Kevin P. Cox (MA ’81, P ’06, P ’07, P ’09)

Here’s a sample weather announcement. It is an actual one I prepared in December 2018.

Because of weather conditions, the Reynolda Campus of Wake Forest University will be closed Tuesday, Dec. 11. There will be no academic operations. Offices will be closed. This includes Wake Downtown.

Travel on and off campus is expected to be hazardous, so all are encouraged to be cautious outside.

Dining services will be available. To obtain information on campus dining, visit deacondining.com. The late-night breakfast has been cancelled; it had been scheduled for Monday night.

Campus shuttles will not operate Tuesday.

Recreation facilities, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, the Student Health Service and Benson University Center will be open Tuesday. The Wake Forest Wellbeing Center/Reynolds Gym will be open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. ZSR Library is open 24 hours. The Student Health Service will operate on an urgent-care basis, only. Appointments are cancelled. Benson Center will operate with regular hours.

The President’s Holiday Party has been cancelled. It was scheduled to be held Tuesday for staff and faculty and their families.

Please continue to check the Wake Alert website at wakealert.wfu.edu for any other announcements that may be made.

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Here’s a short history, written in first person, of my experience with weather-related announcements:

For most of my Wake Forest University career, I was known as the man who stays alert to snowy and icy weather and delivers the happy news to students, faculty and staff when University officials decide that it’s time for a snow day. Classes will not be held on campus; offices will be closed. Sometimes, the weather only prompted a late start or an early end, but even that news prompted cheers.

For many years, I left voice messages on phones for students, faculty and staff about the weather closings and delays. I used many other means to spread the news, too, but it was the voice messages that caught everyone's attention.

It was one of seemingly countless responsibilities I had at Wake Forest while working in various communications roles for 30 years, stretching from 1990 to 2020. I was the
University's most visible spokesperson for about 15 years, led the University's relationship with the news media, served on the University's crisis management team, helped protect the University's brand, served on more committees and task forces than I can remember, and much more. But, it was those "weather-related announcements" that many remember me by.

As the years went by, I became something of a celebrity on campus. I can't explain it. Students organized Kevin Cox's Dance Party. A student comedy group presented a program called Six Degrees of Kevin Cox (inspired by the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon "game"). I was often asked to be a judge at student talent shows. Again, I can't explain it, but it was fun and funny.

My son, Tyler ('06) and my daughter, Cassie ('07, MA '09) were students on campus in those years. I think they may have been hesitant, initially, to be known as Kevin Cox's children. In time, though, they embraced it and became a little famous themselves, perhaps.

Sometimes, while walking on campus or even in a city far from Winston-Salem, I'd hear a student or an alumnus call out, "Hello, Kevin Cox!" On occasion, while shopping at a campus store, I'd hear one student say to another, "That's Kevin Cox, I never thought I'd actually see him."

Faculty and staff joked with me about it. I've been at restaurants in town when a faculty member I knew would call out, "Hey, it's Kevin Cox with a weather-related announcement."

Yes, that is how I started those many messages delivered by phone. "Hello, this is Kevin Cox with a weather-related announcement for January the 12th." Apparently, that opening line ended up in many conversations around campus.

Working at Wake Forest was a wonderful experience. Getting to know students, faculty and staff was the best part. And, one of the ways they got to know me was from those weather announcements. I am happy to be remembered for my time working at Wake Forest. And, that includes being remembered as the weather man.

Reflection from Katie Collins Neal ('03):

While I was a student (1999-2003), each residence hall room still had landline phones. When we awoke to snow on the ground and a flashing light indicating that we had gotten a message overnight, we were overjoyed. There were few sounds students loved more than Kevin Cox's voice with a "weather-related announcement", for Wake Forest rarely canceled classes. It's no wonder he was popular around campus!

In 2010, I returned to Wake Forest to work in Office of Communications & External Relations and I could not believe I was going to work closely with Kevin (whom I'd built
up to mythic proportions by now). The Kevin I got to know was indeed well-revered, but I came to know him for much more than the informational messages he shared with the Wake Forest community. I feel sure that many people who were lucky enough to know him personally found him to be a trusted mentor, reliable colleague and patient friend. And I know for certain that Wake Forest is a better place because of his influence.