

Director, White House Transition Project and Author, *Before the Oath* - Dr. Martha Joynt Kumar is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at Towson University. As a scholar with a research focus on the White House, she is interested in presidential – press relations, White House communications operations, and presidential transitions. Her most recent book, *Managing the President’s Message: The White House Communication Operation*, won a 2008 Richard E. Neustadt Award from the presidency section of the American Political Science Association. Her previous books include *White House World: Transitions, Organization, and Office Operations* and *Portraying the President: The White House and the News Media* with Michael Grossman. *Managing the President’s Message* is coming out in April 2010 in a paperback edition with a postscript comparison of the communications operations of Presidents Obama, George W. Bush, and Bill Clinton. Her most recent publication is “The 2008-2009 Transition Through the Voices of the Participants,” which is in the December 2009 issue of *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

She is director of the White House Transition Project, which is a nonpartisan effort by presidency scholars to provide information on presidential transitions and White House operations to those who came into the White House in January 2009 as the group did in 2001. She worked with the transition operations of presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain and with the team representing President George W. Bush. In the fall of 2008, she testified on effective practices for presidential transitions before the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization, and Procurement hearing: "Passing the Baton: Preparing for the Presidential Transition." The project builds on the earlier White House 2001 Project, which was designed to build an institutional memory for seven White House offices in order to provide the information to new staff coming into the selected positions in 2001. The White House 2001 Project was funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and was associated with the Transition to Governing Project of the American Enterprise Institute.

Professor Kumar has received grants from the Ford Foundation as well as The Pew Charitable Trusts. In 1998 she was a fellow at the Joan Shorenstein Center on Press Politics at the Kennedy School at Harvard University. Professor Kumar was named by the University System of Maryland to be a Wilson H. Elkins Professor for 2003-2004 and again for 2005-2006 to support her work on presidential communications and to fund an interactive course she has taught each spring beginning in 2004: “White House Communications Operations.” She interviews White House officials and reporters in Washington with her students back at Towson hooked in through an Internet connection.

In now the seventh year she has taught the course, she has interviews with over 70 reporters and officials. The interviews are video streamed nationwide and available at: http://www.ucdc.edu/aboutus/whstreaming_archive.cfm. The Wilson H. Elkins grants also funded her work on presidential press conferences.

Kumar grew up in the Washington area and went to Connecticut College for her BA in government and then an MA and a PhD in political science from Columbia University. In between her masters and doctoral degrees, she taught at Tennessee State University in Nashville and worked as a researcher in the Election Unit of the News Department at NBC. In 2008, she was elected as a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration. In addition to her scholarly work, Kumar is currently on the board of directors and the executive committee of the White House Historical Association, the board of the National Coalition for History, and serves as the representative to the National Archives for the American Political Science Association. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa.