

Identity development through student news outlet

Veteran Exponent staff member reflects on college experience and benefits of news writing

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The most important decision I made in college was to join the student-led newspaper - the *Exponent*. The experiences have taught me how to work effectively under time constraints and create articles that express my interests. It has also allowed me to meet other students and staff members and built friendships and connections with the people associated with the paper and throughout the university. By taking the time to write outside of my course work, I have improved my writing overall and learned what issues matter to me.

I joined the newspaper the second semester of my freshman year at UW-Platteville. I was encouraged to do so by a friend that I met while working off-campus. Overall, I enjoyed working off campus, and I got to meet a lot of upperclassmen and learn about their collegiate experiences. It took constant prodding and bothering, but I agreed to visit the paper's production night. Initially, I felt like I had no business being there. I didn't participate in yearbook in high school, and my school didn't have a newspaper. How would I be able to contribute?

I arrived at the production meeting. It was chaotic to say the least. There were thousands of old newspapers stacked along the wall (not even slightly exaggerating). The tables were covered in old scrap paper and writing utensils, but I pushed the items aside and took a seat at one of the tables. I volunteered to help copy edit, not knowing the first thing about Associated Press style. I made some edits, and the other staff members went over the changes with me. At the time, I was frustrated by this because I felt that I had a good grasp on effective writing. This newspaper is what taught me that effective writing comes in a variety of forms, and the opportunity gave me hands-on experience with writing and editing for a publication.

I was afraid of writing. I didn't know what my voice was. I didn't know what issues

and features at UW-Platteville mattered to me. I was participating in a university band, and the editor-in-chief, along with others, twisted my arm into writing my first article about one of our concerts.

I was nervous and panicked about having to reach out to a stranger. I received a response from the student about her experience in the ensemble, and she was happy to contribute. People want to be asked about themselves. I recognized that my role was crucial for helping other students have a voice about the opportunities they have on campus. I was actually participating in the high-impact practices that the university talks so much about.

Six semesters later, I recognize how much I learned and how different my life would be today without my experience with this newspaper. I got to work as the *Exponent's* sports editor, chief copy editor and the social media/public relations manager. I wrote about ensembles, faculty forums, wrestling meets, football games and so much more. I began writing for UW-Platteville's communication department and taking on new projects. I wrote newsletters and releases for the Teaching and Technology Center, and I was hired as a writing center consultant and peer-assisted learning leader to help others develop their voices. The newspaper truly allowed me to develop my identity at this university, and I can't imagine going through my college career without this experience.

I will begin my teaching career next semester. It is hard to imagine not being a part of this staff, but I look forward to seeing what the other members do as they learn about their voices and what matters to them. This experience has changed my life, and I know that other former graduates at this university feel the same way. During my teaching career, I plan to help others engage in news writing, and I encourage students of all backgrounds and majors to contribute to student news outlets during their high school and college careers.



Elizabeth Kaiser graphic

How to stay warm and safe for winter travels

Tips and tricks to stay prepared for any holiday mishaps and mayhems

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As the holiday season draws closer and the weather starts to get colder, traveling can get a little bit tricky. Around the time you think you're completely prepared, life happens, and you realize you have forgotten something. Below are two lists to help keep you safe and warm for all of the hectic holiday travels.

Car Essentials

- *Check Road Conditions before you get in the car*—Check the road conditions before you leave the house. If they're questionable, leave a little bit early so that you won't feel rushed on an icy road.
- *Check your car's functions before driving*—the last thing you want on a snowy winter night is to be stuck on the side of the road somewhere. Make sure your car is all good to go before you set out on a drive.
- *Keep at least a half/full tank of gas*—It's better for your car and it takes away some of the anxiety around winter driving.
- *Gloves and Hand Warmers*—Keeping your hands warm will help you stay cozy. The steering wheel can get chilly during the winter months; a warm pair of mittens can really help. Also, if your car breaks down or won't start, you've got some protection from the cold.
- *Ice Scraper and Brush*—Icy windows and snow-covered blind-spots are particularly dangerous in slippery conditions. Take the time to clean up your car before driving; it'll save you in the long run.
- *Sand, Rock Salt, or Kitty Litter*—If you get stuck in some deep snow, you can use any of these things to build some traction under your tires.
- *Small or Collapsible Shovel*—If you need to dig your way out of a drift, a small shovel can come in handy.
- *Blankets*—Always keep a blanket in your car just in case. It will help you stay warm if you have to camp out for a bit in the cold.
- *Windshield Washer Fluid*—Other cars throw up a lot of salt and slush during the winter months; windshield washer fluid can run low pretty quickly when you're constantly cleaning your windows. Make sure to buy the kind of washer fluid that's meant for freezing temperatures.
- *Jumper Cables*—Cold cars don't always like to start on the first try, it's always a good idea to have a backup set of jumper cables.
- *Sunglasses*—The glare of the sun off of the snow is extremely hard on your eyes. Try to keep sunglasses in your car to protect from the harsh rays.

Backpack Essentials

- *Touchscreen Gloves*—Keep your hands warm while you scroll through Instagram.
- *Lip Balm*—Chilly weather leads to chapped lips.
- *Tissues*—Chilly weather also leads to runny noses, and tissues are just

one of those things that you can never find when you really need them.

- *Cough Drops*—Be prepared for a cold at all times; it is officially cold season.
- *Sunglasses*—Protect your eyes from the sun not only when you're driving, but also when you're walking.
- *Insulated Travel Mug*—Keep your holiday-flavored coffee warm so that you can always have a hot drink on hand.
- *Hats, Gloves, & Scarves*—If you can keep your hands, neck, and ears warm, you'll be set for all of those chilly walks to class, work, etc.



A Feature Photo
from Jacob Thomas

UW-Platteville's number 12, Robert Duax, goes for a jump shot against Central Iowa's number 23, Caden Mauck. The Pioneers won the game 94-77.