing internal documents so that managers can best help their staff and avoid any future employment disputes. The need for careful writing in internal, human resources communication was also promoted by Betty, CEO and President of a small, established nonprofit. Betty shared that careful writing also applies to internal policy documents as well when she notes that it is “important to write carefully and precisely, especially for HR or legal documents because you don’t want to create loopholes or confusion.” She also advocated for the value of having internal, established policies in place to prepare nonprofit leaders to address any issues that may arise.

While Betty and Sue’s feedback demonstrates the need for effective writing in internal, human resource communication, the interviews also revealed that writing is considered, and

sometimes evaluated, as part of the hiring process. One main focus of this study is to establish that writing skills are valuable for nonprofit work. Two of the managers specifically expressed that they consider writing skills when evaluating potential new employees, and that they utilize written evaluations as part of their hiring process for roles that involve writing in order to assess that writing abilities of candidates. Betty even stated that these writing assessments have shown to be valuable as she found that sometimes applicants who have strong resumes do not have strong writing skills. The use of writing assessments by managers illustrates that writing skills are valued by those in management positions. The consideration of candidate writing skills is also in line with the inclusion of written communication skills in job advertisements.

Deliverables

All participants were asked about the types of written communication deliverables they create or are responsible for in their management roles. Each of the six participants mentioned grants, in some capacity. One thing that varied, however, was each manager's individual involvement in the grant writing and procurement process. Some managers actively wrote grant proposals themselves, while others collaborated with their staff. There were also other participants who took limited roles in the grant management process, stating that they just occasionally reviewed grants that were written by others in their organization. The managers that were less involved in grant writing were the more experienced managers who led larger organizations and more employees. For example, Karen, a long-term President and CEO of a large organization, explained that at one point earlier in her career she was more involved in the grant process, but now she only reviews grants when they are for substantial requests or when she was involved in the grant process due to a relationship with the granting organization.

Conversely, Christine, Executive Director of a family foundation, is involved in grants from the grant making perspective, and she utilizes writing throughout her foundation's grantmaking process to assess and award potential grants to other nonprofits. She shared that writing is an impactful part of the grantmaking process in many ways, from the written applications submitted by nonprofits to the board books she compiles for the foundation's board to review and use to make funding decisions. Christine uses writing, primarily email, to communicate with grant seekers and build relationships with these nonprofits. She explains that "we need to know an organization well in order to support them and to make a good decision, to make the right decision, about where our foundation is investing and to make sure that we're tapping into the expertise in the community" (Christine). Hence, writing is an important tool for both parties in the grant making process by helping nonprofits write applications to secure funds and by helping foundations build relationships and support organizations and communities.

In addition to grants, the participants also identified numerous other deliverables they utilize or create. A summary of some of the noteworthy written materials include emails, letters, presentations, speeches, and reports. Table 5 below provides a consolidated list of deliverables identified during the interviews as well as the number of managers who mentioned each item.

Table 5

Deliverables Produced by Management as Identified by Interview Participants

| Deliverable | Number of Participants Who Identified Deliverable | Deliverable | Number of Participants Who Identified Deliverable |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Emails | 6 | Board book | 1 |
| Grants | 5 | Manual | 1 |
| Letters | 3 | Website | 1 |
| Presentations | 2 | Mission, vision, and values | 1 |
| Marketing | 2 | Performance evaluations | 1 |
| Newsletters | 2 | Policies | 1 |
| Reports | 2 | Postcards | 1 |
| Social media | 2 | President's message | 1 |
| Speeches | 2 | Invitations | 1 |
| Articles | 1 | Public relation documents | 1 |
| Blog posts | 1 | Handwritten notes | 1 |
| Brochures | 1 | Strategic plans | 1 |
| Correspondence | 1 | Videos | 1 |
| Flyers | 1 | | |

Source: Personal interviews of Christine, Sue, Karen, Jane, Jill, and Betty.

Emails were the most often mentioned written communication deliverable. All participants, regardless of their specific management position, discussed frequent use of emails to communicate with their varied stakeholders. Jane, President and CEO of new nonprofit, even said that she "spends a good half day writing and responding to emails." Jane further pointed out that the tone and formality she uses in emails is dependent upon the intended recipient, and she has to consider how frequently to email people as well as how much information to include, especially in reference to emails to board members. The thought Jane described here of tailoring her emails as is appropriate for the recipient, ties back to the previously mentioned skill of audience-centered writing.

Sue, an Interim CEO, explained that email is an important tool for nonprofit managers, but it comes with risks. She provided the following commentary regarding the value of email:

I think when people say you need excellent written communication skills they're thinking in sort of grand terms. They're thinking about the correspondence, the reports, and the speeches that capture the mission, inspire audiences to give, inspire people to volunteer and those are all super important, but . . . the most important written communication is the email. . . . Email to me is a wonderful tool, but there's a lot of risk inherent in it. (Sue)

Sue further explained the impact poor written communication can have on perceptions: "I believe a lot in first impressions, and I think sloppy writing gives a bad impression and sloppy writing detracts from the intelligence of the idea. It looks like a bad idea because it's badly written, not because it was a bad idea." Here, Sue directly connected the quality of writing to how others perceive the worthiness of ideas and that ineffective writing detracts from the message's intended message.

Karen, a President and CEO, also identified the impact of a poorly written email:

It's hard because as soon as someone reads an email that's poorly written and has poor grammar . . . the respect for the other person isn't where it should be because . . . those of us who are in positions we're in today expect well written email all the time. So, it's a disadvantage to someone who doesn't know how to write well and use proper grammar.

Thus, in addition to detracting from the quality of ideas, as Sue mentioned, ineffective writing in email can also impact the recipient's impression of the sender.

Qualities of Effective Writing

Through these reflections, Karen and Sue both contributed to the larger point of what constitutes effective written communication. They add that effective writing utilizes proper grammar and is not "sloppy." Through the interviews, other participants also shared what they

felt excellent written communication looked like. Jill, an Associate Director, in addition to also identifying email as her primary communication tool, pointed out the value of being concise in writing. “I find that it’s important to be well written but also to be concise. ...so, something that I’ve worked on honing in this role is making sure when I communicate with people it’s intentional communication.” The importance of being concise, as mentioned by Jill, was a theme throughout all of the interviews, with every manager commenting on the value of writing succinctly.

Betty, a President and CEO, also discussed the value of being concise: “you have to learn how to write concisely and also be careful of the word usage that you employ,” She further elaborated that “It goes back to conciseness and precision. If you adhere to that you pretty much can address any audience. It should be ok” (Betty). What Betty adds here, is that being concise and writing with precision can aid managers in communicating with their various audiences. Sue also emphasized the value of being concise and adds another communication skill that she finds important:

I think the most important thing about the communication skills that I have honed over time is there’s sort of two features of good writing, besides basic grammar and spelling which is sort of fundamental, but one is to be clear and succinct and the second is, for a nonprofit person, is to be able to embed emotion and mission and empathy... You have to write warm words in nonprofit. The words have to be warm.

The second feature of good writing that Sue described, conveying warmth and emotion, is also another trend through the interviews, with most participants referencing the role of emoting in writing in some way. Jane explained that warmth in nonprofit writing is important to get readers to care about your message:

I see a lot of examples of writing that lacks excellence. It is, that it got way too wordy...it was repetitive, and their paragraph didn't have a theme...or it was just too cold. It just didn't convey warmth. And in nonprofits you have to make somebody care about something whatever it is, theater, leukemia, hunger. You need the other person to care about it when they finish reading.

Thus, the value of conveying warmth or emotion in writing is to make the reader care about an organization or mission. Karen echoed the value of writing in a concise manner and added that writing should tell a story: "And you know some people can write and it's grammatically correct and you know the paragraphs flow well, but can they write in a concise way that tells a story that has an impact?" Rather than using the term "warmth" or "emotion" specifically, Karen instead was referring to the use of stories to connect with audiences. Storytelling, thus, can work to evoke the needed emotion to move individuals to action. The role of storytelling in nonprofit work was a topic addressed by several of the participants.

Jane expands on the use of storytelling by sharing that she works to intertwine narrative with numerical data in her written communications in order to tell her organization's story and mission. Jill, who is the primary writer at her chapter, explained how she uses stories to make her writing engaging for her audiences. She explained that she uses writing to connect people, which can be healing and powerful, as well as to share her organization's resources. An additional point Jill made is that it is important to be intentional with language and use best practices, especially when writing about potentially sensitive or triggering topics for readers.

Writing Responsibilities

Participants were all asked to reflect on how much time they spend writing and if they have others to help with their writing. While all of the managers consistently expressed spending a substantial amount of time writing, the time spent on writing tasks was inconsistent within the participants' interview responses. Some estimated that they spend twenty percent of an average day on writing activities, while others reported as much as eighty percent. The participants who were newer to management roles or who worked at smaller nonprofits expressed more time devoted to writing activities. Additionally, the more experienced executives at larger nonprofits indicated that they have others on their staff to help fulfill their organization's writing needs. For example, Karen, who leads the organization with the largest staff, has a marketing department that is responsible for functions such as marketing, public relations, social media, branding, and visual communication. In addition, her organization also has development and research departments that write grants. Karen summed up her role as chief executive in the large organizational structure with the following analogy:

“The CEO is the conductor of the symphony, and it's the artists that are making the music and that's really our staff. . . . We own the leadership role, and we own the strategic direction of our organization, but it's our teammates, our staff members and senior leadership, that do the activities. . . . We make great music together.”

While Karen is able to operate in this “conductor” like role, she shared that “I think the smaller organization's CEO does a lot more writing than I do today” (Karen). The nonprofits that were smaller or had less seasoned managers did not have the same type of developed infrastructure to provide writing support; thus, these managers often took on more writing responsibilities themselves. For example, Jane, the President and CEO and only staff member at a newly

established nonprofit, indicated that she is responsible for all written communication generated by the organization she leads: she wears many hats because the early stages of her nonprofit's development. She offered an understanding of the role of writing in start-up nonprofits:

It just depends on where you are in the cycle of your organization, and what the executive director role looks like. So much depends on the size of the organization and how well resourced it is. So now that we're back in startup mode, we're very, very lean, so there's a lot that I kind of have to be scrappy about and do and have a broader skill set whereas some organizations that are a little more seasoned can allocate, right, and delegate some of those responsibilities.(Jane)

The opposing experiences of Jane and Karen demonstrates that although effective writing is required for all managers to possess, the specific writing responsibilities of each manager is dependent upon the organization's size and age.

Visual Communication and Oral Communication

While the vast majority of interview discussions focused on written communication, occasional reference was made to other communication methods and activities such as verbal and visual communication skills. Sue pointed out that she sees a connection between verbal communication and written communication and that she uses writing to prepare for speaking engagements or presentations. Additionally, visual communication was also referenced, albeit minimally, with two managers broaching the value of that communication form as well. Jane specifically mentioned that she uses visual communications, such as videos and images, to “capture an audience's attention” and to share program information, in addition to the written communication activities she performs.

Writing Experience and Education

Participants were also asked if they had any training, background, or formal education in writing or communication practices. They all possessed a range of degrees, the majority of which were not in writing or communication. However, even though most participants did not formally study writing, they all expressed confidence in their writing abilities. And, those individuals who did not hold degrees related to writing shared that they were able to develop their writing skills through their respective degree programs and through hands-on work experience.

During interviews, participants were prompted to reflect on which types of courses or academic experiences they felt would help prepare nonprofit managers for the writing demands that they and other managers face. This question generated a list of suggested courses and topics that could be beneficial for managers. Multiple respondents suggested that education should cover writing fundamentals such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and vocabulary. Sue expressed that this fundamental writing instruction should include frequent writing that challenges writers to communicate clear messages in various lengths and forms:

Just write and write and write and then somebody stops and really dissects it, they take it apart. . . . it took you 250 words to say that, now say it in 175, and don't lose a point. . . .

I think just fundamental, English construction. . . . Everything from short sentences, to paragraphs, to persuasive arguments, just write and write and write and clarify and clarify and clarify. (Sue)

On top of the writing basics, recommendations were also given for additional writing topics and genres to include in education. Jane recommended courses that covered “writing that is applicable for business contexts,” such as presentations, grant writing, email, and human

resources documents. Jill shared that she thinks grant writing, technical writing, creative writing, and social media writing would be beneficial courses. And, Karen emphasized the importance of learning how to write for fundraising purposes:

You can't, you know, run a nonprofit today and not be involved in fundraising. It's just not realistic. So, the ability to write to people and make a case for why they should give their precious dollars to your organization is really important. So, I think any course work that they can take that would help them be better writers and communicate a vision and making a financial ask would really be beneficial.

The need for fundraising writing training mentioned by Karen is not surprising, given that donors were frequently mentioned as a stakeholder and fundraising deliverables, such as grants, were frequently mentioned in the interviews. Additionally, grants were also suggested as a course topic as well. In sum, the participants reveal that general, foundational writing skills plus applied, professional writing topics specific to nonprofit writing would be valuable educational components for nonprofit managers.

Discussion

The research and data collected through the literature review, job advertisement analysis, and interviews with nonprofit managers provided answers to this project's primary research questions:

Research Question One: What is meant by the term “excellent written communication skills” as utilized in nonprofit management job advertisements and descriptions?

Ultimately, the research methods and sources all affirmed that writing skills are valuable and necessary for those in nonprofit management positions. Through their universal support of written communication skills, regardless of their experience, position, or mission focus, the interview participants demonstrated that communication is a necessary activity for all nonprofits and their administrators. Additionally, the research of many scholars reviewed here established the value of writing for nonprofits and their managers (see Matthew Koschmann, et. al, Donna Raphael and Dale Nesbary, Kim Hendler and Shelly Cryer, and Louise Rehling).

While all participants interviewed through this project asserted the value of writing and communication, only sixty-two percent of the job advertisements mentioned any variety of the term “writing,” and only sixty-nine percent mentioned a version of “communication.” While writing was not mentioned as a needed skill in all advertisements, it is still significant that it was included in over sixty percent of the postings, especially since these executive and administrative roles would require other skills as well, such as financial management. Also, while the specific term “writing” might not always be used, the need for written communication skills can be

inferred due to the qualifications and responsibilities associated with the positions and the lists of written deliverables. Given the value of writing established in the literature and by the interview participants, it can be assumed that all of the positions in the advertisements would involve writing in some way, even if just email communication. It also is not accurate to compare the rate of mention in the advertisements with the rate of mention in the interviews, as interview participants were directly asked to reflect on their use of writing.

This project's three research components have also helped develop a picture of what constitutes effective writing for those in nonprofit management positions. The data provided through interviews with the managers gave the most focused descriptions about what effective written communication looks like. The participants shared that writing produced by managers should be concise, audience-centered, grammatically and structurally sound, and convey warmth, emotion, or a story. However, these qualities are not as well discussed in the literature, with the exception of Claire Connolly Knox. In Knox's research, she does share support for most of these qualities, except for the emotional and storytelling appeals. While mentions to emotional writing was woven through much of the participant interviews, there is very limited coverage of this in the literature or job advertisements. This gap is notable because it shows that the literature may not be inclusive of all of the necessary writing skills for managers, and the use of emotion in nonprofit writing could be further understood with additional study.

Research Question Two: What kinds of writing skills and deliverables are critical to the responsibilities of nonprofit managers?

In addition to the writing and grammar skills mentioned by Knox and the interview participants, there are many important similarities across the data compiled in this project regarding the writing skills relevant to the responsibilities of nonprofit managers. One

consistently mentioned skill is that nonprofit managers and administrators need to be able to communicate through writing to multiple stakeholders and audiences. As discussed, there are many potential stakeholders with whom managers may communicate, and common stakeholders include donors, staff, board, and volunteers. See Appendix C for a full, consolidated list of all stakeholders and audiences discussed in this research. However, the specific stakeholders change from organization to organization, as seen in the data derived from the job advertisements and interviews. Since not all organizations have the same stakeholders and audiences, it is important for those seeking careers in nonprofit administration to understand how to identify audiences, understand their needs, and then tailor communications as is appropriate for each, as was explained by Donna Raphael and Dale Nesbary. Possessing the ability to create audience-centered writing, rather than just learning about a standard set of common stakeholders, would prepare nonprofit managers and administrators to communicate effectively with any stakeholder. Raphael and Nesbary also pointed out that audiences may have different needs. This also ties back to Knox's previous assertion that public administration students need to graduate in possession of audience-centered writing skills in order to best meet stakeholder's communication needs.

Additionally, the data demonstrates that nonprofit managers need to be skilled in crafting messages in different formats in order to create the many deliverables that may be required of them. The literature, advertisements, and interviews all discussed a litany of types of written deliverables, both for internal and external use, that nonprofit managers may create or oversee. Possible deliverables include emails, letters, speeches, grants, newsletters, and many more. The list of necessary deliverables was not the same from source to source or from manager to manager, and the full consolidated list of written deliverables covered in this study can be found

in Appendix B. While many of the examples provided in this project were for external use, all of the data sources mentioned internal communication as well, including for human resource purposes. Some internal deliverables include policies, job descriptions, and performance reviews. Rebecca Walton especially expanded on the value of documentation to show accountability, and Mary R. Watson and Rikki Abzug explained the value of well-written job descriptions in hiring staff and protecting the organization from liability. The interview participants also echoed the use of written communication for internal, staff management purposes.

Additionally, there are a few other interesting points of difference amongst the research regarding deliverables. One is that the literature often mentions the value of utilizing plans, such as strategic plans and communication plans (see David Renz and Robert Herman and Marlene Wiggill). However, there was not much mention of these planning documents by the managers. This is surprising as these planning documents can help guide an organization's communications, programs, and activities.

Another interesting point of contrast is the coverage of emails across the data sources. While emails were not significantly discussed in the job advertisements or the literature, they were substantially discussed by the interview participants. The participants shared that most of their writing is conducted via email. Two of the participants, Sue and Karen, even commented upon the effects of poor writing in emails, which include detracting from the validity of ideas and causing negative first impressions or a lack of respect. Although most of the literature did not discuss emails, one study by Srivatsa Seshadri and Larry Carstenson did establish that messages can be misconstrued over email if managers do not write them effectively and consider the cultural differences of audiences. Given the potential negative impacts of improper email

communication, the quantity of time managers spend writing emails, and absence of discussion of email in the literature, this is clearly an area where additional research would be beneficial.

Through this study's research, a comprehensive list of written deliverables and skills relevant to nonprofit management have been established. While the research has helped identify these items, it has also shown that the specific skills and deliverables needed for management work are not uniform. The specific writing activities managers are tasked with are not fixed, and each manager's responsibilities may include different tasks and deliverables. This variation of responsibilities is demonstrated in the job descriptions through the range of terms, responsibilities, and deliverables included in the data. Similarly, the participant interviews also provided insight regarding the variation in management responsibilities in reference to writing. Through the interview participant responses, we see that managers who are newer or work at smaller nonprofits have a wider range of writing responsibilities and less help to accomplish these tasks, when compared to managers at larger organizations. This is supported by Kim Hendler and Shelly Cryer, Richard L. Edwards and David M. Austin, and R. Sam Larson, et al., and their assertions regarding the varying responsibilities of leaders and the changing value of technical skills between the levels of management and sizes of organizations.

Research Question Three: How can writing skills impact both the effectiveness of a nonprofit manager and the organization as a whole?

The research components utilized in this project shed light on both how written communication can assist in a manager's and organization's effectiveness and how it can also hinder this effectiveness when not utilized properly. The data demonstrated that internal written documents benefit both organizations and managers through assisting with employee feedback and ensuring the organization is protected from liability. Additionally, Rebecca Walton

demonstrated that utilizing documentation can help nonprofits demonstrate accountability to stakeholders. We know that written communication helps nonprofits communicate with stakeholders, and it is important to explore why that matters. One of the most important impacts of communicating with stakeholders is identified through fundraising. The scholarly studies, such as Drew Dolan's survey, demonstrated that fundraising is a key skill for managers, and Adrian Sargeant and Jen Shang, Penelope Burke, and Simone Joyaux identified many written deliverables, such as grants and letters that can be utilized to help raise funds.

While both the interview participants and the job advertisements comment on the need for fundraising skills, and the obvious benefit of this would be to raise funds, it is Penelope Burke who explains specifically why communication skills are necessary and critical for fundraising. She outlines how communicating with donors to express appreciation and the impacts of their gifts in turn makes donors more likely to continue giving to an organization. Burk directly connected ineffective communication as a cause of fundraising failure. Thus, successful donor communication impacts the organization financially and helps build or maintain relationships with donors. In a similar vein, one of the interview participants, Christine, explained how in her foundation Executive Director role, she uses written communication to build relationships with the organizations that her foundation may support. On a large scale then, if communication helps nonprofits to obtain and retain donors and build financial relationships with grant funders, and the financial resources generated by fundraising activities helps nonprofits to conduct their work, then it can be inferred that the ultimate beneficiary of effective communication is the communities and individuals to whom these nonprofits serve.

Last, while the education of nonprofit managers and administrators was not one of this project's main research questions, the data revealed a few key points regarding education for

these leaders. First, the interview participants agreed that written communication is a training need for nonprofit managers, as this is also verified through the research studies (see Lili Wang, Robert Ashcraft, Drew Dolan, Claire Connolly Knox, Donna Raphael and Dale Nesbary). Second, many of the scholars established that programs may not be meeting the needs of students. Third, there additionally was overlap between many of the scholars' findings regarding training needs and the manager's suggestions for education. This overlap in the discussion of writing education for nonprofit managers tells us that it is important that educational programs that are preparing future nonprofit leaders include writing in their curricula. In sum, the data collected through this project provided answers to the primary research questions and identified areas where future exploration would be beneficial

Conclusion

Through the course of this research project, I was prompted to reflect on my own educational and professional writing experiences as they related to the nonprofit sector. As a nonprofit professional and graduate student, I have had the ability to study professional writing while starting and growing my career in the nonprofit sector. Through my graduate education, I completed two nonprofit communications internships: one at a very large nonprofit organization and the other at a very small organization. While these experiences could not have been more different, they both were extremely beneficial and educational for developing my career and writing skills. I have also been employed with an established, mid-sized nonprofit where I worked as a grant writer and most recently as a development and communications manager. My nonprofit trajectory thus far has allowed me to experience being a writer in a variety of contexts, including in different roles and in organizations that varied in size, structure, and mission focus.

Additionally, working in these roles at multiple nonprofit organizations allowed me to create a range of written deliverables for different purposes and intended audiences. Interning at the largest organization, I was able to learn from expert communicators with vast experiences. There were multiple communication staff members in my department and other departments devoted to marketing and fundraising. While I was the least experienced individual on my team, working with communication experts enabled me to try different types of writing with significant help and collaboration. Through this experience, I edited and wrote articles, press releases, online profiles, articles (sometimes as a ghost writer for others in the organization), blogs,

infographics, and social media posts. I was also able to observe planning meetings, which allowed me to learn how communications were strategized. Generally, working in this larger context provided me with the opportunity to try new types of writing and learn how to do it correctly. However, my internship experience at the small organization was equally impactful, albeit in different ways. Here, I was the writing expert. I researched all of the writing tasks I was assigned and attend trainings to learn how to do them. In this role, I was able to personally create documents that I never had before. I developed a communications plan, which was a first for the organization, created promotional materials, and wrote grant applications. These were my first grant applications, and one resulted in funding for the organization. Interning in a small organization and meeting program participants allowed me to really experience the impact that writing can have towards helping a nonprofit accomplish their mission. Mistakes in the writing of these applications would have affected the success of potential grant awards and the help that the participants in this program received.

While these two internship experiences allowed me to significantly grow my nonprofit writing skills, my most impactful experience to date was my time working at a midsized nonprofit. First, I was a grant writer, where I continued honing my grant writing skills and communicated with funders, and then I held my first managerial role. What I found was that as my responsibilities grew, so did the amount of written communication that was required of me. In addition to expanding the writing tasks that I personally had to accomplish, I also, for the first time, supervised other staff members, including writers, and the production of their deliverables. The responsibilities of managing writing and writers was not something that was discussed in any of the reference materials and sources reviewed in this study, but certainly this is an important skill and consideration for nonprofit administrators. I learned that not only did I need

to possess solid writing skills, the knowledge of how to create various deliverables, and be able to communicate appropriately with multiple audiences, but I also needed to be able to help and coach other professionals to do the same. Additionally, working as a manager added more tasks to my responsibilities. I was required to communicate with higher level stakeholders more frequently, collaborate with managers and executives outside of my department, and fulfill employee management responsibilities. While I certainly do not have enough management experience to be an expert, what I did learn was that the need to write well did not become less important when I transitioned out of my specialist role. In fact, I would argue that it became more important. As a manager, I felt the quality of my writing became even more critical. First, because I was setting an example for the team I was leading, second because I was communicating with important stakeholders, and second because I was responsible for human resources documents related to employee performance. These documents such as performance reviews, written warnings, and the general day to day emails that are sent from managers to their teams, were all new to me. I was fortunate, however, to work for a leader that excelled at leading and was a very clear communicator. Working for a manager who was very intentional in his communication, helped me begin to learn how to communicate as a manager myself.

As someone without a public administration or nonprofit management background, I have at times questioned my qualifications for management roles, but my hands-on experience has shown me that writing was an important part of management duties. Through this project, I was interested to learn that not only do other managers value writing as well, but also the data established by scholars demonstrates the solid need managers have for writing skills. I have personally experienced both the impact of effective writing, such as securing grant funding or

rekindling relationships with donors. I have also seen poor written communication, especially in the form of emails, cause confusion among staff or lost funding opportunities.

While I worked on this project, I found myself agreeing with the scholars who call for more research about writing and communication practices in the nonprofit sector. Even though I have studied and practiced writing, this research prompted me to reflect on my own skills, and I realized where I have areas for improvements as well. Additionally, research regarding writing for nonprofit management and administration would benefit myself and other students and professors in academic programs as well as nonprofit organizations and the professionals working in the sector.

In considering this project, I acknowledge that this project's scope was relatively limited primarily focusing on the Metro Atlanta community using a case-study approach that included six nonprofit professionals. In addition, I elected to review forty-two job advertisements from one job listing site. Nonetheless, these samples provided helpful data for purposes of this capstone and for considering how a larger sample may provide additional insights. I also see opportunities for exploring writing in relation to specific job titles that could yield interesting data. In my interview sample, five of the six participants held chief executive roles and one participant held a director role. Future research could expand the sample of organizations, job titles, and deliverables. In addition, little emphasis here was placed on writing that specifically incorporates visual and digital components—this opens other avenues of study and consideration. Another interesting focus for further exploration is the role of rhetoric and rhetorical theory and practice on nonprofit writing. While there were many in the study that revealed or suggested implications of rhetorical activities and analysis, this was not an area included in the scope of this project.

While additional research would be beneficial, the multiple research components of this project have clearly established that nonprofit managers, regardless of employer or position, must have strong writing skills in order to effectively communicate with their various stakeholders, manage their employees, and raise the needed funds to enact their mission's activities. This research on written communication within the nonprofit sector is especially applicable at the time of this project's completion—the time when the COVID-19 pandemic has caused both an increase in community need for nonprofit services and professionals working in remote situations may have a stronger need for written communication, especially emails. It is hoped that the research covered in this study will help to further empower nonprofit leaders, and the future's nonprofit leaders, to help meet the needs of our communities.

Appendix A: Job Advertisements Included in Analysis

Below are the titles of each of the forty-two job advertisements included for review in this project. Each job position listed below was a subpage included on Work for Good's "Executive/Senior Management jobs" website on February 1, 2020.

- 1) "Business and Operations Manager – Hillel Academy (Tampa, FL)"
- 2) "Business Development Associate"
- 3) "CEO / Executive Director"
- 4) "Chief Executive Officer"
- 5) "Chief Executive Officer"
- 6) "Chief Executive Officer"
- 7) "Chief Finance & Operations Officer"
- 8) "Chief Human Resources Officer"
- 9) "Co-Executive Directos"
- 10) "Community + Strategic Partnerships | Director"
- 11) "Development Director (Fundraising"
- 12) "Development Director"
- 13) "Director of Communications and Development"
- 14) "Director of Corporate Relations – Corporate Work Study Program"
- 15) "Director of Hay House"
- 16) "DIRECTOR, BUSINESS PLANNING AND OPERATIONS"
- 17) "Director"
- 18) "District Manager"
- 19) "Executive Assistant to the President& CEO, Yosemite Conservancy"
- 20) "Executive Director — East Hampton, NY"
- 21) "Executive Director of Foundation & Resource Development"
- 22) "Executive Director of the New Conversations Project"
- 23) "Executive Director"
- 24) "Executive Director"
- 25) "Executive Director"
- 26) "Executive Director"
- 27) "Executive Director"
- 28) "Executive Director"
- 29) "Executive Director"
- 30) "Executive Director"
- 31) "Executive Director"
- 32) "Executive Director"

- 33) “Executive Director”
- 34) “Head of School”
- 35) “Managing Director, Kenan Institute”
- 36) “Operations Director”
- 37) “President & CEO”
- 38) “President”
- 39) “Program Director – disability Services”
- 40) “Real Food Real Stories Executive Director”
- 41) “Vice Preside of Marketing and Communications”
- 42) “Vice President, Communications and External Affairs”

Source: “Executive/Senior Management jobs.” *Work for Good*,

www.workforgood.org/jobs/executive-senior-management/. Accessed 1 Feb. 2020.

Appendix B: Consolidated List of Deliverables

This table lists all written deliverables that may be produced by nonprofit management as mentioned by sources covered in this project:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Acknowledgements | Invitations |
| Action plans | Job descriptions |
| Advertisements | Letters |
| Advertising plan | Manuals |
| Agendas | Marketing materials |
| Annual Report | Marketing plan |
| Articles | Meeting minutes |
| Blog posts | Memos |
| Board book | Mission, vision, and values statements |
| Board packets | Narrative/Story |
| Brochures | Newsletters |
| Business case | Operations manual |
| Case for support | Performance evaluations |
| Communication plan | Policies and Procedures |
| Conference posters | Position papers |
| Contracts | Postcards |
| Correspondence | Presentations |
| Curriculum | President's message |
| Development plan | Press releases |
| Direct mail | Program plan |
| Donor appeals/solicitations | Public relation documents |
| Donor solicitation/cultivation plan | Publications |
| Emails | Reports |
| Fact Sheet | RFP |
| Financial sustainability plan | Social media |
| Flyers | Speeches |
| Fundraising letters | Strategic plan |
| Fundraising plan | Style guides |
| Grant reports | Thank you letters |
| Grants and proposals | Video scripts |
| Handwritten notes | Website |
| Internal records | Written summaries |

Appendix C: Consolidated List of Potential Stakeholders and Audiences of Communication

Produced by Nonprofit Management

This table lists all stakeholders and audiences identified as possible recipients of nonprofit management written communication as mentioned by sources covered in this project:

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Alumni | Government organizations |
| Board members | Grant seekers and recipients |
| Clients | Individuals |
| Colleagues | Investment manager |
| Committees | Media outlets |
| Community partners | Members |
| Constituents | Nonprofit and philanthropic leaders |
| Corporations | Parents |
| Council members | Current and potential partners |
| Courts | Professional associations |
| Customers | Regulators |
| Donors | School personnel |
| Elected officials and other authorities | Shared workspace community |
| Employees/Staff | State and federal agencies |
| Funding and referral sources | Vendors |
| General public | Volunteers |
| Government officials | |

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Tommy Nobis Center, Marietta, GA

May 2016 - May 2018

Development and Communications Manager

- Led an organizational rebranding initiative in collaboration with the executive team, managed all related projects with marketing and PR vendors, including updates to graphics, website, and digital and print collateral.
- Developed and maintained relationships with external vendors, and managed marketing, branding, and communications projects with third parties.
- Supervised communications specialists and all internal and external communication activities, including social media, website, emails, and print and digital promotional materials in support of services programs, fundraising activities, and brand awareness.
- Led Georgia Gives Day campaign where the fundraising goal was exceeded, and campaign revenue grew by 224% from the previous fiscal year.
- Researched and evaluated public and private grant funding opportunities, maintained prospect profiles, and made monthly recommendations to the executive team.
- Responsible for securing all grant revenue, and increased grant revenue by 42% from previous fiscal year. Built and maintained relationships with current, lapsed, and new grant funders, prepared all grant submissions, and managed grant applications and awards ensuring all funder requirements were met.
- Led two teams responsible for developing strategic, three-year expansion plans for key service programs to include benchmarks, timelines, needs statements, outcome measures, goals, and budgets.
- Assisted with development department management and budget planning during a leadership transition.

Grant Writer

- Exceeded annual grant fundraising goal by 22% by submitting an average of 12 applications, proposals, or inquiries per quarter. Grant awards, including \$110,000 in new foundation and corporate support, resulted in a 150% year-over-year funding increase.
- Managed the Georgia Gives Day campaign, a targeted digital fundraising initiative for individual and corporate donors that resulted in a 92% funding increase in comparison to the previous fiscal year.
- Created comprehensive standards and procedures for the development department that covered donor stewardship, recognition, and communication; data entry and database integrity; gift acceptance and acknowledgement; and other specific development best practices.
- Chaired a strategic planning committee tasked with developing metrics, goals, and activities to increase brand awareness as part of a strategic planning initiative conducted in collaboration with Georgia Center for Nonprofits.
- Executed and consulted on a variety of projects including digital and print communications, fundraising campaigns, program and organizational budgets, and donor

CRM evaluation. Also performed other duties during internal transitions within the development and communications team.

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA August 2014 - May 2016

Graduate Research Assistant – Horace W. Sturgis Library

- Conducted focused research projects and compiled resulting data and resources for faculty review.
- Wrote digital subject area research guides and edited guides for accuracy, clarity, and consistency.
- Created an internal style guide for faculty and staff use and developed promotional library marketing materials including brochures, flyers, and advertisements.
- Served as “Transforming Libraries for Graduate Students” conference planning committee member. Created conference materials, maintained registrant database, and communicated regularly with attendee base.

Food Security for America, Atlanta, GA January 2016 - April 2016

Communications Intern

- Wrote county and federal grant applications, developed promotional documents for donor events, and contributed to an annual report.
- Crafted comprehensive communications plan that covered goals, strategies, audiences, rationale, and timeline.

Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University, Atlanta, GA May 2015 - August 2015

Communications Intern

- Wrote and edited digital and print content, including a press release, articles, blogs, infographics, social media posts, and faculty profile pages, for donor, patient, and academic audiences.
- Supported communications director by conducting research, assisting with interviews and photoshoots, and aiding with magazine editing and production.

School District of Hillsborough County, Tampa, FL August 2011-July 2014

English Teacher – Armwood High School

- Taught honors and on-level English I and English II at a Title I high school. Communicated regularly with stakeholders, kept detailed records, and developed outcome measurements.
- Served as English I Team Leader. Planned and led bi-monthly peer learning community meetings.

Head Varsity Girls Soccer Coach

- Team received an Exceptional Sportsmanship Report.

EDUCATION

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA

May 2020

Master of Arts in Professional Writing

Concentration: Applied Writing

Capstone: “Writing as a Nonprofit Leadership Tool”

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL
Bachelor of Arts in English Literature

May 2010